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Larbi Ben M'Hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi
Faculty of Letters and Languages.

Department of English.

Feminism at Stake: Baby Girl

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By

Bradja Asma

Supervisor: Mr. Koussa. Toufik
Examinor: Aachiri Samia

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Dedication

My family, dear parents and lovely brother, my best friends, and my supervisor, this work is dedicated to you as an act of my thankfulness for your encouragement and support.
Acknowledgments

Praise be to Allah, the Glorious, without his help none of this would be possible. Dear mother, dear father-May Allah grant you a long life- the fruit of my hard work is in the first place for you. I know that if I spend the rest of my life saying thank you, I will not find the suitable word that really allows me to do so. I thank you for your continuous support that you gave and still give me even in times of my failures. I wish one day I could give my children half of love, respect, and support that you have given me. Second, my thankfulness will be for you dear brother. Every time I look to your baby face, I see that beautiful smile that gives me more hope and motivation. Third, this work will be for my best friends; Dida, Nabil, Ahmed, Mayssa, Houda, and Mourad. Even your simplest word, has supported me and gave me the impression that I have the most valuable friendship ever made. Last and not least, if I have the chance, I will be very grateful to thank my Academic supervisor Mr. Koussa Toufik. From the deep of my heart, I thank you for accepting to be my tutor for two years, for your guidance, advice, critics and motivation.

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Abstract

The thesis tends to investigate the representation of black women in Lenora Adams’ *Baby Girl*. Instead of having chapters, the book is written of three long letters, through which Lenora Adams, the black writer, and with its protagonist Sheree tends to demonstrate her feminist perspectives and points of view. The main objective of this thesis goes on with the same objective of Adams. It will show how a twenty first century’s black girl is trying to adapt with the challenges that she is going through, and how she tries to make her decisions and reactions according to the different circumstances. It will reveal how Adams has dealt with subjects as coming of age, finding identity, friendship, love, drugs, gaining respect, responsibility, social classes, and racial differences. From a black feminist perspective, Adams has dealt with Sheree’s life experiences and main problems as being used for money, using drugs, getting pregnant. Sheree was a very strong girl who went through many trials and tribulations throughout her life especially with the lack of father’s authority. Through Sheree’s experiences, Adams has challenged the notion of being different, which means being inferior, non-civilized, and underdeveloped that the old American oppressive system has left upon the American society.
Résumé

La thèse tend à enquêter sur la représentation des femmes noires dans *Fille Bébé* Lenora Adams. Au lieu d'avoir des chapitres, le livre est écrit de trois longues lettres, à travers lequel Lenora Adams, l'écrivain noir, et avec son protagoniste Sheree tend à démontrer ses perspectives et points de vue féministes. L'objectif principal de cette thèse se poursuit avec le même objectif d’Adams. Il montrera comment fille noire d'un XXIe siècle tente de s'adapter aux défis qu'elle va par, et comment elle tente de prendre ses décisions et réactions selon les différentes circonstances. Il révlera comment Adams a traité de sujets comme provenant de l'âge, de trouver l'identité, l'amitié, l'amour, la drogue, gagner le respect, la responsabilité, les classes sociales, raciales et les différences. D'un point de vue féministe noir, Adams a traité avec les expériences de vie de Sheree et les problèmes principaux comme étant utilisé pour de l'argent, l'usage de drogues, de tomber enceinte. Sheree avait une très forte fille qui a traversé de nombreuses épreuves et tribulations au long de sa vie, en particulier à l'absence de l'autorité du père. Grâce à l'expérience de Sheree, Adams a contesté la notion d'être différent, ce qui signifie être inférieur, non-civilisé, et sous-développé que l'ancien système d'oppression américaine a laissé sur la société américaine.
الملخص

هذه الأطروحة تسعى إلى التحقيق في كيفية تمثيل لينورا أدمز للنساء السود في روايتها بايبي قارل. الرواية تتكون من ثلاثة رسائل بدلًا من فصول، والتي من خلالها حاولت الكاتبة، وهي سوداء البشرة - مستعمرة بشيري، بطلة الرواية، إن تبين وتثبت وجهات نظرها النسوية. الهدف الرئيسي للأطروحة يتشابه وهدف أدمز الذي تسعى إلى تحقيقه. هذه الأطروحة تحاول إظهار محاولة فتاة سوداء في القرن الحادي والعشرين التكيف والتحديات التي تمر بها، وكذا اتخاذ قرارات والقيام بردود أفعال في مختلف الظروف التي تواجهها. كما أنها تكشف أيضا عن كيفية تعامل أدمز مع مواضيع مثل: بلوغ سن الرشد، إيجاد الهوية، الصداقة، الحب، المخدرات، كسب الاحترام، المسؤولية، الطبقات الاجتماعية، والاختلافات العرقية. أدمز تتعاملت مع تجارب حياة شيري ومشاكلها مثل كونها تستخدم من أجل المال، تتعاطى المخدرات، وحملها في سن مبكر من وجهة نظر النساء السود، بلاك فيمينيست. شيري هي تلك الفتاة القوية التي عاشت العديد من التجارب والمحان طوال حياتها خاصة مع غياب سلطة الأب. من خلال تجارب شيري، أدمز تحدث فكرة كونها مختلفة وهو ما يعني أن تكون أقل شأنا، غير متحضره، ومتخلفة وهذا ما خلقه النظام القمعي الأمريكي القديم في المجتمع الأمريكي.
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Introduction

United States Women’s Suffrage Movement (1848-1920) represents the moment when the American women began to be aware of their legal rights (the rights to vote and to hold public office) besides their natural ones. In addition, the movement had paved the way for other organized movements to take place in the American history. Feminism; one of those organized movements; became really visible by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and it was a reaction against the lack of equality, class, race or gender.

Most scholars and researchers in the recent years were interested in their studies and writings to deal with the Feminist movement from a historical perspective .i.e. its reasons of being emerged, its three waves, its aims and objectives, to the way in which it was adopted as a theory in literary writings. Under the flag of Feminism, there have been multiple feminisms representing the efforts of women to live into their full humanity in a world shaped by and for, the generally larger and more violent, male.

Since the age of slavery had gone away, and that all American women are equal and free, and that they all have the same rights, why are there so many fights between feminists? Is there really a White feminism and a Black one? Why there is such a distinction between White feminism and a Black one in literary writings? Is there a real difference between each of these categories and types, and do they really have different principles, ideas, issues, or all are the same and all are waving under the flag of one word; feminism.
To answer these questions and to shed light on the hidden differences between White and Black feminisms in a literary context, my work follows an analytical advocatory method. For more development, the dissertation will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will define feminism as a term. In doing so, I have relied on some academic dictionaries as the Oxford and Cambridge. Moving on to deal with feminist literary critic, I find myself relaying on some writers as Toril Moi, Peter Barry, Elaine Showalter, Kate Millet, Dale Spender, Rosaline Coward, among others. Furthermore in developing the subject of feminist literary criticism and tracing its deep roots, I have mentioned some of the early feminists as Christine de Pizan, Margret Fuller, and George Eliot. Bell Hooks, John Bradshaw, Anne Barbeau, Emma Brockers, Judith Bennett, and others who dealt with the concept of patriarchy from multiple sides that are explained extensively. The chapter also contains some of feminism branches as queer theory and gender studies. The next point that is dealt with in the first chapter is the feminist movement. Sarah Moore Grimke, Angelina Moore Grimke, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were among the white abolitionists, and Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman were among the black abolitionists. All of the previous names had worked for the development of the feminist movement and the feminist organizations. The last points that is dealt with in this chapter is the three waves of feminism and its several types.

The second chapter entitled Feminisms in USA will focus on the different critics about the topic of feminism. It investigates how education affected women’s community and led them to think on the different programs that will allow them to develop the field. From 1950s onward, attempts were focused on the ability of developing a program that will fit all women worldwide. It focuses on the difference between Black feminism and White
one. Besides it will enlarge the topic to the different names of feminism as Womanism, Africana Womanism as terms and principles that were introduced by some of the feminists.

To develop this chapter, I have followed the critics of some of the 21st century writers as Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene Young, Vivian Verdell Gordon, Laverne Gyant, Clenora Hudson-Weems, Arlene R. Keizer, and Margaret Walters.

The third chapter will mainly focus on the analysis of Baby Girl by Lenora Adams. I will investigate how the black writer Lenora Adams has addressed black women lives and issues according to the new circumstances of contemporary America. Through the analysis of the novel, one can come to deduce which path or direction it is following, or in which category it could be classified: Black feminism, Womanism, Africana Womanism.

To conclude with, feminism is a large and vague term to be studied in just Master dissertation especially with issues such as White feminism and Black feminism. The results, which this work came with, maybe a subject for more detailed and higher studies. Among the results sorted out through the analysis of Adam’s Baby Girl is that Black feminism is different from white feminism and that Black feminism is a school by itself.
Chapter One: Feminism

Feminism is a body of social theory and political movement primarily based on and motivated by the experiences of women. It is the theory that men and women should be equal, politically, economically, and socially. It is a large framework, and in an attempt to cover the topic, I find it reasonable to discuss the different definitions of the term. Second, the debate will focus around feminism as a theory or as a method of criticism with other branches that appeared later on as queer theory and gender studies. The third and last point of the debate will be based on feminism as a historical fact, the Feminist Movement, with its three waves and different types as liberal feminism, radical feminism, social feminism …etc. (“Introduction to Feminism Topics”) \(^1\).

Feminism means different things to different people, and different parts of the larger feminist community have had different goals. Feminism composes of ideas and beliefs about women's views towards culture compared to men's ones. The presumption in feminism is that women are treated in an unequal way, and that women are disadvantaged if compared to men. In different words, it describes a culture during which women are treated otherwise than men, a distinction which made women feel uncomfortable. Feminism deduces that such treatment is cultural and it needs to be changed, and that it; whether individually or in groups; is looking for a new culture that would bring new values which would make personal as well as social changes. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, feminism additionally refers to a social movement, the feminist movement which is a set of
connected teams and people committed to organized actions, together with modifications in behavior of members of the movement and persuasion of others outside of it to form a change².

However, defining feminism as a term is not an easy task, because believing that feminism encompasses a wide scope of perspectives, and that it is an exhaustive, wide-range social phenomena is not a perfect and specific definition. Aiming at reaching an exact definition of the term feminism, some of the academic dictionaries as Cambridge and the Oxford would be very helpful means. Cambridge defines feminism as "the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state" ("Feminism", def.). In a like manner the Oxford goes on to define the term as the following "the advocacy of women’s rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes. ....the issue of rights for women first became prominent during the French and American revolutions in the late 18th century." or "a doctrine or movement that advocates equal rights for women." ("Feminism", def.).

Since feminism, as a term, is concerned with issues of race, class, sexuality, social equality, nationality, and religion, what would it mean or focus if it is related to literary theory and criticism? Feminist literary theory or feminist literary criticism is the most interesting and most difficult of all definitions. Feminist literary criticism analyzes the literary work with a feminist perspective, and examines the author's female characters and estimates their role within that literary work. Moreover, feminist literary criticism is the term for criticizing literary works through the examination of female points of view, concerns, and values. In contrast, feminist literary criticism of the recent years encompasses
not only female literary works but also male literary works, leaving men to be held accountable for their portrayal of women as well as men in their literary works (Benstock et al. 153).

Feminist literary criticism properly begins in the aftermath of ‘second wave’ feminism, the term usually given to the emergence of women’s movements in the United States and Europe during the Civil Rights campaigns of the 1960s. Though, a feminist literary criticism did not emerge fully formed from this moment. Rather, its eventual self-conscious expression was the culmination of centuries of women’s writing, of women writing about women writing, and of women and men writing about women’s minds, bodies, art and ideas (Plain and Sellers 2).

In "Feminist, Female, Feminine", Toril Moi declares that over the past few decades, terms as feminist, female and feminine were frequently used by feminist writers. In an attempt to understand the crucial political and theoretical issues of contemporary feminist literary criticism, Moi made a distinction between the three terms i.e. feminist, female, and feminine (117). Feminist or feminism are indicating a political position which has two sides; a support for the purposes of the new women’s movement of the 1960s, and an opposition to all forms of patriarchy and sexism, as argued by Kate Millett that the intrinsic nature of politics is power, and she suggested that feminist critics and theorists should or have to reveal the way females were dominated by males. In doing so, the feminist critic is free in choosing the method he or she likes. However, Millett believed that the existing
critical methods were politicized, and feminist criticism had become a new trend of literary studies, and feminists had found themselves in a position that obliges them to make explicit the politics of the neutral or objective works of their colleagues, as well as to act as cultural critics (118). To this point, feminists have to be pluralistic: pluralism has often lead to an easy acceptance of concepts of multiplicity, and it has provided feminists with new ways that will allow them to be open, to avoid the falsely universalistic claims of patriarchal institutions and discourses, and to express their solidarity with other social movements (118). In this sense, Moi argues that there are different political views within the feminist camp, and that his job is not to gather or unify them, but to emphasize that remarkable feminist criticism and theory have to be in relation in the study of institutional, social and personal relations between sexes (118).

