

WOMEN ON THE ROAD NARRATING THEIR IDENTITIES

Yolculukta Kimliklerini Anlatan Kadınlar

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ABSTRACT

Many women from different ethnic backgrounds in the United States of America suffer from many inequalities in the male dominated society. Among these ethnic groups, Mexican American women suffer from certain inequalities. Ana Castillo with her work So Far From God (1993), Isabel Allende with her work Paula (1994) and Sandra Cisneros with her work The House on Mango Street (1984) become the voice of these ethnic women. The analysis of their works will reveal the common problems of the women and the suggestions these authors put forth for these problem.

For the analysis of three works, the theories as feminism, ethnicity, identity and narration techniques will be explained. The feminist perspectives, representation of ethnicity, identity of women and narration style in the novels will be analyzed.

Finally, the analysis of three works will reveal the way society restricts women, especially ethnic women and the way women resist this oppression.

Key Words: Identity, Ethnicity, Feminism, Mexican American, Woman

ÖZET

Amerika Birleşik Devletlerindeki birçok farklı etnik gruptan kadın, erkek egemen toplumdaki birçok eşitsizliğe maruz kalırlar. Bu etnik gruplar içerisinde, Meksika asıllı Amerikalı kadınlar seçkin yazarlarca anlatılan bazı eşitsizliklere maruz kalırlar. Ana Castillo So Far From God, Isabel Allende Paula, ve Sandra Cisneros The House On Mango Street eserleriyle bu etnik kadınların sesi olurlar. Eserlerinin analizi kadınların ortak problemlerini ve bu problemler için yazarların sunduğu önerileri ortaya koyacaktır.

Üç eserin analizi için teoriler olarak feminizm, etnisite, kimlik kavramları ve anlatı teknikleri açıklanacaktır. Romanlardaki feminist perspektifler, kadınların etnisite ve kimliklerinin temsili ve anlatı tarzları incelenecektir.

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Sonuç olarak, üç eserin analizi, toplumun kadını, özellikle etnik kadını kısıtlama biçimini ve kadınların bu baskıya karşı direnişini ortaya koyacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kimlik, Etnisite, Feminizm, Meksikalı Amerikalı, Kadın

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is an aesthetic way of expressing feelings, sorrows, past life events of individuals in the world. World with lots of inequalities, problems and disasters disorder the lives of many. Among these many, women become the most suffering ones in the world ruled by patriarchal powers. Women suffer not only for being women but also are put into many disadvantageous situations and positions caused by the patriarchal world. They are put into these disadvantageous positions not just due to their gender but also their identity and ethnicity. These most common reasons which lead to discrimination of women are similar almost in all countries as it is in the United States of America which hosts women from all different ethnic backgrounds of the world. Thus, the women of the world who suffer from similar discrimination voice their problems on many fields and literature is one of the strongest fields in which they voice their ideas, feelings. Among those women who voice their situation, Ana Castillo with her work *So Far From God* (1993), Isabel Allende with her work *Paula* (1994) and Sandra Cisneros with her work *The House on Mango Street* (1984) are important Mexican American, feminist writers. With their ethnic backgrounds and feminist perspective, these authors narrate the common problems of women who suffer from segregation due to their gender, ethnicity, identity, and their physical and psychological journey in such a segregated world. In this context, their way of narrating identities of women who are on the road, on a physical and psychological journey is important for analysis of these three works.

2. THEORIES

2.1 Feminism, Ethnicity and Identity

Firstly, from the point of becoming the voice of the women, the feminist perspective is the basic for the three novels and is required to be explained. Christy Rishoi states that feminist perspective is “to recover and honor the specificity of women experience, and cultural significance by making women’s

voices and stories heard”¹. Rishoi states that there is a need to show the importance of the women, their significance in the society and make them noticed by the society. Thus, as it is understood from Rishoi’s statement, feminist discourse aims to tell about the patriarchal society, the situation of woman in a male controlled community as it is in three novels. Besides, feminist perspective focuses on gender issue. As Judith Butler states “gender is culturally constructed”². As Butler states, women are coded in certain cultural expectations such as the motto’s of patriarchy which aims to keep women at home doing housework but not involving the men’s business.

Men’s request for keeping away women from their business is also accomplished by racist approach of patriarchy as gender and racism parallels. Racism is by definition “deeming someone’s race is important”³. From this point, Rashmi Varma states that “Over the past fifty years, at least since the era of civil rights and women’s rights struggles in the 1960s, race and gender have been variously represented as being “parallel,” “intersecting,” and “overlapping” systems of identity formation that structure social relations”⁴. As it is understood from these words, like gender; racism provides opportunity for structuring social relations and positions of women who are put backward in social relation due to their gender, are also put backward again due to their race, ethnicity. Women’s ethnicity also becomes an issue for their segregation. As a term “ethnicity is a cultural concept centered on norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices which mark a process of cultural boundary formation”⁵. As it is understood from the definition, ethnicity provides segregation by the help of codes which are culturally constructed and provide boundaries. Thus, women are discriminated more than once, as it is reflected in all three novels in which women are discriminated for their gender, race or ethnicity.