Later, Toril Moi claims that feminists often accuse male intellectuals of stealing women's ideas, and he illustrated by the work of Dale Spender Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them when she examines cases of clear intellectual dishonesty; men presenting women's ideas as their own without giving enough information about their original sources, which Spender considers as an obvious example of the widespread patriarchal effort to silence women. For Spender, the best solution for this problem is that feminists should try to make explicit the political context and implication of their works (119).

Being a female does not necessarily guarantee a feminist approach, and that neither all books of the pre 1960s that were written by women on women writers exemplify anti-patriarchy, nor is a female tradition in literature or criticism a feminist one. In an essay entitled “Are Women's Novels, Feminist Novels”, Rosaline Coward has discussed the
general confusion of feminist with female writings within the women's movement: "It is just not possible to say that women-centered writings have any necessary relationship to feminism"(120). Moreover, Toril Moi declares that the fact that describing women's experience as a feminist act is in one hand true, because patriarchy has always tried to silence and oppress women and their experience, and making them visible is an anti-patriarchy strategy. However, and in another hand, he believes that women's experience can be made visible in various ways (121). Moi concluded his statement by saying that believing that shared female experience gives rise to a feminist analysis of women's situation is politically naive and theoretically unaware, and that sharing the same experience with someone else does not necessarily ensure a common political orientation. In addition, many feminist critics wrote about female authors is a political choice but not a definition of feminist criticism, it is its political perspective which provides feminist criticism its unity. As a conclusion to the distinction between feminist and female, Moi raised the question of whether men can be feminists or a feminist critic or no. The answer is yes. Men can be feminists because under patriarchy, or the patriarchal society gives men the right to speak from different positions than women (122).

Defining feminist and feminine in the first place, Toril Moi moves on to deal with the second and last distinction that is between female and feminine. Before, the use of the terms feminine/masculine was to represent social constructs: pattern of sexuality and behavior which are culturally and socially unaccepted, nurture, and female/male to represent the biological aspects of sexual differences, nature. As Simon de Beauvoir who believes that one is not born a women, one becomes one, patriarchal oppression composes of applying a given norms of femininity on all biological women to make all of us believe
that the chosen norms of femininity are natural, and any women who opposes to obey can be categorized as unfeminine and unnatural. In contrast, feminists insist that being a female does not oblige any women to be feminine, and according to them, this definition is totally true regardless to whether it is defined in the old patriarchal ways or in a new feminist ways (122). As a result, the question that should be raised here is whether it is worthwhile for feminists to define or fix the meaning of femininity or no? Since patriarchy has already developed a series of characteristics that could help in fixing the meaning of feminine, feminists should try to accept them otherwise they have to bring new set of feminine virtues. However, if feminists decide to bring new sets, they should be ready to face the danger of turning a positive feminist definition of femininity into a definition of femaleness, and as a result turning back to the patriarchal one (123).

If Toril Moi has distinguished between the three terms that were and are used by feminists, Elaine Showalter has made a distinction between them but in a form of phases: the feminine phase, the feminist phase and the female phase. The feminine phase (1840-80) women writers tried to imitate the presiding male artistic norms; in the feminist phase (1880-1920) radical and separatist positions are maintained; and finally the female phase (1920 onward) the female writings and experiences were given more attention. The reason behind dividing the phases in this way, Showalter argues that feminist criticism needs a terminology if it was to achieve theoretical respectability. Also there was a need to reach a sense of progress, enable early feminist criticism to have their rightful credit, and make it clear that the approach they represent is no longer regarded as a model for practice (Showalter, qtd. in Barry 86).
Today's feminist literary criticism is the fruit of the women's movement of the 1960s. In this sense, the movement was literary from its beginning because it was concerned with books and literature, and it realized the importance of the women's images publicized by literature. However, the women's movement of the 1960's was neither the starting point of feminism as a literary approach nor the resumption of the already existing traditions and thoughts of the classic books that had addressed the problem of women's inequality in society as Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) which offers the portrayal of the unfair and unequal treatment of women (Barry 85).

In fact, the history of feminism as a literary doctrine could be traced long time before. In the fifteenth-century France, the Italian French late medieval poet and author Christine de Pizan (1364-1430) was seen as Europe's first professional women writer. Christine de Pizan had wrote more than a dozen of books among which two had gained more success and fame. The first work *The City of Ladies* (1404-05) was a philosophical book that stated the history of women, and in which de Pizan wanted to demonstrate how women were unjustly oppressed. In addition; and through the invention of three characters; lady Reason, Lady Rectitude, and Lady Justice; she wished to challenge the misrepresentations of women as weak-minded, childish, unintelligent, inferior, incapable for a good judgment, and that they would only bring evil to the world (Davison).

The second work *The Three Virtues* (1405) was a range of advice and guidance to all women--the peasant and the princess--for having more consideration, a better chance for education, and a role beyond the home. In recent decades, these two works of art were translated into English language by Charity Cannon Willard⁵, and he agreed that de Pizan was an early feminist who used the medieval French to convey the notion that women
could be able to play a significant role in their society. With the latest editions as that of the
1980s and 1990s, the two works; *The City of Ladies* and *The Three Virtues* are referred to
as *A Medieval Women’s Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies* (Davison).

Moreover, in early nineteenth-century, there were women authors as Margaret Fuller
(1810-1850) and George Eliot (1819-1880). Sarah Margaret Fuller is well remembered for
her landmark book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) in which she encouraged
young women to find more independence from home and family and to acquire that
independence through education. She rejected the concept that women should be well
pleased with their lives, and she proposed that they should be allowed to have more
opportunities in their society: “Let them be sea-captains, if they will” (Johnson Lewis). In
1857, and after the publication of a short story *Amos Barton*, Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880)
took the pen name George Eliot. In her fictional novels as *Adams Bede* (1859) *The Mill on
the Floss* (1860) and *Middlemarch* (1871-72), Eliot used women as her central characters or
heroines, aiming to show her moral beliefs and understanding of life. However, in *Felix
Holt* (1866) Eliot aimed at conveying her political thoughts through addressing social
questions that England was going through (“George Eliot”).

Therefore, the literature of the nineteenth-century was about representing women's
lives and providing some advice and guidance for better life. However, feminist literary
criticism of the twentieth-century went on different ways. Elaine Showalter, who coined the
term gynocritics; which means the study of gynotexts (books written by male writers) with
subjects such as history, styles, themes, structures of writings by women had criticized
feminist criticism of the 1970s as being shifted from andro-texts (books written by female
writers) to gynotexts. Feminist criticism of the 1970s was a critical response to the lack of
knowledge about women’s lives and situations, a matter of exposing the mechanisms of patriarchy, and a great critical attention has been given to works of art by male writers in which women were portrayed (Showalter, qtd. in Barry 85).

In "understanding Patriarchy", Bell Hooks argues that men do not use the term patriarchy in their daily life because it is not part of their everyday thought or speech, that is why they associate it or relate it to women's liberation or to feminism. Moreover, she declares that patriarchy is a political social system which emphasized that males inherently superior and that they have the right to dominate and rule over everyone who is weak specially females. As illustration, Hooks gives an example of her own family who believes in patriarchy in which her role was to serve, to be weak, to care take, however, the male role was to be served, to be strong, and to refuse to care take among other things as to provide, think and plan. In addition, she demonstrates that in patriarchal family:

I was taught that it was not proper for a female to be violent, that it was unnatural. My brother was taught hat his value would be determined by his will to do violence. He was taught that for a boy, enjoying violence was a good thing. He was taught that a boy should not express feelings. I was taught that girls could and should express feelings, or at least some of them (1).

In Creating Love, the psychotherapist John Bradshaw goes on with the dictionary definition of patriarchy and said that patriarchy is a social organization marked by the
supremacy of the father in the clan or family in both domestic and religious functions. He added "patriarchal rules still govern most of the world's religious, school systems, and family systems" (qtd. in Hooks 3). In contemporary life, Hooks disagrees with those who believe that the children of female-households are not learning the values of patriarchy because no male is there by declaring that "yet many female-headed households endorse and promotes patriarchal thinking with far greater passion than two-parent households" (3), and that recent feminist activists should acknowledge that the fact that men are oppressing women because they are also hurt by rigid sex roles; they are obliged to live in patriarchy and act as in proper ways that suit the patriarchal system is a fake one (3).

"Feminist literary Criticism: From Anti-Patriarchy to Decadence", by Anne Barbeau Gardiner is a collection of scholars’ perspectives who are either for or against patriarchy. In her work History Matters, Judith Bennett argues that patriarchy represents the main issue of women's history, but at the same time she argues that nowadays women refuse to use the term as being old fashioned (Bennett, qtd. in Gardiner 393). Bennett recounts how Jane Fonda once remarked that “patriarchy is very much alive and well, and we have to do something about it” (Bennett, qtd. in Gardiner 393). Ruth Robbins goes with Fonda and argues in her work Literary Feminisms that the cause behind women's sufferance is that they are living in a patriarchal society which thought they are physically less powerful and must be controlled and oppressed by men (Robbins, qtd. in Gardiner 394).

Later Emma Brockes replied that patriarchy is “anachronism and that lots of women would bridle at the suggestion they are victims of a patriarchal system” (qtd. in Gardiner 393). Judith Bennett disagrees with Brockes and said that “patriarchy is essential to the future of feminism” (Bennett, qtd. in Gardiner 393). To defend her view, she points to Ida
Blom and other feminists as Sylvia Walby who agreed that "no other term is as useful to describe the system by which men dominate, oppress and exploit women as patriarchy" (Walby, qtd. in Gardiner 393). Moreover, Bennett advise us not to look for the origins of the term patriarchy because it would lead us to confess, and in a direct way, that there are biological differences between both genders; men and women, and she argue that the two terms, patriarchy and women, are useful in the struggle of power between man and women, but they have no relation to their nature, biology, or objective reality (Bennett, qtd. in Gardiner). Even if feminist critics were against patriarchy or patriarchal society, and that they wanted to challenge the western canon because they believe that it was men who produced those works and that male critics attest to their greatness, they have from the start followed the teaching of white European males like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan, and Elaine Showalter has warned of this dependency (Gardiner 393, 394).

Differing from the 1970s, feminism of the 1980s had faced three main changes. First, it became associated with other approaches as Marxism, Structuralism, Linguistics, and so on. Second, its focus had shifted from exploring male world to exploring female one, in an attempt to fix up what was damaged of their experiences. In third point, the focus of feminism was on finding new ways to reconstruct women's writings by giving more opportunities to neglected women writers. Furthermore, Peter Barry had stated the roles of the feminist critics as following: rethink the canon, aiming at the rediscovery of texts written by women, revalue women's experience, examine representations of women in literature by men and women, challenge representations of women as other, as lack, as part of nature, examine power relations which obtain in texts and in life, with a view to breaking
them down, seeing reading as a political act, and showing the extent of patriarchy, recognize the role of language in making what is social and constructed seem transparent and natural, and raise the question of whether men and women are essentially different because of biology, or are socially constructed as different (92).

In a like manner, the non-fiction work *Encyclopedia of Feminism*, by Liza Tuttle also attempted to defined feminist theory as asking new questions of old texts and it had cited the goals of feminist criticism as: to develop a female tradition of writing, to interpret symbolism of women's writing in order not to be lost or ignored by the male’s perspective, to rediscover old texts, to analyze women writers and their writings from a female point of view, to resist sexism in literature, and to increase awareness of the sexual politics of language and style (3).

It’s worth mentioning that feminism is always associated with two other fields of study, queer theory and gender studies. The word queer as it appeared in the oxford dictionary has the primary meaning of strange, odd, and peculiar of the ordinary. In the early twentieth century the word was used to mean homosexual. Later, the word has been taken by gay people to replace the terms gay and homosexual because they think they were very offensive and aggressive terms. Queer theory is a new branch of study that appeared since about 1991. It grew out from gay/lesbian studies, which in turn, had grown out from feminist studies and feminist theory. It concerns itself with all forms of sexuality that are queer, thus it expands the scope of its analysis to all types of behaviors including those which are gender-bending and those which require queer, non-normative kinds of sexuality (Harris).
Queer theory emphasizes that all concepts relating sexual behaviors to sexual identities, all categories of normative sexualities, and all sexual behaviors are social constructed. For this reason, it follows feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies in rejecting the notion that sexuality is an essentialist category, something determined by biology, and instead puts forward an understanding of sexuality that there should be a shift over boundaries, ambivalences, and cultural constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context. In this context, queer theory means to challenge and make normal strange and unsettled, and to encourage the notion of non-straightness. The notion of queer theory is always associated with Judith Butler. In *Gender Trouble*, concepts as performativity; the person is what he/she does not what he/she is; sexuality and gender identities were included, and through them, Butler wanted to refuse stable categories altogether (Harris).