The women who are segregated due to their ethnicity are also the women coming from the third world, which is a term defined by the patriarchy of the

¹ Christy Rishoi, “*From Girl To Woman: American Women’s Coming of Age Narratives*”. New York: State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 23

² Judith Butler, “*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of the Identity*”. New York: Routledge. (2002), p. 9.

³ Ellen Rooney, “*The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*”. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 235

⁴ Ellen Rooney, “*The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*”. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 232

⁵ Chris Barker, “*Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*”. New York: Sage Publications Ltd. 2007, p. 25

first world. Those women become the women of postcolonial women so postcolonial feminist approach comes out as the voice of these women. Rosemary Marangoly George states “From the early 1980s onward, postcolonial feminism in the West has been centrally concerned with the terms in which knowledge about non-Western women was produced, circulated, and utilized”⁶. Like the subjects of the third world, which are controlled and shaped by the patriarchal powers of the first world, women of the third world were tried to be shaped, controlled and oppressed by the first world men. Thus, this situation becomes the issue of the three authors in their works.

Like their attachment to post colonialism, the identity of these women are crucial for the feminist perspective. Lacan indicates that “identity is a construction of language”⁷. So it could be said that identity is a constructed entity and identity parallels with gender issue as John Stoltenberg states. He claims that “under patriarchy, the cultural norm of male identity consists in power, prestige, privilege, and prerogative as over and against the genderclass women”⁸. It is obvious from the words of Stoltenberg, male defines the identity of women and male power aims to rule over the opposite gender. The examples of this situation and the such identities attached to women show themselves in many parts of the works of the Mexican American authors who are also identified as Mexican American women.

2.2 Narration Style

The identifications and such definitions of patriarchy are reflected by the narration style of the work. By the narration, the writing style comes to mind. Nietzsche says that “all writing is autobiographical in some sense, regardless of the explicit subject matter and regardless of whether we call it fact or fiction. We write to extend our love affair with an idea or image, or we write to understand something we have experienced, directly or indirectly”⁹. As it is stated by Nietzsche, writing is done to tell about life of self. Writing is narrating

⁶ Ellen Rooney, “*The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*”. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 211

⁷ Luc Herman, and Bart Varvaek, “*Handbook of Narrative Analysis*”. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005, p. 108.

⁸ Gill Plain, and Susan Sellers. “*A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*”. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 187.

⁹ Christy Rishoi, “*From Girl To Woman: American Women’s Coming of Age Narratives*”. New York: State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 2.

and women want to narrate their experiences, thus they can mean their experiences as Nietzsche says and happens in three novels. As a term “narration is concerned with formulation – the entire set of ways in which a story is actually told”¹⁰. From this point, feminist narratology, claiming that sex cannot be separated from gender as it is also a way of segregation, “shows that gender, sex, and sexuality play a central role in the construction and interpretation of narrative texts”¹¹. The sexual role of women, their location in the society due to their gender are reflected in the women narratives. In this context Friedman states that “women’s sense of ‘identification, interdependence, and community’ informs their construction of selfhood, and further, this collective identity informs the practice of autobiographical writing by women”¹². Rishoi indicates that women narrates their selfhood, identification and their life story within the society as it happens in the three novels. About their narration of their life stories, women narrate their growing up which make their works a coming of age story. As a definition “Coming-of-age stories, then, depict the various degrees of success with which their protagonists negotiate the socially sanctioned paths for boys and girls to adulthood”¹³. From this point, these novels tell the woman character’s journey from girlhood to adulthood, their coming of age story. Thus, the way they narrate their stories, make their narrative as coming of age narrative. As a definition and quality, “coming-of-age narratives confront the ways in which the subject, willingly or not, is gradually guided toward his or her culturally ordained role in life”¹⁴. Coming of age narrative tells the journey of the women. Such narrative tells the women on the road, the ones who are on a physical or physiological, inner journey which provides mobility for women as it is for the characters of three novels.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 *So Far From God*

¹⁰ Luc Herman, and Bart Varvaeck, “*Handbook of Narrative Analysis*”. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005, p. 80.

¹¹ Luc Herman, and Bart Varvaeck, “*Handbook of Narrative Analysis*”. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005, p. 130.

¹² Christy Rishoi, “*From Girl To Woman: American Women’s Coming of Age Narratives*”. New York: State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 65.

¹³ Christy Rishoi, “*From Girl To Woman: American Women’s Coming of Age Narratives*”. New York: State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 71.

¹⁴ Christy Rishoi, “*From Girl To Woman: American Women’s Coming of Age Narratives*”. New York: State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 72.

3.1.1. Gender and Patriarchy

Within the light of all this theoretical information which associates with each of three novels, *So Far From God* by Ana Castillo is a significant novel. The story is about five women and the segregation they suffered. "The five women experience a variety of personal adventures derived from mestizaje, gender, and the geographical area in which they were born"¹⁵. As it is stated by B. J. Manriquez, the novel is about the journey, story of five women whose journey is affected by their gender. In this perspective, the dominant patriarchal culture applies its power on women and sometimes this power leads to violence.

Caridad had been taken by ambulance to the hospital, treated and saved (just barely), Sofi was told that her daughter's nipples had been bitten off. She had also been scourged with something, branded like cattle. Worst of all, a tracheotomy was performed because she had also been stabbed in the throat¹⁶.

By these sentences, Castillo tells, how Caridad, the daughter of Sofia was wounded by men without any reason. There is no reason on this attack but her being women, her gender as it is stated by Danize Martinez.

Castillo's treatment of Caridad, as well as Moragas, Anzaldúa's, and Cisneros' revisionist mythmaking, show how Chicanas can counter issues of poverty, environmental racism, and gendered violence being perpetuated by oppressive dominant cultures and institutions¹⁷.

Martinez points out that Castillo emphasizes the gendered violence on women and reflects this situation in her many novels as she does in *So far From God*.

Besides, the novel points out women are discriminated due to their gender codes which are created by patriarchy. The novel exemplifies this by Sofia's desire to be Mayor. Her husband thinks that her becoming mayor is a threat to him as he will have to care houseworks which she is supposed to do.

So it sounds like you're going to run for Mayor of this house, not of Tome ... Domingo tried not to sound worried about small

¹⁵ B. J Manriquez, "Ana Castillo's "So Far from God:" Intimations of the Absurd". *West Chester: College Literature*, 2002, p. 38

¹⁶ Ana Castillo, "So Far From God". New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1993, p. 33.

¹⁷ DanizeteMartinez, "Teaching Chicana/o Literature in Community College with Ana Castillo's *So Far from God*". Pullman: Rocky Mountain Review, 2011, p. 224.

prospects, but he knew that under the circumstances, with everybody but Loca gone, Sofi being the Mayor of the house would mean that he would be the only one around to be delegated every task that occurred to her¹⁸.

As it is understood from these lines, the husband as the symbol of patriarchy expects the women do the housework so that the society diminishes her gender roles into doing housework and the contrast situation would threaten the existence of men. Because, giving up housework means that men have to do the works which are expected from women. At this point, writer points out that women need to be strong and fight. “Esperanza, always tried to tell me about how we needed to go out and fight for our rights. She always talked about things like working to change system”¹⁹. The author emphasizes the power of women, the importance of struggle against patriarchy. Thus, she reflects the success of woman as being mayor and honors woman and woman’s success against segregation within the feminist perspective in her work.

3.1.2 Ethnicity and Gender

Her reflection of discrimination against women is not only on gender but race. The family which is not an American, white Anglo Saxon Puritan (WASP) family but a Mexican American family, is consisted of hybrid people. The outside world controlled by WASP is not safe for this family who is consisted of Mexican American women. “La Loca wanted to go to her sister but could not bring herself to travel into the unknown terrain of the city, so prayed, as she often had done for the women in her family”²⁰. Outside world is full of dangers and even at home La Loca is affected from racism. “Loca, within her domestic sphere, is still disrupted by the racism and sexism of the patriarchy”²¹. Even at her home, woman can suffer from racism. Women suffer due to their gender and race. In this occasion, they are less important than WASP as it is stated in the search of police for the attackers of Caridad. “If they knew who it was that had disappeared they probably would do little more than a routine hospital and jail search for Caridad, such had been her reputation”²². Castillo states that Caridad

¹⁸ Ana Castillo, “*So Far From God*”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 145.

¹⁹ Ana Castillo, “*So Far From God*”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 144.

²⁰ Ana Castillo, “*So Far From God*”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 57.

²¹ Ana Castillo, “*So Far From God*”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 78.

²² Ana Castillo, “*So Far From God*”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 83.

is a Mexican American and she is not taken into consideration a lot even in a situation that she was attacked and left to death. So outside is a world full of hatred against the ones who are not in the race of patriarchy.

Besides, their ethnicity bases the racism problem which the novel brings up. Danizete Martines indicates that “The story is told through a series of historic, ethnic, and gender juxtapositions, or rather, collisions”²³. When writer shows that the story is full of such ethnic juxtapositions, she also tries to emphasize the unimportance of categorizations done according to these ethnic qualities of women.