The other field of study that is related to feminism is gender studies. Gender studies or theory is a new and expanding discipline, its concepts, methods and research matters are still a matter of contention. In 1970s, feminist criticism of gender inequality paved the way for gender studies. As a reaction to the lack of knowledge about women’s lives and conditions, that women’s studies were trying to implement, gender studies has taken the responsibility to add this knowledge in order to make sure that the knowledge base was not prejudiced and that the ignorance about women’s life conditions will not necessarily create injustice society. Even if women’s studies were interested in the study of women’s situations within their societies and their relationships with men from the past to the present times, scholars of gender studies were not totally convinced that they could do so because they believe that “it was not possible to understand the complex nature of social
relationships solely by means of studies of women’s material circumstances, social affiliation, actions or failure to act etc.” Gender researchers are interested in how people think, interpret, perceive, symbolize, feel, write, paint, dance, fantasize, wish, experience, define what we normally call sex and what this word means and what it meant in the past (The Swedish Research Coun 2).

Gender studies is a specific, wide ranging and complex discipline. However, its researchers cannot grasp everything about the discipline. Even more, most of them are not interested in gender studies outside their own subject. In other word, gender researchers are not open minded to the point that enables them to provide the needed information about their field of study, and to add new ideas, concepts, and perceptions as well. Furthermore, gender studies is an interdisciplinary field that is trying to understand gender from different perspectives, and that its knowledge could be used to solve problems in other disciplines, its researchers have found a difficulty in finding a precise line between intradisciplinary gender studies and gender theory with an interdisciplinary focus, i.e. gender researchers are wondering whether gender studies is a dependent discipline or that other disciplines are depending on it to get their problems solved (The Swedish Research Coun 3).

In August 2006, there was a conference that has taken place in Toronto, Canada that aims at changing the name of Women’s Studies to Women’s and Gender Studies. After debating the issues an agreement was reached in support for the name change. For getting more views (either supporting or opposing), members of the conference decided to leave the issue open for the discussion before the final decision, and they have sent an email to more than four hundred (400 members and supporters). The result was in support for the
change. Many people; from the same four hundred members; came with new reasons in support for the name change, among them:

- The change indicates the historical development of the discipline over the three last decades of the feminist approach.
- It shows more valuable communication between the conference’s aims.
- Early women’s studies researchers were only concentrating on the differences between men and women and sees it as inherent or natural, gender studies now sees it as socially and historically constructed. Gender is the fruit of multiple historical elements, social organizations, identities and cultural norms. That is why Women’s and Gender Studies now link women’s issues and gender expectations (Miss G).

At first, members of the conference were hesitated about the word gender in Women’s Studies, because they think that switching to Gender Studies will demean the value of keeping the word women in the title. However; at the same time; they think that the inclusion of the word gender would lead them to talk about women’s experiences across diverse identities, including but not limited to, those tied to race, class, and sexual orientations. Also the inclusion of the word gender in women’s studies gives the opportunity to, not only women’s experiences but to men’s experiences of gender expectations to be expressed. For that, the conference aimed at promoting or providing a policy that is anti-oppression, and that supports justice, equality, and respect for all people of all genders. Moreover, the conference aimed at building a discipline that hold both
women and men as well in order not to live in a world that is divided into two rival worlds where each of them is trying to prove theories and ideas (Miss G).

The term feminism has many different uses and its meanings are often contested. Among these many uses, the term feminism is used to refer to a historically specific political movement in the US and Europe; the Feminist Movement. At the time of the American Revolution (April 19, 1775-September 3, 1783), American women, just as their European sisters, were clearly oppressed, generally uneducated, and usually had no financial resources of their own. Married women were legally dominated by their husbands and completely dependent upon them, and if they gained an income, they rarely had any control over it. However, middle and upper-class women enjoyed material comfort, but at the same time were confined and restricted by rigid social codes. Besides, women had no political rights, could not run for office, and were not allowed to vote. So many women were satisfied with their unequal status without objection. In contrast, others became increasingly dissatisfied with their continued exclusion and they took an active interest in political life (Magnus Hirschfield Arch).

1820's and 30's was the period when different moral and religious reform movements had earned the attraction of a number of American women. Temperance, education, peace, and abolition were the first social interests to which American female could properly devote themselves. The next years, especially the period before the Civil War (1861-1865), represented the moment when this reform movement flourished and eventually came to include a new struggle for women's suffrage. Temperance was one of the important concerns to women at the time, because alcoholic husbands could spend the entire family
income on drinks and their wives find themselves legally unable to do anything about it. At that time, temperance propaganda made possible the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, establishing the National Prohibition of Alcohol in the USA. However, the organization failed in preventing the drinking of alcohol, but led to an exhaustive production of dangerous, unregulated, and untaxed alcohol, the increased of violence and organized crime, and massive political corruption (Hanson).

Two of the best known abolitionists were the sisters Sarah Moore Grimke (1792-1873) and Angelina Emily Grimke (1805-1879), who were born in South Carolina, and had experienced slavery. After moving to the North in 1838, they had taken the duty to write and speak against it. They were among the American first women to act publicly in social reform movements, they received abuse and ridicule for their abolitionist activity. What made Angelina and her sister Sarah unique within abolitionist circles was neither their oratorical and literary talents nor their energetic commitment to the causes of racial and gender equality, it was their first-hand experience with the institution of slavery and with its daily horrors and injustices. Angelina and Sarah Grimke not only spoke but wrote about slavery and about the rights of women. For instance, Angelina had written an Appeal to the Christian Women of the Southern States (1836) where she called her old friends in Southern Carolina to become active participants in the movement to end slavery. Sarah was a poor public speaker, but in writing she was equal to Angelina. In July 1837, Sarah’s “Letters on the Equality of the Sexes” appeared in the New England Spectator (Berkin).

Another two abolitionists who turned to feminism were Lucretia Mott (1793-1880) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902). Lucretia Mott was U.S. social reformer and
women’s rights advocate. In an age when most women were not expected to think about issues of the day, she had founded Philadelphia’s Female Anti-Slavery Society. In 1848 Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton among others organized the Seneca Falls Convention (Kyles). Elizabeth Cady Stanton is the driving force behind the 1848 convention, and she played a significant role in the women's rights movement. For many years, Stanton was the planner and author of the movement's strategies and documents. During the Civil War, Elizabeth Cady Stanton paid a great attention towards the abolition of slavery, and in 1868 she worked with Susan B. Anthony on the Revolution, a weekly paper. With Anthony, she formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) in 1869, then she became its first president till 1890. Stanton’s famous works could be listed as following, the three volumes of Women Suffrage (18181-6) with Anthony, and the two volumes of The Women’s Bible (1895-1898) in which she declared that the Bible and organization religion denied women their full rights (Patrick).

In contrast, there were a few black women in the abolitionist movement, among them there were Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. Harriet Tubman, who has the basket name of Araminta Ross, was of purely African ancestry and also a runaway slave. In September 1850, Harriet was made an official conductor of the Underground Railroad (UGRR), a secret network of safe houses where runaway slaves could stay on their journey north to freedom, and she helped her first slaves escape to the North. In 1899 she led on fifteen trips of blacks to freedom in the North and Canada, via the Underground Railroad. She was a leader in the abolitionist movement, and during the Civil War, 1861 Tubman enlisted into the Union army as a contraband nurse, in a hospital in Hilton Head, South Carolina where she was a spy for the federal forces as well (“Harriet Tubman”).
In the other side, Sojourner Truth, who was given the name Isabella at birth, was born in (1797), in Hurley, New York. Truth was a Dutch-speaking slave, was enslaved for her first twenty-eight years. It was only when she converted to Christianity that she was given the name of Sojourner Truth, Sojourner because she must travel across the land and show people their sins, and Truth because she must tell the truth to these people. As abolitionist, Isabella had understood the importance of fighting for freedom, and as a women's rights activist, she had gone through additional burdens that white women did not, and made powerful speeches against slavery, and for women's suffrage. 1851 was the year when Truth made her famous speech "Ain't I a Woman" at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio where she proclaimed that "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right-side up again", and where she chastises those who believe that women and blacks are inferior ("Sojourner Truth").

In 1848, organized history's first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York (19 and 20 July 1848) was held. The convention passed a Declaration of Sentiments which was signed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and that reflected the American Declaration of Independence proclaiming: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (US Dec of Ind). The Declaration of Sentiments was a significant document that called for the advancement of women in nineteenth-century America. It was the first pronouncement demanding that women be given the right to vote, and that proposed reforms in all areas of women's lives. The Seneca Falls convention also adopted a set of resolutions, demanding
legal and educational reforms and the end of the sexual double standard. These demands were quickly attacked by clergymen and male journalists all over the country. Only a few men had recognized the importance of the women's cause and support it, among them was the great black abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1818-1865), who welcomed the feminists in his newspaper and appeared as a guest speaker before subsequent women’s rights convention (Gabler-Hover and Sattelmeyer, vol. 1).

The feminist movement passed through three waves or phases. The first wave could be traced from 1848-mid-1920s. The seminal text for this phase was the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions 1848. In this phase, sexuality and reproductive rights were dominant issues, and the focus was on passing the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing social equality regardless of sex. Furthermore in this phase, social and child-labor laws were created, campaigns for legalized birth control started, and the Equal Rights Amendments 1923 were drafted. The seminal text for the second wave feminism was The Feminine Mystique, Betty Fried 1963. White, educated middle class American women joined National Women’s Studies Association, and major USA cities saw large organizations of women’s liberation groups. This phase also saw the passing of equal funding for boys and girls activities in educational settings. Social problems as domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, women in workplace among others were legally and socially recognized. Third wave feminism could be traced in the late 1980s onward. It seeks to challenge the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which according to them, over-emphasize the experiences of upper middle-class white women. Thus, inclusion of women was broader, regardless to their color, sex, age…. Feminist leaders like Gloria Anzaldua, Bell Hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine
Hong Kingston, among others and who were rooted in the second wave feminism, sought a negotiation for a space within the feminist framework for consideration of race-related subjectivities. In this phase, women began to involve into male-dominate cultural arenas (Swardhani W).

Generally known, there has never been a single united feminism, there have been multiple feminisms representing the efforts of women to live into their full humanity in a world shaped by and for the generally larger and more violent male. In this sense, it could be understood that feminism has more than one type and its types could be listed as the following; liberal feminism, cultural feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism and ecofeminism. Liberal feminism sees all people as equal, and sexism as dysfunctional because it deprives society of one-half of its creative work force. It believes that equality between women could only be reached via legal means and social reform and that oppression exists because of their socialization process. Radical feminism sees the oppression of women as fundamental and all other forms of oppression stem from male dominance which its purpose is to obtain psychological ego satisfaction, and strength and self-esteem. However, socialist feminism is distinct from radical feminism in the notion that sex discrimination women faced was the source of all of their oppression. They are more likely to describe oppression based on gender as one piece of the struggle. In other words, they sought to avoid separating feminism from the rest of society. They preferred to integrate their struggle against women's oppression with the struggle against other injustice based on race, class or economic status and work together with men to correct the inequities between men and women (Wibben 101).
Moreover, cultural feminism has meant to be the theory that understands the difference between men and women and believes that this difference is essential in the society. It celebrates women’s special ways, experiences and qualities. It also believes in the importance of men and women relationships and their cultures as well and that the culture discussed before was only about men and it should be balanced by female experiences. Other types of feminism are ecofeminism and conservative feminism (Wibben 101). Besides types of feminism, there are also forms of feminism that could be listed in; white feminism, black feminism and womanism (Aldridge 193). These forms of feminism will be the opening scene in the second chapter.
Notes

1 Some in-text citations are referenced by the title of the work itself and without a page number for the reason that these works do not have neither an author nor a page number.


3 Pluralism: a situation in which people of different social classes, religions, races, etc., are together in a society but continue to have their different traditions and interests. It is also a theory that there are more than one or more than two kinds of ultimate reality, or a theory that reality is composed of a plurality of entities (Merriam-webster.com).