Unlike the rest of the women in her family who, despite her grandmother’s insistence that they were Spanish, descendants of pure Spanish blood, all shared the flat butt of the Pueblo blood undeniably circulating through their veins, Caridad had a somewhat pronounced ass that men were inclined to show their unappreciated appreciation for everywhere she sent²⁴.

The author refers to the importance given to nobility of Spanish heritage among Mexican American by blood example and at the same time deconstructs this nobility myth by comparing noble Spanish blood to blood of flat butt Pueblo. Writer emphasizes the unimportance of categorization done according to ethnicity.

3.1.3 Identity and Narration

Parallel with ethnicity, identity is also effective for identifying situation of women. In this perspective, writer holds the power of language for positive thoughts on women and doesn’t act like the men act about using power of language for giving corrupted identities to women. She represents women as positive beings and provides different identities for them. Colette Morrow states that “Hence, in *So Far from God* an empowered lesbian subject assumes the roles of healer, virgin-saint, and warrior, the commonplaces for female identity in traditional Mexican and Native American discourses”²⁵. Morrow points out that woman could have more than one identity. In contrast to men who expect to

²³Martinez, Danizete. “*Teaching Chicana/o Literature in Community College with Ana Castillo's So Far from God*”. Pullman: Rocky Mountain Review, 2011, p. 216.

²⁴Ana Castillo, “*So Far From God*”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 26.

²⁵Colette Morrow, “*Queering Chicano/a Narratives: Lesbian as Healer, Saint and Warrior in Ana Castillo's "So Far from God"*”. Chicago: The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association, 1997, p. 63

keep women at home, women could be a healer, virgin and warrior as it is exemplified by Ana Castillo's woman character Felicia who heals Caridad.

Everything we need for healing is found in natural surroundings, dona Felicia told her and put up her two hands in front of Caridad, palms facing her. With those hands she repaired more bones and muscles and rubbed out more intestinal obstructions than you could shake a stick²⁶.

When Castillo's men characters break and demolish, women characters mend, heal. They become healers, warriors against the inequalities of men and many other positive identities are attached to them. By such a representation, writer shows that women get out of being men's object and gain their identity and independence.

Furthermore, the representation of more truthful identities is done by language against stereotypes as it is stated by B. J. Manriquez. She states that "by resorting to 1960s aesthetics of absurdity in *So Far From God*, Castillo attempts to destroy Chicana stereotypes, albeit allegorically, while the humorous *mitotera* narration draws its power from the language"²⁷. Manriquez points out the power of language and narration. As a style of narration, the author tells the lives of women, the other women in her life and herself. The novel is about five women and focuses on their lives, their growing up process. When some of them begin the life as child, some of them begin as young women and gets old. So the narration focuses on lives of women, their stories and makes the work autobiographical by giving information about the women, their problems and the events related to their life times. When providing all these, as Manriquez states, the author provides a narration style which could stand against Chicana stereotype, so the author provides proper and real identities of the characters related to their ethnic backgrounds. At this point, the novel talks about two sisters who are called Helena and Maria. They are on pilgrimage and they visit the village where their roots lay. "Their destination was the village where Maria's ancestors had been buried for the last nine generations- until her father had left New Mexico"²⁸. Author means that Mexican Americans have deep roots; they are not refugees or unimportant

²⁶ Ana Castillo, "*So Far From God*". New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 65.

²⁷ B. J Manriquez, "*Ana Castillo's 'So Far from God: Intimations of the Absurd'*". *West Chester: College Literature*, 2002, p. 47

²⁸ Ana Castillo, "*So Far From God*". New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 122.

people. They have deep roots back in Mexico. And women, away from their roots are always on search, searching their identities, they make journey physically and psychologically, and they develop and these narrative qualities in the novel equips it with coming age narrative.

The journeys of women are long and it is hard for them to understand whether they are on the right path as author means. In this context, the author refers to journey of Helena and Maria.

Just as Helena and Maria got off the main highway, Helena caught sight of a pickup tailing her close enough so that, thinking that what he wanted was to pass up her well-worn VW Bug, she moved aside to let him just do that. At first, she didn't say nothing out loud when he insisted on staying behind since she was unfamiliar with the road and wasn't sure if they were even going the right way²⁹.

Writer tells that women are physically on the road but they can't find the way. At the same time, their being lost refers to the lost women who look roots and connections with their identity as Maria says later that "Like I told you before, I've never kept in touch with my relatives in Truchas"³⁰. Her words represent the lost connection among Mexican Americans with their roots. Similarly Fe is lost in the mind of man.