4 I focused on the definition of Feminist, Female, and Feminine as terms. For more definitions of feminism as literary theory see Gill Plain and Susan Sellers: *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism* or Peter Barry’s *An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.*

5 Also translated by Earl Jeffrey Richards and foreword by Natalie Zemon Davis.
6 Someone who is in a hopeless mental condition.
Chapter Two: Feminisms in USA

Feminisms in USA…. The final “s” is added to mean neither the possessive “s” nor the third person “s”, but it is added to mean the plural. More importantly, why in USA? Generally known, The United States of America is a multi-cultural community, i.e. different people are living there with different cultures, beliefs, religions, and identities. It is a society that is composed of white people, black people, among others, and these groups differ from one another, each one of them has its own culture, beliefs, way of thinking, and way of life. Thus, they would be different in their belonging. In other words, each group has the right to join the institution or the school of thought that most fits its interests, thoughts, and beliefs. Feminism, as a school of thought, has its own followers, activists, and participants, and by adding the “s” to the word feminism, one could deduce that there are several types or categories of feminism. Being a feminist is fascinating. However, the challenge is choosing the right path that one must follow. According to the nature of the American society, multi-cultural community, a mixture of white and black people among others, it seems that feminism would have more than one category, there might be white feminism, black feminism... The question that should be raised is do they really differ, is there a real difference between each of these categories and types, do they really have different principles, ideas, issues, or all are the same and all are waving under the flag of one word, feminism. Even more, does feminism, as a word and/or as a school of thought, exist?

It is already discussed that feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that is aiming to apply justice for women and put an end to sexism with
all its forms. It also provides many perspectives on social, cultural, and political phenomena. Its discussed topics of feminist theory and politics were on the body, the self, family, human rights, class and work, race and racism, sex work, and sexuality. Moreover, feminism does not only brings some particular moral and political claims to philosophy and literature, but it also adds new ways of asking and answering questions, i.e. new ways of thinking and analyzing ideas and thoughts. Feminism has many different and maybe conflicting approaches to philosophy and literary criticism. Furthermore, it is not awkward to say that in one type of feminism we could find different arguments and opinions, including the root of problem, the patriarchal system, and men’s domination to women. Besides that, the aim of the struggle is also different from one another, especially in creating a society without oppression and classes. That is why it is important to raise the question of what feminists as a group are committed to and how feminist commitments generate a host of philosophical and literary topics (“Introduction to Feminism Topics”).

African-American, Afro-American Studies, Black Studies, African and Afro-Caribbean Studies are the main components of the academic units that concentrate on the investigation of people of African origins, who were brought from Africa as free people to be slaves in America, in their attachment with the Europeans. Thirty years ago, the Black Studies movements imposed on the Americans to be aware that Blacks would no longer accept the notion of being subordinated and that they would change the American oppressing system (Aldridge3). Since the number of African-American Faculty and administrators is limited in the universities and the number of graduate students is limited too, African-American/Black Studies take the duty to expend the dimensions of knowledge and provide the society with trained professionals who could help developing their
community. Their community have taken the position to fight against the continuous and unlimited attacks on their limited resources.

However people of the academy of African-American/Black Studies are still feeling the intrusion of other external fields, as white institutions of higher learning students, and are complaining and agitating that this intrusion is or will be one the reasons of the African-American/Black Studies failures (Aldridge 5). Moreover, the formation of Black Studies programs ranged from:

Course offerings in various departments having to do with black subjects, courses offered by faculty based on traditional departments, teaching courses under the direction of a coordinator, one or two full-time position assigned to the program with faculty from other departments offering courses under the aegis of Black Studies, some combination of the above and/or faculty holding joint appointments in Black Studies and other disciplines, research appointments in Black Studies and another disciplines, research institutes, centers, or programs, and traditional academic department with a core of full time faculty, chairperson, degree-granting status, tenured positions, and representation on university governance committees (Aldridge 6).

All this demands were reformed in 1978 under three structural types; autonomous programs, interdepartmental programs, and joint-appointment programs. The National Council for Black Studies has declared that departmental format is the preferred and most suitable structure to achieve success in Black Studies programs (Aldridge 6). As a result, in 1981 it provides a curriculum that outlines the key concepts that are supposed to achieve an
effective and comprehensive Black Studies concentration. This curriculum has an introductory course that make up the first level of the studies, a second and third levels that imply an overview on literature, survey courses, current research, and emerging issues.

Now, African-American/Black Studies are providing the criteria and expertise essential for the selection, retention, and career for the mobility of its personal and institutional character of its programs (Aldridge 7). The major and important function and role of African-American/Black Studies is to provide trained professionals to help students who are enrolled in white institutions to join the Black Studies program and be taught in the same level and with the same degree of proficiency (Aldridge 8).

Laying on W. E. B Du Bois wordings “we can only understand the present by continually referring to and studying the past; when any one of the intricate phenomena for our daily life puzzles us; when there arises religious problems, political problems, race problems, we must always remember that while their solution lies in the present, their cause and their explanation lie in the past” (vol. 2), African-American/ Black Studies of the 1970s and 1980s attempted to look for the roots of their problems and tended to find solutions for it. Hence, the results of Black Studies of that period were “the destruction of the myth of the passive acceptance of subjugation by blacks, people of African descent have always been actors attempting to shape their own destiny, documentation of the critical role of collective self-help in laying the foundations for black progress”. More results were “the restoration of the record of ancient and modern contributions of blacks in the development of high technology and in establishing early civilization in North and South America, exploration of the contemporary implications of psychic duality, and explication of the critical role played by women in shaping the black experience” (Stewart 16).
In other words, blacks wanted to make and decide their own destiny and fate, they did not want to be dependent or followers anymore, and they tried to explain and show their role, black men and women, in shaping or building a civilized nation. They also wanted to explore the implicit consequences of psychic duality, i.e. to explore the psychological effects of living in a country that is different from their mother one, and whether they suffered or are suffering from double identity or no. Much more, and depending on Du Bois emphasis on building higher education, Black Studies professionals established a national professional organization and they gave it the name of National Council for Black Studies. This organization represents both, Black Studies scholars/activists and Black Studies administrative units (Stewart 17). In 1984, NCBS declared that the term Africana Studies is best suited the enterprise of Black Studies than African Studies because they thought that the first term, Africana Studies, contributes not only for Africans who are living in USA, but also for all black Africans all over the world, i.e. its describes African-American in the USA, studies of classical African civilizations, postcolonial Africa, and the African diaspora. However, few years later, verity of terms were used describing the enterprise as Afro-American Studies and African-American Studies among others. Black Studies efforts carried out a number of specialized Black Studies journals like Journal of Black Studies, the Western Journal of Black Studies, and New England Journal of Black Studies (Stewart 19).

The right definition for the self and role is fundamental for people’s social reality, and for African Americans, it is as it was, the social reality that is based upon race continue to confront between white dominance and black subordination. In the USA, racism was experienced by all people of the African diaspora, it did not neglect or differentiate between
new born or child, between young or elder, between well-educated or undereducated, between strong or week, between rich or poor, and between white skins to the colored ones (Gordon 165). Racism in America was not gender-specific, and the conceptual references, black as bad, white as good, had touched both African-American men and women. However women out of the African diaspora were seen as black first and as female second. African-American women were suffering from racism as much as African-American men did. They experienced the same degree of sexual exploitation and economic abuse during the period of enslavement. Hence, African-American women have victimized thrice, racism, sexism and economic exploitation (166).

These black women were considered to be females only under these three conditions that made them able to provide profits for their owner as the products of their reproduction. For that reason they were looking for the appropriate identification of their self and for the negative factors that led to their oppression. For the reason that African-American women were thrice oppressed compering to men because of their biological difference, females, they thought of the term feminism or feminists, and they have cited a list of conditions that they have struggled for in the Americas. At the top of this list, there were two important conditions, the ability to control one’s own reproduction and freedom from sexual harassment. The rest of the list contained right to vote, equal pay for equal work, the abolition of racism in the criminal justice system and old age security among others. African-America women’s rebellion during the enslavement era, their devotion, and their fight side by side with men against oppression qualified them to be classified as first feminists (Gordon 167).
Cultures can be described with symbols, and the destruction of any culture could be via its symbols. The meanings behind these symbols are important for cultural understanding and communication, and for the ultimate cultural continuity. Cultures can be described with symbols and symbols by their role can be described with words. Words are the means through which people manipulate their symbols for the definition of the self and role. Thus the choice of words is important because it will determine who we are and what we do, our role in our society. African-American women agreed on the use of the term feminism to describe themselves and their role in the American society. Feminism that is exclusive associated with the reaction of African-American women to demonstrate their unique experience in a community where there is male supremacy and female subordination. The politics of language is a lens that telescopes the way in which people treat each other (Gordon 167). During the apartheid of the American South, African-American women were described by terms or named by words that gave the impression of segregation as Colored Ladies and Negro Women among others. As a consequence, to discuss the topic of feminism or Black Studies, one must pay attention to the importance of the politics of language or words because the appropriate word is the appropriate identity. However the use of the term feminism as a mirror of African-American women’s struggle against racism and sexism was resisted by some of them not because of their misunderstanding of the term, but for not associating it with the social movement that contains not only black women but white women as well which their demands and aims of struggle are not the same. While white women were struggling to be treated equally if comparing to white men, black women were struggling side by side with their men against the oppressor (Gordon 168).
Black Studies programs of the 1950s and 1960s were just a means for black students to claim their objection against the traditional academic isolation of their study from the world. Black women faculty and black women student joined their male peers, their brother in the struggle to establish what is known Africana Studies. To be clear and honest, black women in Black Studies were not against the perspectives of white feminist theory as wrong or invalid, but they wanted to clarify that such feminist theory is inappropriate for Africana women who had never shared the same experience of sexism as the women of dominant group. Moreover, Black students declared that issues of Africana women must be included in Black Studies curriculum in order to be African centered and to remember the egalitarianism of ancient African civilization. Plans for policy and action must contain black women experiences from the time of that civilization to the present problems of racism, sexism, and economic exploitation. Black male scholars, who had dominated Black Studies have taken the duty to be the vocal about this Afrocentricity or African-centeredness within their departments and their network (Gordon 170).

Black students’ objection against the traditional academic isolation of their study from the world and against white students’ privileges as the protection from issues of war and peace, the environment, freedom of speech, and others, had come out with the formalization of a model of a program for Women’s Studies that is a part of Black Studies. In 1960s, the formalized program of Women’s Studies had also come out of another traditional challenge, male-centered university curricular. Women’s Studies are claiming that their program is gender-specific program and cultural-specific program as well, to accept them as females first and second to accept their cultural diversity. Their claim of is an evidence of their higher education that helped in the improvement of the academic
validity of the feminist theory. Some of Women’s Studies programs wanted to pay specific attention to the history of colored women or women of third world women. The debate was whether it is appropriate and worthy for Women’s Studies to address race-specific issues and culture specific issues. Women’s Studies programs have the objective of creating a program that is interested only with black women’s issues of race and culture not with all women’s of color issues, i.e. that program avoids the notion of collective culture (Gordon 173). For that reason, Women’s Studies program represents a direct threat for Black Studies. The newly Women’s Studies program and higher education of its professionals caused a kind of decline of financial Black Studies resources and the decrease of the number of professional university graduates. In the other hand, there were an increased financial support for Women’s Studies, for instance, Bush administration’s special financial support of the 1980s for minority and black students (Gordon 174).

Historically, black women had received more education than their counterparts for that reason they had held equal or better social positions in some educational establishments. Black Women’s contribution to education had helped in the development of Black/Africana Studies. Women like Bertha Maxwell Roddy, Charysee Lawrence-McIntyre, Delores P. Aldridge, Johnella Butler, and Carlene Young among other contributed to the discipline of Black Studies via their leadership and research. This leadership could be noticed via organizations as the NCBS, the African Heritage Studies, and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. They have assisted in bringing into practice the theoretical perspective of Afrocentricity. The history of these women among others could be described as “a struggle for survival, identity, and to protect and support for the family”. With faith, strength, confidence, they tended to
survive and do a lot of precious activities. Through certain characteristics as relationship with self, their families, friends, communities, their relationship with God, the way they dress, the decor of their office, their language, their teaching and research, black women were able to express, define and affirm themselves and their culture as well. Even if the creation of the Black/Africana Studies programs of higher education in the sixties was overdue and the faculty that held many of the early Black/Africana programs was newly graduated, its students were involved in teaching students and the black community about the black history experience, social organization, psychology, science, literature, religion, philosophy, economic, art, music…. Those involved in the development of the program as Alain Locke, Arthur Schomburg, Carter G. Woodson, and others have called for the scholarly activities that would help in creating new knowledge and reveal the truth about historical experiences of black people experiences in an attempt to understand human experience from an Afrocentric world view. This vision would be the linking point between the academy and the community in order to develop the policy and curriculum of the Black/Africana Studies (Gyant 179).