Fe had gotten lost in the Juan Soldado gold mine of her head. In the darkness of that mine, she called to Tom, hearing only her own echo reverberating back, with never no reply from her beloved, who surely, she thought with great conviction, was also lost in there³¹.

So, it is obvious that women are lost and doing inner journeys and narrate these journeys, they narrate their journeys and how they find ways, how they improve, develop and mobility become their freedom, their way of looking and finding for answers. Therefore, women narrate their experiences and understand the meaning of their experiences. In this perspective Sofia loses her beloved daughter La Loca but as La Loca was considered a saint due to her resurrection at three years old, Sofia becomes a member of MOMAS which is a group of women who are mothers of saint children and does great works there. In this perspective, narration provides her journey, her story and shows the meaning of

²⁹ Ana Castillo, *So Far From God*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 124.

³⁰ Ana Castillo, *So Far From God*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 129.

³¹ Ana Castillo, *So Far From God*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1993, p. 155.

her experience which leads from uncertainty into the women groups who are united which is exemplified in the novel by examples such as Sofia's desire to be mayor of town in order to organize, unite town people, especially women for a better town.

3.2 Paula

3.2.1 Gender and Patriarchy

Isabel Allende's *Paula* is a significant work which has certain qualities and resemblances with *So Far From God*. The work is about the life of the author who experienced difficult times during the coma and after death of her daughter. She narrates what she experienced during these difficult periods of her life. But as a woman, for sure her difficult times were not consisted of just these, so she goes back to times when she was very young, and brings her story to the day she publishes her novel in 1994. Within perspective of feminism, her novel provides an example of strong woman in the society. Linda S. Maier states that "her representation of strong female characters, such as Paula and herself, lends her work a sense of gender empowerment, which along with her buoyant optimism, mark the Post-Boom generation"³². As Maier claims, Isabel Allende comes out with a strong female character which doesn't fit the norms of patriarchal society. She puts forth a woman character who is a healer like Felicia character in *So Far From God* novel. She is strong and standing for her daughter who is in coma. Even when she was a child, she is brave and nothing can stop her from reaching her aims as it happens at the time she goes to school.

I was careful not to tell at home that other parents had withdrawn their children from the school, and I certainly never mentioned the daily negotiations between the driver and the men on the barricades who allowed us to pass. I attended classes until the establishment was deserted and Miss St. John courteously asked me not to return for a few days- until this disagreeable incident has been resolved and people return to their senses³³.

Even at the war time in Lebanon, as a child, she continuous to attend the school where the bombs explode and guns are fired. The author reflects the

³² Linda S Maier, "Mourning Becomes "Paula": The Writing Process as Therapy for Isabel Allende". Walled Lake: American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, 2003, p. 42

³³ Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 87

brave women and honors them as the feminist perspective aims.

Besides, she touches the gender issue, and the inequalities that woman suffer as *So Far From God*, reflected by the examples given about the violence applied on Caridad due to her gender. Within this scope, the novel reflects that woman is segregated in gender codes which are culturally constructed.

He did not like my reputation as a feminist or my long dresses and antique hats, to say nothing of my Citroen painted like a shower curtain, but he forgave my extravagances because in real life I carried out my role as mother, wife, and housekeeper³⁴.

As it is understood from this sentence, her grandfather expects her to be a mother, wife and housekeeper. Allende, like Castillo points out the society's expectations from women, the gender roles defined for women and segregation of women due to their gender. But like Sofia in *So Far From God* novel, her character and daughter Paula also resists the acts of society which tries to segregate or control women. Even as a child she says that "the first part of that revelation had little effect on me because I did not intend to have children just yet"³⁵. Allende points out that she wants to have control of her body and resist the expectation of her society, the expected roles of her gender which are defined by patriarchy.

3.2.2 Ethnicity and Gender

Besides all these oppressive acts of patriarchy, Isabel Allende points out that how patriarchy is strong and could apply racist approaches on women as it is in *So Far From God*. In the context of the racist attitude toward woman, author gives example from Germany. She talks a father who acts rude and brutal toward her retarded daughter.

His father had been an officer in the Nazi army, a cruel man who mistreated his wife and children and who in the war had been given the opportunity to satisfy his most brutal instincts. He told me about his retarded younger sister, and how his father steeped in pride of race, had never accepted her but forced her to live like an animal, silent huddling under a white cloth-covered table so he wouldn't have to see her³⁶.

³⁴ Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 145

³⁵ Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 54

³⁶ Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 295

Allende refers to the Aryan race which is believed to be pure German and mostly German army officers believed during the Second World War, and reflects how such a racist attitude is applied on a woman by her father. Writer points out that racist attitude against women are everywhere.

In this perspective, women's ethnicity is important issue for segregation. The author aims to show the insignificance of segregation done due to ethnic background of people and tries to tell that all ethnics are mixed or unimportant. In order to reflect these ideas on this subject, Isabel Allende defines herself. "I have three – quarters Spanish Basque blood, one quarter French, and a tot of Araucan or Mapuche Indian, like everyone else in my land"³⁷. Allende emphasizes that there are no significant difference among people as Castillo states in her work by blood example. Allende points out that the importance of strong women does not come from strong or noble blood, a term coined by patriarchal powers.

3.2.3 Identity and Narration

Writer puts fort strong women portrait by reflecting strong identity of women as Castillo does. Isabel says that "This is me, I'm a woman, I have a name, I'm called Isabel, I'm not turning to smoke, I have not disappeared"³⁸. The author says that she is a woman, she is proud of her gender and she states that she exists as she is. Similar to her expressions about her existence, throughout the story, she portrays a strong woman who believes that her daughter will be ok and she will heal her and she will do anything necessary, she will be self sacrifice. In contrast to patriarchal consideration of women as a weak identity, Allende, as Castillo does, portrays a strong identity of woman. In this perspective, she also reflects how police undermines her identity. She talks about the perspective of the policeman for the Latin Americans. "There behind the backs of the police, all of us penniless refuges from South America – sudacas, they called us with scorn – gathered to talk to our families on the other side of the world"³⁹. Writer refers to Spain deliberately as Latin Americans believe the nobility of Spanish blood but Spanish people don't care about Latin American women or their identity which patriarchy bases on Spanish blood. In contrast, within their arrogant perspective, Spanish people consider them as

³⁷Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 14

³⁸ Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 111

³⁹Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 256

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masses from Latin America where the country differences don't exist.

At the same time, as it is stated in *So Far From God*, the author points out that there are many identities of the woman not just one. The woman is a healer as Isabel tries to heal her daughter. At the same time she adds more identities to herself. She defines herself as Flower child.

Flower Children. I did, however, immediately accept many of the external signs of that culture because I looked much better in long dresses, especially in the last month of pregnancy when I was absolutely round⁴⁰.

Like being flower child, she becomes director in a women's magazine and loses that identity later. "I lost my job as director, and soon would lose all my post on the women's magazine – as would the rest of the staff, because in the eyes of the military, feminism was subversive as Marxism"⁴¹. As it is stated, Allende talks about many identities and emphasizes that identities could be changed due to conditions of life. There becomes identity shifts. She becomes an editor, but she is fired and lose that identity, she becomes feminist and that identity is tried to be stopped even though she never gives up her struggle as Sofia doesn't give up in *So Far From God* novel.

The author connects all these problems onto the postcolonial situation. She talks about the situation of Chile, her country.

There were slums where people lived in misery, and regions where polluted water killed as many people as it had in the colonial era, but in the euphoria of easy wealth, no one remembered that⁴².

Allende points out that colonialism demolishes societies, people and Latin America, her country is in a very difficult situation. There are military interventions everywhere and she states that "feminism" is "subversive as Marxism"⁴³. The author protests this situation within postcolonial feminism by becoming voice of third world women who suffered from this wrong policies of colonialism and post colonialism. She narrates that she is in fear of being put in jail by the army forces due to her acts. She points out the oppression of male power, the army on women in Chile

Her way of narration is also significant at this point. The reader comes

⁴⁰Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 138

⁴¹Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 201

⁴²Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 241

⁴³Isabel Allende "Paula". London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 201.

across first person narration and third person narration. Catherina P. Perricone states that “Allende continues her narration in the first person, but now speaks of Paula in the third person”⁴⁴. This way of narration emphasizes the efforts of Isabel to communicate with her daughter and makes the work more autobiographical as making out an autobiographical work is provided in *So Far From God*. By such narration, Isabel Allende tells her experiences in her life. As a woman narration, woman tries to locate herself in life as Isabel states. “My life is created as I narrate, and my memory grows stronger with writing; what I do not put in words on a page will be erased by time”⁴⁵. Allende states that her life has a meaning, a way of existence by narrating it; therefore she connects and locates herself in the world. So she writes her experiences during her daughter’s illness, before and after that. Besides, as being coming age narrative, there is a progress and mobility of woman in the narration. She makes lots of journey, physical journeys as travels to different countries and psychological journeys, inner journeys as dreams during her interaction with her daughter when she is ill. She says that “What do you want to teach us, Paula? I have changed a lot during these interminable weeks, all of those who have lived through this experience have changed, especially Ernesto, who seems to have aged a hundred years”⁴⁶. She means that she gained experience on this journey which she began with Paula whose journey began with illness. But at the end, this journey provides a unification of women as it does at *So Far From God*. “I am everything that exists, I am in every leaf of the forest in every drop of the dew, in every particle of ash carried by stream, I am Paula, and I am also Isabel, I am nothing and all other things in this life and other lives, immortal”⁴⁷. Allende’s narration emphasizes that women’s nobility lifts the limits of world and stop them from seeing the life with ends and let them see it continues in another form and that provides the unification with other women by getting more and more experience by the help of the mobility.