Black feminists worked on to change the name of Black Studies that came into being in the 1960s, in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, to Women’s or Africana Studies. The aims behind that was that they believe the new program of Africana Studies would serve all black women, in and/or out of the African diaspora. Black feminists wanted to create a new curriculum that would be gender-specific and culture-specific program, i.e. black feminists hoped that the new program would address their issues, accept them as females, and respect their cultural differences. Black women out of the African diaspora, especially in USA, had suffered from racism and sexism, and this sufferance and conflicts
were caused by the dominated groups as whites. For that reason, whites and blacks are among the conflicting groups in USA, and as feminists, each one of them has his own beliefs and thoughts to struggle for and aims to reach as well. White feminism is declared to be female-centered and it is about the empowerment of women in the patriarchal society. It concentrates on equality between men and women across the board. Man is the primary enemy in white female points of view because white women did not suffer from racism as black ones, but they were, in a way or in another, oppressed by white men. Black feminism is family-centered, black feminists had a great attachment with their families and their success was due to the continuous support they gained from their families. Moreover, black feminist were not against their men, they had never been against his leadership, i.e. Black/Africana Studies has open doors for black men to be the leader in the mission of the development and growth of its program in areas of theory and policy. Black feminists were not struggling for equality with men, because they already were due to the fact that both were equal in the struggle against the oppressors. The rejection of the term feminism by some of Black/African Studies’ participants was not against white feminist movement but because they, black feminists, thought they have their own agenda that neither movement can take on. Black feminism focuses on the experiences, needs, and desires of women of color (Aldridge 193).

The Civil Rights movement in the sixties has emphasized liberation and marked the first engagement of Africana people in the struggle against racism, and it has also traced the roles of black women which different from their men’s one “…whereby distinct boundaries were established, which separated the roles of women and man. Africana male activists publicly acknowledge expectations that women involved in the movement conform to a
subservient role pattern. This sexist expectation was expressed as women were admonished to manage household needs and breed warriors for the revolution” (Aldridge 193). In addition, Toni Cade stated that “…seemingly mutinous cadres of women getting salty about having to man the telephones or fix the coffee while the men wrote the position and decided on policy” (Cade, qtd.in Aldridge 193).

Black men and women were equal in their struggle against the oppressors, they shared the same experience of racism, sexism, and economic exploitation. They worked together for the development of Black African Studies program and curriculum, and black women were not against black men leadership of the organization. Behind the scenes, however, black men wished if black women stayed at home doing the house work and taking care of their husbands and children. In this way they, black men, thought they would gain more support from their families rather than being involved in the revolution and having a disturbing life in and out. Hence, black men would reduce the value and strength black women have. In this manner black women would suffer from sexism twice, from white community and from their black men. It is argued that black women did not fail in facing the attempts of black men to reduce their strength and in this context, bell hooks argued that “…for a while it drew attention to the dual victimization of black women by racist and sexist oppression, white feminists tended to romanticize female experience rather than discuss the negative impact of oppression”, and for the strength of black women and their resistance, she continued “… when feminists acknowledge in one breath that black women are victimized and in the same breath emphasize their strength, they imply that though black women are oppressed they manage to circumvent the damaging impact by being strong…” (hooks, qtd. in Aldridge 194). For black women ignorance, it is stated that
“Women’s Studies … focused almost exclusively upon the lives of white women. Black Studies, which was much too often male-dominated, also ignored black women…. Because of white women’s racism and black men’s sexism, there was no room in either area for a serious consideration of the lives of black women” (qtd. in Aldridge 194).

The debate was over accepting the concept of feminism or rejecting it. Some of the black women in the 1970s have accepted it for the fact that it is the only way to ensure membership, prestige, high visibility, job and publication via that powerful, visible community of academic women, and also because of the absence of an alternative and suitable framework for their individual needs. Some Africana women rejected it and reassessed the historical realities and the agenda for the modern feminist movement. For that reason they, black women who rejected feminism, experienced some unsuccessful attempts to silence them as not being referred to by scholars and not being invited to participate in some of their conferences. Julia Hare justified her rejection to feminism in her work *Black Issues in Higher Education* (1993) by the following words “Women who are calling themselves Black feminists need another word that describes what their concerns are. Black Feminism is not a word that describes the plight of Black women. The white race has a woman problem because the women were oppressed. Black people have a man and woman problem because Black men are as oppressed as their women” (qtd in Hudson-Weems 206). It seems that when Julia Hare wrote these words did not recognize that another word was already put in the public arena, womanism/Africana womanism. Clenora Hudson-Weems had already presented this name at national conferences, such as the NCBS in March 1986 and 1988, the African Heritage Studies Association in 1988, and the 1987 and 1988 Women Studies Association. These presentations were later grouped in one work
“Critical and Agenda Conflicts in Academia: Critical Issues in Africana Women's Studies” that was reprinted in *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993). Female empowerment when they came to the United States in the seventeenth century was the first priority for black females rather than race and most of them did not consider themselves to be feminists. Betinna Aptheker, a white feminist, stated:

> When we place women at the center of our thinking, we are going about the business of creating a historical and cultural matrix from which women may claim autonomy and independence over their own lives. For women of color, such autonomy cannot be achieved in conditions of racial oppression and cultural genocide. In short, feminist, in the modern sense, means the empowerment of women. For women of color, such an equality, such an empowerment, cannot take place unless the communities in which they live can successfully establish their own racial and cultural integrity (Aptheker, qtd. in Hudson-Weems 206).

This does not mean that race or gender issues are not important for Africana women, however dealing with gender biases does not mean being dependent or reliable on feminism as the only way to address them. Besides, the feminist has no exclusivity on gender issues. In fact, Africana people are more concerned with the historical reality and the centrality of the family for the security of the future generations, and they believe that this could only done through Womanism or Africana Womanism paradigm (Hudson-Weems 207).

Africana Womanism is a term that was coined by Clenora Hudson-Weems in 1987 in the previous mentioned presentations and works. It is related to all women of African descent, its main object is to make Africana women able to decide and create their own area
of asserting their realities in thought and in action. The first word, Africana, refers to
women’s ethnic background and their cultural identity. The second term, womanism, calls
back the rich legacy of African womanhood as Sojourner Truth's powerful
speech “Ain’t I a Woman” in which she battles with the dominant alienating forces as an
Africana woman. Clenora Hudson-Weems does not want Africana Womanism to be
confused with Alice Walker’s Womenism, in her collection of essays *In Search of Our
Mothers’ Gardens* where she defines a womanist to be: “A black feminist or feminist of
color . . . who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers
women's culture . . . [and who] sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or no
sexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. . .
Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender” (Walker, qtd. in. Hudson-Weems 211). The
theory of Womanism is committed to the survival and wholeness of all people, including
men as well. Indeed, Black Feminism, that is female-centered, is still derivative of
Feminism. Africana Womanism is concerned with the natural order of life, family and a
complimentary relationship with men and women. Even if Black Feminism has dealt with
the social, political, and educational struggle of African-American women in the United
States, it failed in the process of address all the global issues that women in the African
Diaspora are dealing with (Hudson-Weems 211).

The significant presence of Africana women scholars in the academy of Africana
Studies has increased written researches about them and it gave Africana men the chance to
write about Africana women from their own perspective in a way that would decrease or
minimize their importance, and that would cause Africana women’s absence in Africana
Studies curriculum. This, then would prevent Africana women form publishing, and they
found doors closed on their publishing interests. But in spite of these obstacles, there were, in the seventies and eighties, a rise and institutionalization of both Africana and Women’s Studies. This period witnessed the production of many works as Toni Cade’s *The Black Women* (1970) that focuses on Africana women themselves, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (1972) by Gerda Lerner that examines the experience of women of African descent as different from non-Africana women and Africana men. After that, there was the first anthology by its two African historians, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Sharon Harley, *The Afro-American Women: Struggles and Images* (1978) that is a collection of original essays from a historical perspective. *Ain’t I a Woman?* (1985) is a work by its writer Deborah Grey White that provides new insights on the lives of slave women. Over the last two decades, a dozens of literary books were authored as Mary Helen Washington’s *Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women* (1975), Barbara Christian’s *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition 1892-1976* (1981), Bell Hook’s *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and feminism* (1981), and Gloria Wade-Gayle’s *No Crystal Stair, Vision of Race and Sex in Women’s Fiction* (1984) (196). With all this success, it must be noted that until recently Africana Studies units were administrated and controlled by Africana males who treated Africana women as whites has treated both men and women of African descent (Aldridge 198).

It is argued that black feminist literary criticism has emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, encouraged by the Civil Rights movement and developed by the conjunction of the Second Wave of American Feminism that was dominated by white women and black men. In the late twentieth-century black feminist critics and writers were demanded to make a link between their present-day analysis and that of the eighteenth and nineteenth
centuries as a way to create a sense of continuity between black women’s struggle and critical approach to literature and culture of the past and the present. 1970s was a year that is full of literary products by African American women as Toni Morrison’s *The Blue Eye*, Alice Walker’s novel *The Third Life of Grande Copeland*, Maya Angelou’s memoir *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and Toni Cade’s anthology *The Black Women*. These works highlights the obstacles to realize freedom for African American women, putting special attention on black men physical and psychological oppression of black women (Keizer 155).

The fiction writer and essayist Alice Walker is recognized to be an important figure in black feminist literary criticism. In her essays “In Search of Our Mother Gardens” (1974) and “Looking for Zora” (1975) she invented women to acknowledge the creativity of their female ancestors as a method to recover the work of preceded generations of black women writers. Furthermore, Alice Walker’s “Saving the Life That Is Your Own: the Importance of Models in the Artists Life” (1976) describes her desire to recover earlier black women’s experience (Keizer 155). “A Black Feminist Statement” and “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism” (1977) are two works by their writers Cambahee River’s and Barbara Smith. The first worked as a manifesto of black feminist literary critics while the second one is joined the black feminism’s concerns with the work of literary criticism for the first time. Through the same work, Barbara Smith traces the exclusion of black women fiction, poetry, and drama in American literary critical discourse. She declares that what really distinguishes black feminist fiction is that it contains a literary tradition, i.e. black feminist fiction includes and indicates elements of the traditional life of black women and their political, social, and economic experience. In addition, black feminist critics must look for a link
between writers of the past, as white male literature, and those of the present not for the purpose of imitation or interpretation, but to get inspired and write out of one’s own identity. Deborah McDowell, in her work “New Direction for Black Literary Criticism”, responded on Smith’s belief that black women critic must write about women, and she argues that black critic has right to analyze literary works, not only those written by black women (Keizer 156).

*Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition* (1980) by Barbara Christian is a literary work that confirms the existence of an African American women’s literary tradition, agreeing with Smith’s view. Its first section is a historical background of the American literary and cultural stereotype of black women, and it shows the reaction of the nineteenth-century African American black writers toward these stereotypes. In the second section, Christian explains the different ways in which Alice Walker, Paul Marshall, and Toni Morison created characters that explore the different challenges that African American and Caribbean women has gone through both, in the past and in the present (Keizer 157). Barbara Christian’s work *Black Women Novelists* was later challenged by later works of black feminist literary analysis as Hazel Carby’s *Reconstructing Womanhood: the Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987), where she criticized the notion of Smith, McDowell and Christian, and she claimed her own materialist approach to black women’s narratives and novels of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Reconstructing Womanhood* rejected the idea of tradition and calls attention to a theoretical and historical questions of a tradition of black women’s writings (Keizer 158).
In the 1980s and 1990s Hortense Spillers, Claudia Tate, Mae Henderson, Nellie Mackey, Bell Hooks, Audre Lorde, Valerie Smith, Frances. Smith Fosters, Carole Boyce. Davies, Mary Helen Washington, among others has published many essays in which they enlarged the field of African-American literary criticism and explored issues as sexuality, intergenerational co-operation and conflicts, the influence of African culture on African-American literature. From a feminist viewpoint Hortense Spillers’ *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* emphasized on the existence of a relationship between psychoanalysis and African American literature and culture and has explored whether the Freudian and Lacanian could be applied on African American literature. “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book”, “The Permanent Obliquity of An In (pha) lliby Straight: In the Time of the Daughters and Fathers”, “All the Things You Could be By Now”, If Sigmund Freud’s Wife Was Your Mother: Psychoanalysis and Race” Spillers’ are her most influential essays in which she concluded that psychoanalysis could only be applied on African American literature and culture in case where American slavery caused sufferance for African American families (158). Many had challenged Spillers’ idea and created psychoanalytic readings of African American literature as Claudia Tate’s *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race*, Mae Henderson “Toni Morison’s Beloved: Re-Membering the Body as Historical Text” (159). Sylvia Wynter and Carole Boyce Davies’s literary representation of African women of the Caribbean and those whose identities are constructed through the process of traveling between US, the Caribbean and the Europeans metropoles has helped in creating African-diaspora Studies (Keizer 160).
And the debate continuous…. Sometimes the debate is about the definition of the word feminism itself, as the writer Rebeca West stated in 1913 “I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or prostitute” (qtd. in Walter 1), and sometimes on the name of the field of the Black studies, i.e. whether to name it Black Studies, Women’s Studies, Africana Studies, or Africana Womanism. Moreover, the debate was over accepting or rejecting feminism itself as a term or theory, because in England for example it was until the 1960s that only women who were fighting for women’s rights were called themselves feminists (Walters 3). Importantly, the debate was not only about naming the field of black women’s studies, it was about its program and curriculum that would help black women to describe their thoughts, needs, experiences, and interests. Baby Girl (2007) is the first novel for its black writer Lenora Adams is a contemporary work that addresses black women lives and issues according to the new circumstances of contemporary America. Through its analysis, maybe we will deduce which path or direction, it is following, or in which category it could be classified, Black feminism, Womanism, Africana Womanism or none of them.
Notes

1 Multicultural: adj: relating to or containing several cultural or ethnic groups within a society (Oxford dictionary).

Adj: relating to or including many different cultures (Merriam-webster.com)
Chapter Three: Black feminism in Baby Girl

Lenora Adams was a television news reporter in Lancaster/Harrisburg/York, Pennsylvania, but now she is a stayed at home mother. She volunteers at elementary school where her three children are studying, and sometimes she volunteers at a high school in Charlotte, North Carolina. Baby Girl is her first novel. Its cover photo is an image of a black, young girl who has a curly hair with some flowers of different colors on it, and who is putting a kind of big and circled earrings. In addition the girl is wearing a white shirt with long sleeves. From this kind of wearing, it can be deduced that the girl is a simple and modest one, and she is from the middle or working classes who are living in popular districts of the USA. Generally, when we love someone and we want to spoil him/her, we use different words as dear, honey, sweetheart, baby… the author has chosen to entitle her first novel by Baby Girl for the fact that the boyfriend of her essential character used to call her baby girl.