3.3 *The House On Mango Street*

3.3.1 Gender and Patriarchy

⁴⁴ Catherine R. Perricone, “*Genre and Metarealism in Allende's Paula*”. Walled Lake: American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, 1998, p. 46.

⁴⁵ Isabel Allende “*Paula*”. London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Isabel Allende “*Paula*”. London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 73.

⁴⁷ Isabel Allende “*Paula*”. London: Harper Collins Publisher, 2008, p. 330.

Women who stand against the oppression and segregation of the society, are told in *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. The novel tells the story of Esperanza who moves to Mango Street in Chicago and her relation with neighborhood residents. Like other authors, Cisneros narrates these relations in the feminist perspective so her work also involves the issues as racism and gender.

It wasn't as if I didn't know who I was. I knew I was a Mexican woman. But, I didn't think it had anything to do with why I felt so much imbalance in my life, whereas it had everything to do with it! My race, my gender, and my class! And it didn't make sense until that moment, sitting in that seminar. That's when I decided I would write about something my classmates couldn't write about⁴⁸.

Cisneros' novel reflects how the women are discriminated due to their gender by the patriarchy. She says that "She could speak up and celebrate my otherness as a woman, as a working class person, as an American of Mexican descent"⁴⁹. The author points out that she is other due to her gender.

Almost all the women Esperanza refers to are abused, afraid, and beaten down both emotionally and physically. They are locked inside the house, some bearing the signs of domestic abuse, and all forced to work or provide for their families on the most limited of means⁵⁰.

As it is stated by Allison Amend, the women of Cisneros in this street of poverty are kept in house and forced to do housework which is expected from women who are obliged to obey the rules of their gender which are defined by the patriarchy. Therefore, the book reveals the segregation that women suffered even during their childhood.

The boys and girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours. My brothers for example. They've got plenty to say to me and Nenny inside the house. But outside they can't be seen talking to girls. Carlos and Kiki are each other's best friends... not ours⁵¹.

Writer shows how from the early periods of life gender discrimination

⁴⁸ Jacqueline Doyle, *More Room of Her Own: Sandra Cisneros's The House on Mango Street*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Sandra Cisneros, *The House On Mango Street*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 16.

⁵⁰ Allison Amend, *Multicultural Voices: Hispanic American Writers*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010, p. 66.

⁵¹ Sandra Cisneros, *The House On Mango Street*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 9.

begins, and reflects a conflict in which points boys talks their sisters at home which is a closed place but don't talk outside where patriarchy's eyes are on women and men. The novel also points out the expectations from women as it is in two other novels. "Minerva is only a little bit older than me but already she has two kids and a husband who left. Her mother raised her kids alone and it looks like her daughters will go that way"⁵². The author shows how women are put into houses with children and this situation becomes a destiny, a heritage passing from mother to daughter.

In this perspective, as other authors do within the feminist perspective, the author also shows the resistance against this situation in order to honor the women. "My great- grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry"⁵³. In the story, from the mother example in which woman gives birth to her husband and is obedient to patriarchy by staying at home and taking care of children, the author skips to a great-grandmother figure who was wild and wouldn't like to marry. She is the symbol of resistance which is not approved by the patriarchal power.

3.3.2 Gender and Ethnicity

Patriarchal power applies its authority not only according to gender but also race as it happens in other two novels. Women who are discriminated due to their gender, are discriminated again due to their race in the novel. The author points out the insignificance of such discrimination as other two authors state. "But I think diseases have no eyes. They pick up a dizzy finger anyone, just anyone"⁵⁴. The author points out that racism is a way of applying power of dominant culture but it is artificial. Realities of life are different and they don't consider race when approaching people. So, like oppression on women's race, there is oppression women's ethnicity. The writer tells about people who are far away from their native lands and longing for them.

One day we were passing a house a house that looked in my mind, like houses I had seen in Mexico. I don't know why. There was nothing about the house that looked exactly like the houses I remembered. I'm not even sure why I thought it, but it seemed to

⁵²Sandra Cisneros, "*The House On Mango Street*". New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 105.

⁵³Sandra Cisneros, "*The House On Mango Street*". New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 12.

⁵⁴Sandra Cisneros, "*The House On Mango Street*". New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 72.

feel right⁵⁵.

Author emphasizes her longing for her ethnic background in this country where she feels alienated and indicates how she is away from her ethnic origin in this new country, new world she has to survive.