The novel is a three letters, the first one is from a teenage girl whose name is Sheree, sometimes referred to as Ree Ree, to her mother explaining what happened and why she had left and gone away. The second one is a reply from Sheree’s mother to her, and the last one is from Sheree to her son to read it when he will grow up. Hence the novel is too long to be minimized and explained in twenty or thirty pages, and the two remaining letters contain some repeated ideas, thoughts, and concepts. For that reason I have only concentrated on the first letter because it is the longest one, and it contains the elements that my dissertation is tending to claim, and it also answers the questions that are raised mainly the difference between black feminism and the white one. “Dear moms, I know you are
probably wondering where I am and why I left” (Adams 1). The letter is sent from The Northeast of the United States of America, Pennsylvania, exactly from Milagro House “The first question is easy I’m still in Pennsylvania, but several miles away in a small town called Lancaster. I’m staying at a place called Milagro House, which is kind of like a long-term shelter for teenage girls and women” (1). Sheree is urging and begging her mother not to come because she needs to be free and alone, she needs some space to think deeply about her previous and coming life “but please don’t come here. Right now I need my space” (1). Sheree is blaming herself for not learning from her mother’s experiences and also her mother for not helping her “All these years I had fooled myself into thinking you could rescue me, but you hadn’t saved yourself yet. Perhaps as I write this letter we’ll both figure out the deeper reason why, why my path is so similar to yours, why I didn’t learn lessons from the past. So to help me and you learn” (2). After these strong words and sad voice, Sheree starts narrating her own experiences and life journey from the beginning of the summer season. At the beginning of the letter, Sheree feels disappointed and she blames her mother for not helping her to make her life different, not like her mother’s one, because she does not want to live the same experiences that her mother did, she does not want to repeat the same mistakes and faults that her mother had committed. However, after some lines, Sheree reminds her about the moral lessons that she gave her when she was a kid and the first thing that she begins with was her travel with her best friend Angela, Ange, to Philadelphia where their car was broken and they stayed at Raheem’s house, Ange’s boyfriend, waiting for Ange’s father to come and take them home. When Ange lied on her father about the real reason behind her car damage, Sheree informs her mother that she never lied on her and reminded her about her own words, “Don’t lie on me, Sheree. I hate liars, and I hate sneaky people too”, “When I was a kid, the penalty for layin’ was a beatin’.
Now I suspect you don’t have the energy to all that, ‘cause now you threaten to throw me out of the house. And I know you ain’t playin’, either. If you caught me in a lie, you would straight-up kick me out. So I don’t lie to you; there’s no point” (7). Sheree’s mother is a single mother, and like all mothers, she wanted to give her a good breeding.

As the cover photo has already indicated that Sheree’s social standing was not that much, she was from the middle or working classes, that is why she is complaining about the street where she lived and her mother’s working place:

I started playing my wishing game. I wished no one would be hangin out on the corner, I wished the houses were bigger, farther apart, and surrounded by more grass. I wished there wasn’t any trash on the street or sidewalks. I wished my neighborhood looked more like Ange’s (12). Before I shut the front door, I checked for your keys. They were in their usual spot on the front room table. Since Regal’s was still open, I was surprised you were already home. […] After all these years, I still haven’t figure out why it’s even called Regal’s. The darkness, the musty smell, the stained wooden floor, the ripped watermelon-colored bar stools, the plastic glasses-nothing about the place or the people who go there is regal (13).

In contrast, when Sheree was a little girl, her point of view was different “When I was a little girl, I thought the place was da bomb. I used to love it when you took me there” (13). Now Sheree is complaining about her house street and mother’s work place, but when she was a little girl, she was admiring her mother’s work and the way she was dressed to the point that she wanted to be like her, “[…] my eyes were glued to the way the men talked to and touched you” (14). In a series of similes, she continued:
You know how every little girl thinks her moms is the prettiest? Well that’s what I thought about you. Still do. I remember how you used to always wear your black catsuit. Remember? You’d wear the skintight black zip-up spandex suit, with riding boots and a black riding hat. The zipper would be pulled just so it covers south of the border. Depending on how you moved, anyone could catch a glimpse of the side of your breast. I especially loved how you would cock your hat to the side and look like you were goin’ to your next riding lesson. […] That was one of my favorite outfits. And the guys at Regal’s? Even the married ones loved it too. […] It was on one of those days, sitting on the bar and watching how men were captivated by you, that I decided to be just like you (15). I wanted to dress like you. I wanted to sound like you. I wanted to look like you. I wanted men to look at me with begging eyes, the way they did you. I wanted to be like you so bad that I took to copying you (16).

What is more interesting is that whether Sheree has the right to blame her mother for not helping her to make her life different, or it was her decision and choice from childhood? After that Sheree continues to express her admiration to her mother and her way of life:

At home I often practiced how you smoked. I’d take out a Newport that I stole fresh from your purse, pretend to look around for the right person to light it. Once I caught this eye, I’d give him a soft half smile, showing more lips than teeth. When it was lit, I’d inhale, then I would tap my pretend airbrushed nails on the bar, in this case the kitchen table, and slowly blow the smoke out of my slightly upturned, partially closed lips (16).
It could be said that Sheree wants to be like her mother, to be wanted and desired by men, because she thought it was the only way to be alive, to prove her existence and role in the society that should meet the needs of men who are living with. Then Sheree goes on to express another desire that is totally different from what she had already said, “But that was back in the day. A child’s game. I’ve since outgrown tryin’ to be like you. Heck, I inherited your body. So now, I don’t want to be like anybody but me, whoever I am” (16). Parents are the model for their children. At first, Sheree wanted to walk on her mother’s footsteps, to be like her, but when Sheree grows up, and she has inherited her mother’s body, she wants to be herself, and no one else, with all its faults and mistakes. She wants to choose her own path that is not like her mother’s one, and to take responsibility of her own decisions and choices.

One of the reasons why Sheree does not want to be like her mother is her mother’s own way of life:

On that night, after Ange’s car situation in Point Breeze, I was getting tired, so I went upstairs. Your door was shut. Stealthly, I placed my hand on the knob and carefully tried to twist it. It was locked. I wondered who you had in there. Knowing not to bother you when you had company, I went to my own bedroom, where I locked my own door. Nothing is worse than having some drunken or highed-up fool “accidentally” walkin’ into my bedroom. Remember how one of your friends used to do that? (17).

She continues, “That old cat named Marcellus used to walk in all of the time. Between you and me, I know he did it on purpose. He would try to catch me just as I got up out of the bathtub and was in my room. Or he’d just walk into the bathroom while I was peein’. [...] I
could be dead sleep, hear that sound, and be fully alert. I’d always say the same thing loudly: “Mr. Marcellus, Mom’s room is the next door”” (17). Sheree is again criticizing her mother’s way of life and how the existence of a man is important in her life. Moreover, Sheree does not accept the notion of being owned by man for the lack of money:

Yeah, there was somethin’ about that Marcellus I just did not trust. Thank god you didn’t keep him around too long. Every once in a while, mostly when you were broke, you’d get back with him. Oh, how I hated when money was tight. Marcellus had a job at the post office sorting mail or something like that. You always bragged about how it was a good job with good benifits. As a kid I’d think it wouldn’t be that good or he’d be outside delivering it. Moms, I used to try real hard to get you to forget about him. But when the bills were deep and money was hard to come by, you always banked on Marecellus. The fool was always open (18).

Sheree is disappointed about her mother’s life instability and her several relationships with men, for that reason she refuses the idea of being like her “Your next boyfriend, Dayday, was cute” (17). This time however, Sheree is comfortable with her mother’s new boyfriend “Out of all of them, I liked him the best. It wasn’t just because he put locks on all of the doors. He was cool too. But the locks? Yeah, that was the move, right there! Just by pushing a little knob in, I was finally able to sleep uninterrupted each night. And I was able to lock the bathroom door too. No more keeping my guard up. I finally got privacy” (18). And she continues her description toward her mother’s new relationship “When Kevin was around, we were like a family. We did things like most families do. We went to the movies and out to dinner, took pictures at the mall together, and went to Chuck E. Cheese. You
named it, we did it. I can honestly say you loved him and it wasn’t about payin’ bills” (18). Few lines later, Sheree expresses her grandmother’s feelings towards Kevin, “Stacey, there’s something about him that ain’t quite right. I can’t put my finger on it, but I feel it in my bones” (20). Sheree’s grandmother’s feeling was right, and the important reason why Sheree did not want to be like her mother:

It was on Saturday, cleaning day. I was upstairs changing into another shirt when Kevin silently walked into my room. I turned around, saw him, and froze. No, not again, I thought! We’d been here before. He no longer had to play the tickle game, or find the dollar, or any of his stupid games. I just wanted it to be fast and over with so I turned back around and waited. I prayed to God, please don’t make him make me touch his ding-a-ling, don’t let him jam his tongue into my mouth. From behind, he roughly grabbed my right tittie. […] As Kevin dropped to his knees, his large calloused hands began rubbing on the dots on my titties. The lead singer, Marques Houston, was staring back at me. Kevin pulled me closer. It’s strange, but instead of paying attention to Kevin, I remember thinking, I want to marry Marques. Then Kevin made some type of sound. I did too. […] In my mind I hated what Kevin was doing (22).

Sheree continues her description of the hard and aggressive situation that she was getting through with some rude words:

But my body? My body was just flustered. My blood was racing. And. […] and, […] my coochie felt […] my coochie felt! My coochie didn’t used to feel. It was a coochie. It was for peein’. When Kevin touched me, my
coochie felt hot. And my panties? They started stickin’ to me. I thought I had peed my pants. Kevin kept rubbing my titties and breathing real hard.

“Aah… you are so beautiful”. In my mind, I ordered Marques to look away!

Just as Kevin was fumbling with the button of my shorts […] I turned back to God in prayer, *Please don’t let him put his fingers in my coochie...* (23).

And the surprise occurred... “and then you saved me. However, I didn’t want you to see me like that” (23). “The expression on your face quickly changed from shock to rage. I’ve heard you cuss a thousand times, but not as angrily as you did that day. You bombarded Kevin with a slew of curse words. You slapped and punched him” (23). Sheree was blamed for being grown up, as if it was her fault “You need to stop bein’ so fresh. Your damn body’s growing like wildflowers! Keep it covered!” (24). Wildflower is a name that Sheree’s relatives used to describe things and attitudes because of:

Once I overheard my Mom Mom talking to you in the kitchen, warning you that if you didn’t bring me up better, I’d be like a wildflower. At the time, I didn’t understand Mom Mom’s meaning. But as I got older and began helping her prune her flower beds, the subtle message grew on me.