3.3.3 Identity and Narration

In this new world, surviving, strong woman identity is portrayed by the writer. “Esperanza seeks to develop an autonomous identity”⁵⁶. “But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something like silver. I am always Esperanza”⁵⁷. Esperanza builds her own, autonomous identity and she manages unification with her Mexican identity as a person living in Chicago and reflects that she has a strong identity in contrast to spoiled identity image tried to be created by patriarchal language. Therefore by the help of the language, the author builds a strong identity which points out her existence and unique identity like the ones in *So Far From God* and *Paula*. Also, like those novels indicate, Cisneros’ novel points out many identities of women. “In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters”⁵⁸. The author points out different identities she carries with being American and Mexican.

The author reflects these identities by her narration style. Like other works which are considered as autobiography due to their narration style, this work is also an autobiography which narrates the life of the author and the people around her.

Nonetheless, the large cast of characters, the series of monologues, and the creation of characters through their voices provide Cisneros's informal notes with a dramatic quality. In the declamatory tradition, the pieces perform the voices of Mexican-Americans, their hopes, and their sorrows as they come to pray at the shrine. Through their narrations, these characters become authors of their stories, exert agency, and validate their experiences. As a result of capturing their voices, the story deconstructs dominant ideological

⁵⁵Sandra Cisneros, *The House On Mango Street*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 21.

⁵⁶Jacqueline Doyle, *More Room of Her Own: Sandra Cisneros's The House on Mango Street*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 18.

⁵⁷Sandra Cisneros, *The House On Mango Street*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 12.

⁵⁸Sandra Cisneros, *The House On Mango Street*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 11.

discourses of Mexican-Americans as mere victims of society⁵⁹.

As Elizabeth Mermann- Jozwiak states, Cisneros' narration becomes the voice of Mexican American women as it is aimed by the feminist perspective. Each chapter focuses on a different Mexican American women on the Mango Street and shows how gender, sex, identity play important role for construction of narrative.

Besides, the narration reflects the journey, mobility of women. "Esperanza's journeying, both physical and psychological, does not cut a straight, linear path"⁶⁰. In this perspective, even the novel begins about movements. "We didn't always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina, and before that I can't remember. But what I remember most is moving a lot"⁶¹. Even the book begins by the word move which is associated with movement and tells the reader that the book will be about movement, inner journey and development of the character.

Her development/maturation, like her text, eventually will leave Esperanza squarely where she began: on Mango Street. This revision of the American idealization of mobility is important because instead of signifying the freedom to journey and conjuring the image of forward-moving progress, Cisneros reinforces the importance of community and returning to the neighborhood that helped to shape her as a Chicana growing up in American society⁶².

The character develops and finds herself, her identity again in Chicana community as it is stated by Karafilis. This situation is stated by the novel.

Friends and neighbours will say, What happened to that Esperanza? Where did she go with all those books and paper? Why did she march so far away? They will not know I have gone away to

⁵⁹ Elisabeth Mermann Jozwiak, "Gritos desde la Frontera: Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Postmodernism", Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 110.

⁶⁰ Maria Karafilis, "Crossing the Borders of Genre: Revisions of the "Bildungsroman" in Sandra Cisneros's "The House on Mango Street" and Jamaica Kincaid's "Annie John", Chicago: The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association, 1998, p. 68.

⁶¹ Sandra Cisneros, "The House On Mango Street". New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1991, p. 3.

⁶² Maria Karafilis, "Crossing the Borders of Genre: Revisions of the "Bildungsroman" in Sandra Cisneros's "The House on Mango Street" and Jamaica Kincaid's "Annie John", Chicago: The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association, 1998, p. 68.

come back⁶³.

Cisneros like Castillo and Allende, portrays the journey of the character by her narration and unify character with her people.

4. CONCLUSION

Finally, being women, feminist perspective, the ethnicity and the identity of women, the way women are narrated are important issues that *So Far From God*, *Paula* and *The House on Mango Street* dealt with. Dealing with Mexican Americans, Americans and some other ethnics, each novel focuses on same issue, the women, the gender. The novels aim to reveal the power of the patriarchy and give the examples the way patriarchy applies its power on women to restrict them. Besides they tell how the ethnicity effects the way gender issue in the society. The novels emphasizes that women were segregated not only for being female but also for being Mexican American or belonginh to other ethnic groups. Therefore, the novels' focus reveal that, the women of the world and the ethnic women of Unites States of America have common problems caused by patriarchy and the power it applies on women. From this point, with their narration styles, these novels provide an autobiographical journey of women and the problems they come accross during their journeys, how they overcome or try to overcome these obstacles put by male dominant society. Therefore, these novels and their authors become the voice of the women who are in every corner of the world under the oppression of men.

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⁶³Sandra Cisneros, "*The House On Mango Street*". New York: Alfred A. Knopf , Inc. 1991, p. 134.

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