Wildflowers can be hard to control. Despite the environment, water, and soil quality, the flowers can take on the life of their own, growing freely. Perhaps that’s why Mom Mom, her mother, and her mother’s mother were all container gardeners. Although by nature they had green thumbs, to them there was something unnatural about seeing a field of blossom. No, they preferred their flowers to be carefully surrounded by mulch and other types of beddings, always growing under their control (25).
It is obvious that the word wildflowers is used as a metaphor to refer to children and their raising. Sheree’s grandmother advises Sheree’s mother to control her daughter from childhood in order not to have problems when she grows up, especially when the father’s power, strength and wisdom is missed. However, sometimes things went wrong and out of control even with advice and moral lessons. For instance, Sheree tried for not being like her mother but unfortunately:

Damon. My man. You’ve never heard me call him my boyfriend. He’s too old to be called that. He doesn’t call me girlfriend, either, sometimes shorty, but mostly baby girl. I love it when he calls me that. He knows it too. Somethin’ about the way Damon says it in his deep voice, drawing out the L in girl that makes me feel so good inside. What’s up Damon, I asked while tryin’ to find his eyes behind his dark shades. You, baby girl. He lightly smiled. I knew what he wanted and he had me. [...] There would be no more conversation. His message was understood. [...] I knew, you were probably at Regal’s, so Damon and I would have the place to ourselves. [...] When we were done I made him a sandwich. [...] He ate it and got up to leave (39).

The conversation continues to show the reality beyond Damon and Sheree’s relationship, “putting’ some sexiness in my tone, I asked him to stay and watch some TV” (39). Damon’s reply was “I promised Bird I’d catch up with him” (39). “[...] and crossed my arms. Damon knew what I wanted. [...] I gotta catch up with Bird. I’ll call you later tonight. Look, here’s some money. It’s all I got right now. [...] A small smile crept across my face. The four Andrew Jackson’s were better than nothin’” (40). “Damon put some better in his voice. [...] Where you gonna be at later? [...] I don’t know. Why? Cause I got
some things to take care right quick. I’m a stop by around nine. Be home. Put that pink thing you have” (63). Moreover, “As usual, I was expected to listen and do….Like a fool, I thought he might want to hang out with me, go somewhere, and do something other than that” (63).

The previous quotes has dealt with Sheree’s and her mother’s experiences. From one side, Sheree wanted to be like her mother and to walk on her footsteps, and from another side Sheree refused to be like her, she criticized her work place, her behaviors, her multitude relationships; bringing home men all throughout her childhood. Sheree’s mother had given her a failed moral lessons, and she was the first one who introduces her to sex and drugs, “Ree Ree, I only smoke bud, weed, ganja, […] no caine, no pills, no acid. Weed is all. Stay away from that other stuff. You hear me […] that other stuff is no joke” (55).

From a psychological perspective that Hortense Spillers was calling for, that psychoanalysis could be applied on people of African descent who had suffered from racism, segregation and discrimination (Keizer 158). Relying on Spillers’ idea of psychoanalysis, it could said that Sheree refuses to be as her mother due to the failed experiences that she had gone through, sexual abuse from one of her mother’s boyfriend, Kevin, at a very young age, mistreatment from her own boyfriend, Damon, her relationship with him for the sake of money; being with the wrong man for money. Another psychological feature of Adams’ fiction is seen through using a simple style and everyday language which made it more realistic, Adams has integrated the concept of women’s experiences and the inclusion of women’s tradition, culture, needs, and desires in black fiction that black feminism was calling for (Aldridge 193). Moreover, Adams has used this kind of language, everyday or streets’ language, to show how the black language is
different from the white one that is more academic and sophisticated one. So the use of this language is to confirm the difference between the black and the white writings.

Furthermore, and through Sheree, Adams goes deeper in analyzing the American society according to the new circumstances. Bringing up the past is not easy as Sheree declares “A few days have passed since I started this letter. Bringing up the past isn’t easy, but it’s necessary, to get to my truth and to help explain why I am in this situation” (Adams 26). Sheree is going back to Ange’s life and adventures. Once again Sheree went to Point breeze with Ange to see her boyfriend Raheem whom she did not meet since the incident night. In the following lines, Sheree is describing Ange’s house with words that indicate the social differences between them, “Each time I returned from Ange’s house, you always asked for a description, wanting to know what was inside these rich people’s mansions in Lower Merion” (27). Then she continues “The old three-story traditional home made of stone had large double windows, windows boxes full of colorful flowers that you and Mom would have loved. There was also a small balcony, two front doors, a stone patio, and a swimming pool” (27). “As nice as the outside of the house was, it did not compare to what was inside. All of the furniture was dark and heavy-looking. I know that sounds ugly, but as I told you before, actually it was very beautiful” (27). “Thanks to Eleanor, the housekeeper, the Rinaldi house was clean. It was also well lived in. No one put anything away. Eleanor did it all” (27). Ange is also passing through the same experiences as Sheree’s one, sex, drugs, “[…] she was horny. Obviously horny. Horny to the point where she was even making me uncomfortable, […] Raheem handles his bidness […] their beats were bumpin’ against the noise upstairs” (30). Ange’s boyfriend was using her for the money as Damon did, “He never has any money. […] But she’s given him enough. I keep
schoolin Ange’s tellin’ her to stop diggin’ in her pocketbook. But she just laughs at me, saying it’s only money, it’s not big deal” (31). Then “Raheem is twenty years old, out of high school, without a job, which means no money. He doesn’t even regularly sell street medicine. Every now and again he sell some weed […] what Raheem has goin’ for him is that he’s fine […] he puts the F in fine but he’s broke. Empty pockets never beat fine” (31). “We were still smokin’ when Ange knocked on the screen door. You knew she got on too, so you offered her a hit. […] Isabela knew Ange smoked weed, but she wouldn’t let her smoke it in the house” (52). Ange is a supporting character for Sheree. Even if she is white and rich, she and her parents has never been complicated of having contacts and relations with black people, “I like black guys! I like the way their skin feels. I love their lips and the way they kiss. I love how they talk to me, taking control.” (34), “Although, I don’t think Mr. Rinaldi is prejudiced, after all, they have a black housekeeper, he just doesn’t approve his princess black boyfriend. […] Isabela doesn’t seem to mind. She lets Ange do whatever she wants” (34). “In school, people are always askin’ me why Ange likes black guys” (34). Sheree continues, “Ange is different from the girls around here. She’s not a hater. She could care less that my boobs are bigger than hers are […] she doesn’t try to compete, so I don’t. She let’s me be me” (37).

Another feature that Lenora Adams is dealing with through the previous and next quotes is challenging the old white vision or viewpoint toward the blacks and that was one of the main principles that black feminism tending to reach, challenging the stereotype of white community towards the black one as they are always the non-civilized, problem creators, drug dealers…. In the 1970, the Black Studies movement has taken the duty to
change the notion of black subordination, and the American oppressing system (Aldridge 3):

A few of the cool kids who knew how to party came. Moms, it means that the house was full of mostly white folks, and me, Raheem, Russell, and Damon added the color. One thing I learned from hangin’ with Ange’s white people know how to party too. But it’s different from ours. Loud music but no dancin’. They have beer, some hard liquors maybe, and lots of drugs. People think only black people do drugs. I guess it’s cause we are the only ones paraded on the TV news getting caught sellin’. And some of us use too. But for real these antidrug messages are twisted. From what I’ve seen with my own eyes, nobody black’s doin’ all that stuff. Ecstasy, angel dust, whippits, no way. Can’t afford it! Ain’t no rich daddies in the hood. We smoke weed, that’s it, and it’s cheap (Adams 66).

Sheree is again reminding her mother of the moral lessons that she had once gave her, “Good thing you gave me the drug talk long ago, because if I didn’t watch out, I could get caught up at a party like Ange’s” (66), and also of the social status of her friend Ange, their deep relationship, and the way they treated each other even with their racial, social and economic differences, “Damon even stayed at Ange’s for a while with me. […] Giving him a tour as if it were my own, I showed Damon, Ange’s house. He was impressed. Started talking big. Talking about how he’s gonna buy a forty-two-inch plasma TV too. And also have his whole house wired for music and computers” (67). “Using some of the money Damon gave me, I paid the bill at Bella Italia. Ange and I usually take turns treating. When I got money, it’s Ange’s. If she needs it, it’s hers” (68), “I told you how deep Ange’s
pocket are, and she really is quite generous, but I refused to take advantage of my friend. Raheem already does enough of that” (68).

Unfortunately, without any previous decision, and with naive ignorance of her mother’s moral lessons, Sheree has gone through the same experiences as her mother’s ones. She has several relationships with men, Timmy, Austin, Damon, “Yeah, you taught me that one back in the middle school. I was in the sixth grade and had been goin’ with Timmy who was in the eighth. He was my first. After he got it a couple of times, he quit me. My first one, my first heartbreak” (75). “[…] I threw myself onto your bed, burying my face on your pillow, cryin’ and screamin’. Why? Why? Why?” (77).

Later on, she moves on to show that her relation with Damon was only for desires and money:

At eleven fifteen someone knocked on the door. It was Damon. I shouldn’t have answered it. It would’ve served him! But I couldn’t ignore him more than I could ignore my own desires […] when we were done, I played the pretend game. […] I pretended we’re grown and married. We are deeply in love and have two kids. […] Once I shared this with Damon, he said, I don’t want no more kids, Sheree. He had already two kids (69). […] Thank God, neither their mamas lives in Ardmore. The only time Damon sees the boys is when their moms take them to visit Damon’s mom, Ms. Joyce. Okay, so no kids. But Damon never said no to getting married. He just laughed at that part (70). […] You know why I really didn’t play pretend with Damon no more, though? Sometimes I wondered if I was his game. Was he pretending with me, too?! He never said he loved me. I guess I didn’t really expect him
to say that anyway. That was not exactly his style. But sometimes I felt like deep down he probably did. He was there, right? He came over. He gave me money. He was nice to me, you, and my friends. Is that love? (71)

In fact Sheree’s mother is a bar worker and the kind of women with a lot of relations, but she tries to be besides her daughter especially because she is a single mother. Sheree is aware of that, each time she got in troubles, she reminds her mother’s moral lessons.

Ree Ree, I don’t want to see you cryin’ over no boys! Since the beginning of time, that’s what boys have done. They chase you, talk that sweet stuff, get some, get bored, and move on. If you’re smart, you don’t give them your heat, ‘cause they never give theirs. Never care more for them than they do for you. Always keep something for yourself. And that something has to be your heart. If you do that, you’ll never want to cry again. But maybe, just maybe, if you handle them right, they’ll cry for you (78). […] So, with your lessons learned, I didn’t fret about Damon’s mystery chick. As long as I continue to get some of what I wanted, it was all good. I went upstairs, locked my door, and went to sleep. I didn’t hear you come home. The next morning your door was open, and your bed untouched. It was obvious you didn’t come home. I wondered where you were. But I have awakened to your absence enough times to know not to be concerned. Eventually, you would present yourself. Time flew by and still no you. At about three o’clock, I started to worry. The first person I called was Candy. […] But Candy was the one to tell me that you were in jail. […] At home I began searching the house for more money. I had no idea how your bail would be
(79). […] For a moment I thought of calling Mom Mom. She’d have some money; only, you wouldn’t want to repay that debt. This would just be another thing Mom Mom would hold over your head. So I didn’t call her. And I’d definitely didn’t call Roc. Even though he was my dad, you wouldn’t want him in your bidness either (81).

Sometimes Sheree finds herself obliged to take double role, or to switch role. Even her mother moral lessons to her, it seems that her mother is not mature enough, and she needed to be advised. In this case, the absence of the father led Sheree to be in a way or another self-raised:

Damon was the only person left. I hit him on his cell. […] Later that night, Damon dropped by and gave me three hundred-dollar bills. […] But I didn’t even sweet him. In my mind I knew that whoever this chick was, she wasn’t all that if Damon was still giving me the Benjamin’s. If I’d never learned anything else, one of your early lessons I immediately understood. Nothing is for free. Like everything else in life, Damon’s gift came with a price. I paid on my knees (82).

Ange’s parents are alive, she has passed through the same experiences that Sheree had gone through, sex, drugs…

Sheree, we have to make a stop first. Ange said when I shut the car door. Okay, where? Drugstore, I’m late. My eyes got all big […] How late? Three weeks (85). […] I think I need to take a test. We bought the test, the type of
two kits in case we made a mistake. Since there were no public bathrooms, in the drugstore, Ange had to do it in Raheem’s house. No mistaking, one test was enough. The blue line showed in a matter of seconds. Meantime, Ange’s problem still not solved. […] She had a serious dilemma. She didn’t want to have a baby, but she was scared to get an abortion. Turning the radio, I said, Ange, I had an abortion before (86). […] But I was twelve years old. Young and stupid. I actually believed that you couldn’t be pregnant your first time doin’ it. Duh! Yeah, I know, Moms, you told me otherwise. But I was young, so I believe him. Well, I did it. Did it a couple of times, too. And yes, I got pregnant (95).

She continues her story of getting pregnant and doing abortion, and her mother tries to be beside her as a kind of support for her best friend Ange:

I told Ange how you quired out, calling me some of the names my old girlfriends did. It stung more when you said it, though. But you solved my problem. Taking me to the clinic. Two days later, walking through the right-to-lifers, who chanted baby killers (how they know what I was there for? we entered the clinic and got it done (95). Today, the fact that I felt nothing haunts my thoughts. I wondered how I was able to kill a part of me. I often wonder if it was a girl. Or a boy. Or both maybe. Whatever it was, it would have been five years old (96).

Mother and daughter went to the doctor to take another pregnancy test. I guess the one from the drugstore wasn’t considred reliable enough for the doctor. Yeah, she was pregnant. About two months. Two days later, they left
early in the morning- Isabella and Ange- hours before Mr. Rinaldi went to work. Without raising suspicion, they told him they had hair appointments [...] He also didn’t question either of them about their uncut hair looking the same. Or that his princess seemed to be tired and irritable (104). [...] The doctor told me to take it easy for a few days. It’s been three weeks, this is ridiculous. She is driving me crazy. Yeah, well, you know Isabella. [...] She didn’t seem to pay Ange or Tony much attention (105). [...] Sickness brought out the mother in Isabella. Too much mother. Put an s in front of that word and that’s what she did to Ange and Tony, but only when they weren’t feeling well (106).

The precided quotes has explained and demonstrates how Sheree has grown and been mature enough to learn from her own experinces to the point she can share her own secret with Ange and give her some advice. In addition, they explained how Ange got in trouble even with the presence of her parents, and how her mother helped her to get out of that.

Sitting on the on the couch, smoking a cigarette, watching TV, you greeted me, “Roc came by”. His name brightened up my mood. Just like that, I was smiling and happy, forgetting about our argument. [...] The look on your face told me that my happiness was hurting you. It a look I’ve seen before, every time you mentioned Roc (99). [...] Smatshing the cigarette into the ashtray, you gave your side. He heard about what happened at Ragal’s and he started talking that stuf, like he’s runnin’ thangs. I told him he don’t pay any bills up in here. So he ain’t got shit to say about how I act. [...] Couldn’t you have kept your mouth shut? Just for me ? It seems like you
always come between Roc and me. I don’t get it. He’s my dad. I know y’ all still got beef, but can’t you squash it for me? He only lives one town over, but our visits, if you can call them that, are far and wide (100). […] Oh, Ree Ree, I told him to come by tomorrow morning after I live for work. […] The next morning, I was showered and dressed for six. […] I wanted to look good for Roc. […] Still, no Roc. It was the same thing happening to me again. Roc making empty promises (101). […] Is this what fathers do? […] I wasted the day waiting for him. A part of me wanted to call him up and curse him out, but I feared doing that would keep him away (104).

Finally, Sheree’s father appeared. However his role was just limited for some visits.

The second letter was from Stacey, Sheree’s mother, back to her. “I wanted you to be smarter than me […] I wanted you to do all of the things I missed out on. I didn’t just miss it out because I had you. But also because I played around in school and was boy crazy. I spent too much time in the streets” (141). “I never realized how most of the Rodneys, Nates, etc, are similar to Roc. I figured if I didn’t give them my heart. […] Never once did I think about how their presence might affect you” (141). “Now when I look at you […] I see how much you are following me. […] My efforts, to lead you to something better have you retracting my steps” (142). “Damon? He’s a young Roc […] Damon can be controlling you, too-telling you what to do, what to wear, meeting only on his terms. […] No, Damon has to go” (142). “You gonna have a baby soon. Do you really want to have it alone in a homeless shelter? I know […] I told you I’d kick you out if you got pregnant. But I never meant it. That was just me talking though. […] My threat was supposed to scare your butt, so you wouldn’t let this happen to you” (143). “Yes. This your home. I know what it’s like to raise
a baby alone. You are not alone. I am here. I’m always going to be here for you. […]  
There’s nothing wrong with wildflowers; they are beautiful. You are beautiful!” (143).  
“[…] they are truly a gift for us. As the years passed, I, too, overlooked God’s gift. […]  
Come back home. We can be gardeners together, raising your rose. A Black Jade, perhaps?  
[…] Between the two of us, I’m sure we’ll find a way to make her or him bloom” (144).  
Stacey ends up her letter with a sad voice that is full of blames and regrets, “[…] IT  
WASN’T YOUR FAULT! […] Bringing Kevin into our home poisoned it. I couldn’t  
forgive myself for allowing him near you. I’m sorry, Ree Ree. It was never your fault”  
(144).  

The last letter is from Sheree to her boy son, Beauford Dianthus Jemison. She sent  
him a letter for the aim of reading it when he will grow up, recounting her pregnancy and  
her delivery, explaining how she came to be at a halfway house. This letter starts with  
“Dear Beauford, it probably seems strange reading an old letter from me. Countless times  
I’ll tell you the story, but I know if I don’t write it down, somehow it’ll be forgotten.  
History was a way of dulling the pain, righting wrongs, and changing facts. I don’t want  
that to happen. What was, is what was. No need to keep secrets, or gloss over. The truth is  
the truth” (147). The rest of the letter, Sheree is informing her son how she left Milagro  
House and went back home, and how her mother, Damon, and Roc reactions were when  
they saw her again after five months absence, and they heard that she is pregnant, “[…] on  
September 24, I agreed to move back home, […] So, Ree Ree, are you going back to school  
on Monday? Moms, I think I’m just gonna get my GED. I missed almost a month of school  
already. […] No Ree Ree, you misunderstood me. You are going to finish school and get  
your diplomat, not your GED” (153). And she continues, “But, Moms, I don’t want to walk
around school pregnant. […] School was the last place I wanted to be” (154). “When I came home, I walked by the courts and I saw Damon and his boyees hangin’ around. […] Damon looked at his boyees for a second. I think he was tryin’ ti figure out how he could avoid conversation with me. […] Finally he looked at me. Sheree, I told you I didn’t want no more kids. I’m not tryin’ to do this again” (158). “Pleading. I went on. But it’s yours and it’s way too late to do anything about it now. On Friday, I’m a find out if it’s a girl. You wanna come with me? […] Friday afternoon, I looked for Damon at the courts and the corner, I checked to see if his car was at his mom’s house. I couldn’t find him or reach him on his cell” (159). “[…]. My ears took quite the beatin’, from a surprise visit from Roc one afternoon on the living room. Sheree, your mom told me about your situation. I don’t know why you got yourself into this. How are you going to raise a baby when you’re still young yourself?” (165). “Yes, Roc the man who gave me life but nothin’ more, was tryin’ to talk to me about responsibility” (166). “Look, Roc, don’t try to play daddy now. It’s seventeen years and five months too late. When I needed you to be one, you weren’t here. Did you ever think that maybe I wouldn’t be in this, in this…SITUATION if you had been a real dad?” (166). However, later on things has been changed, “Roc was coming around the house more. At first, he seemed to be so disappointed in me. That was new to me, considering he never acted like he cared before. As my due date drew nearer, though, Roc’s disappointment seemed to fade. He finally started referring to my situation as the daddy. He seemed to be getting excited, too” (176). “Roc stood up and pointed to the box. This isn’t just any stroller either. […] You can do it with one hand while holding the baby with the other. It’ll be easy for you collapse and fold as you get on the bus” (188). In the following quotes, Sheree explains her delivery day and its process, “[…] February 1. That was my due date. And I was determined to be on time. I wanted to hurry up, drop the load, and then
get back in shape for track season” (192). “[…] February I came and went. I stayed home from school that day because I didn’t want to go into labor or deliver there” (192). “[…] Ooh, your water done broke. It’s time to go to the hospital. I’ll call Candy and Roc” (197). “[…] But my pains were getting faster and stronger. I was scared. […] Aaagh! I wailed as the pain got heavier” (198). “[…] I can’t take it anymore. It hurts too much! I don’t want to do this. I want to go home” (199). “[…] Get this baby out of me. Push Ree Ree. My vagina was burning. It felt hot and on fire. […] holding the breath, I pushed as hard as I could, making sounds that had no meaning. The burning… the stretching” (203). “[…] Two seventeen a.m. Ashy and covered with blood, you and some long cord were in the doctor’s hands” (204). “[…] Look, he is got your chin Roc. He was born at two seventeen, weighing six pounds even, and is seventeen inches” (206). “[…] Yes, for the first few days, of your life you were called Damon by me, D by Moms and Roc. After my conversation with Roc, I realized Moms was right, Damon doesn’t deserve such special honor. […] Beauford is actually Roc’s real name, although few people know that” (220). The last letter and the novel ends up with Sheree’s graduation and some love words for her son, “On June 6, Moms got her wish. I crossed the threshold, turning my tassel, graduating from high school” (222). “[…] Babies don’t give love, they take. They take, quite simply because they need. […] I finally got it. It’s not about me no more. It’s all about you. […] so don’t get me wrong, I love you to death” (222). “[…] You have made me a better person. One who isn’t out partyin’, chasin’ guys no more. […] I want you to learn from my mistakes, because I made a lot of ‘em. […] If I had known back when I was younger what I know now, I would have worked on loving Sheree more. You would have been created in my future, after I knew and loved, really loved, myself first” (223).
From the preceded quotes, explanations, and analysis, Lenora Adams has focused the most on Sheree’s experiences. Her childhood, her first pregnancy, her mother’s relationships, her best friend Ange, her boyfriends, Timmy, Damon, Austin. Moreover, Adams focuses on the concept of racial, social, economic differences between whites and blacks. She also shed the light on some moral lessons that teenagers must pay attention to as sex, drugs, leaving homes to the streets…. The novel has dealt with both social concepts and political ones. In other words, it highlights the importance of women’s experiences on the black fiction which was one of the main issues raised by the black feminists in the 1960s, because it was the concept that differentiate between white feminism and the black one’s concepts and interests. Black feminists of that time wanted to make a gender- specific and culture-specific program that would accept women as females, accept their cultural diversity, their history, and address their issues (Gordon 173). Politically, it has focused on challenging the effects of the oppressing system of the USA. It could be said that the repetitiveness of Sheree’s thoughts, as Sheree thinks about Damon, affects the novel negatively, I find that Adams tends to repeat Sheree’s experiences to show how deep black women and white as well are still suffering from things they were fighting against for ages, as being owned by men for the sake of money, and how the absence of the father would affect child’s personality and raising.
**Conclusion**

Feminism is a doctrine advocating social, political, and economic rights for women equal to those of men. In other words, it is a collection of movements and ideologies aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, cultural, and social rights for women. It is also argued to be a literary doctrine, feminist literary criticism, that offers strategies for analyzing texts to emphasize issues related to gender and sexuality in works written by both men and women, but it is particularly concerned with women’s writings. Moreover, its aim is to promote equality by ensuring the fair representation and treatment of women in texts and classrooms. Extensively, Feminist literary approach examines the experiences of women from all races, classes, and cultures, including, for example, African American, Latina, Asian American, American Indian, lesbian, and Third World subjects among others. Furthermore, In the American scene, it is viewed that there are two types of feminism, Black feminism and White feminism. To highlight the issue of Black Vs White, I have taken *Baby Girl* for its black writer Lenora Adams, as an illustration due to the fact that it concentrates on the issues of black women experience, traditions, and cultures. To extend the topic, my work was divided into three chapters.

The first chapter, Feminism, had relied on academic dictionaries as the Oxford and Cambridge to definition to feminism as a term. The next point was tracing the roots of feminism and its impact on literary theory or criticism. Furthermore, the chapter had also dealt with the feminist movement with its three waves and multiple types. The second chapter which was entitled Feminisms in USA, had investigated the role of education or educational programs in developing women’s community, mainly the black ones. It had
also dealt with the different names of feminism White feminism, Black feminism, Womanism, Africana Womanism, and highlights the different issues and principles that each of them is concerned with. The third and last chapter which had the title of Black Feminism in *Baby Girl*. The chapter had demonstrated how the writer of the mentioned novel had portrayed the black woman in the contemporary USA. Moreover, it had shed lights on women’s experiences, through its character, Sheree. Through the life events and the experiences of the same character, the chapter had investigated the differences between Black feminism, and the Black fiction and the white one. The three chapters had ended up with the conclusion that Black feminism and the Black fiction are different from the white one. This conclusion could be summarized in three main concepts; the inclusion of black women’s experiences, culture, and traditions in the black fiction, challenging the stereotype or the old vision of white community towards the black one, that are the non-civilized, drug dealers, and problem creators, through making a comparison between both communities. The third concept was the use of the everyday language or the streets language as a way or strategy to emphasize that the black fiction and the black writing style is different from the white sophisticated one.
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