

**T.C. KOCAELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ**  
**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**  
**BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANABİLİM DALI**  
**İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI PROGRAMI**

**DECONSTRUCTION TOWARDS POSTHUMANISM:**  
**A FEMINIST READING OF *SHURI***

**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

**Fatma Berna UYSAL**

**KOCAELİ 2021**

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## ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, teknolojik açıdan oldukça gelişmiş günümüz dünyasında ataerkil gelenekten miras kalan ve üstünlüğe ve aşağı görmeye işaret eden bazı kavramları incelemektir. Bu geleneğin kısmi-egemen düşüncesi ikili karşıtıklardan (akıl-duygu, beden-ruh, doğa-kültür, ben-öteki vs.) beslenir ve oluşturulmuş olan karşıtıklar keyfidir. Bunlar arasındaki gerçek bağlantıyı göstermek için postmodern kurguda yapısökümün gelişimi ile birlikte feminist edebiyat eleştiri ve insansonrası kuramlardan yararlanılacaktır. Bu tezde *Shuri* (2019)'nin betimlemesine odaklanılarak kadın süper kahraman karakterlerindeki paradigma değişikliği öne çıkarılacaktır. Feminist edebiyat kuramı karşıtıktan beslenmeyen koşulların oluşturulmasına yardımcı olurken, insansonrası kuram teknolojiye ve *Shuri* çizgi romanındaki yansımaya daha fazla odaklanmada yol gösterici olacaktır. *Shuri* örneği insan ve insan olmayan veya herhangi bir organik ve inorganik varlık arasında oluşturulan bağlantının ontolojik ve epistemelolojik düzeyde hiyerarşik karşıtıklardan muaf olduğunu göstermektedir. Daha önce güce dayalı ve haliyle keyfi olarak oluşturulmuş ve çerçevesi belirlenmiş kavramlar teknolojik olarak gelişmiş bir dünyada insanı ve dolayısıyla kadını yeniden tanımlamak için yeterli değildir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Yapısöküm, Feminizm, İnsansonrası teori, Çizgi roman, *Shuri*

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the concepts that are inherited from the patriarchal tradition and pointing to superiority and inferiority in today's technologically highly developed world. The partial-dominant thought of this tradition is fed by binary oppositions (mind-emotion, body-spirit, nature-culture, self-other, etc.) and the created oppositions are arbitrary. Along with the development of deconstruction in postmodern fiction, feminist literary criticism and posthuman theories will be used to show the real connection between them. In this thesis, the paradigm shift in female superhero characters will be highlighted by focusing on the description of *Shuri* (2019). While feminist literary theory will help to create conditions that do not feed on the opposition, the posthuman theory will guide the focus more on technology and its reflection in *Shuri* comics. The example of *Shuri* shows that the connection between human and non-human or any organic and inorganic entity is free from hierarchical oppositions at the ontological and epistemological level. Concepts that were previously based on power and thus arbitrarily formed and framed are not sufficient to redefine man and therefore woman in a technologically advanced world.

**Keywords:** Deconstruction, Feminism, Posthumanism, Comic book, *Shuri*

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore the understanding that creates hierarchies and binary oppositions on a social and cultural level and the ways to deconstruct them with a feminist and relatedly posthuman set of mind in which deconstruction appears. In order to do this, the combination of poststructural, feminist and posthuman notions will be studied because the common goal is to point out the arbitrary predetermined notions that are the product of patriarchy and cause misinterpretation in social and cultural level. The main concern is to focus on the reasons for the paradigm shift of the definitions of the subject that are insufficient to define the meanings to be human and woman in a technologically advanced world and cause inequality. To demonstrate this change in the woman and posthuman subject, firstly the idea of human and reason since modernism will be studied. Postmodernism and poststructuralism will be examined in a detailed manner to understand deconstruction and the shift in paradigms. Since the main aim is to focus on the change in understanding, feminine *écriture* and posthumanism will be the main focus. To be able to comprehend the change in societies, cultures and accordingly the definitions and meanings, the comic book, *Shuri*, will be used as an example. In a technology-saturated postmodern world, where visuality henceforth is the basic preference, a science fiction comic book represents the main concerns that this thesis aims to reach towards deconstruction.

In the first chapter, the focus is on postmodernism and how poststructuralist literature evolves out of it. Postmodernism and poststructuralism are not two separate 'situations', they remain together. They expand themselves together because each of them gets an advantage over the other and influences it. The connection that causes the mentioned relation between postmodernism and poststructuralism is significant. The flow in this chapter starts with modernism to postmodernism, and continues towards structuralism to poststructuralism. The linear awareness in time is not useful to be considered here while talking about modernism, postmodernism, structuralism and poststructuralism and yet more likely a curvilinear mesh that is created by mentioned notions should be acknowledged. The chronological order is not sufficient to apprehend the former and the latter.

In the second chapter, the ways to deconstruct the inherited notions and predetermined values and how they started to appear in social and cultural context will be mentioned. The relation between feminism and posthumanism will be built through the end of the section. The question of the transparency between so-called binary oppositions such as nature/culture, human/animal, real/fantasy, normal/abnormal, fiction/non-fiction started to be experienced in various disciplines with the rise of postmodern thought. When postmodernism finds its way towards language and literature with the studies of poststructuralism, deconstruction has become foregrounded. Since poststructuralists have mentioned the restrictor codes and notions in structuralism, deconstruction has embraced an approach which focuses on shuttering the hegemony over the so-called differences that create dichotomies between ethnicities, races, cultures, and genders. The problem of representations in various disciplines but mostly in literature is mentioned by poststructuralism. Besides economic, political, psychological, social and cultural concepts, literature is the area that experiences the meanings of being human on both ontological and epistemological levels, which are about the existence and knowledge of human respectively, together with the mentioned notions. In short, epistemology is a philosophical notion that seeks the nature of knowledge, and ontology is the concept that studies reality, being, becoming, and existence. The philosophical way to define the human and its existence shows varieties depending on the era in which the meaning to be human is problematised.

The definition of being human is analysed through the decades. The definition has differentiated together with social changes and the circumstances of these changes. With advanced technological and scientific developments, the new definition of human has been defined by posthuman. Under the title of posthumanism, different arguments related to the future of human beings in a technologically advanced era, the necessary changings in ethics and politics, moreover, robotics and bioethics are discussed (Çelik, 2019: 145). The era itself is called Anthropocene in which the new ways to be human and different routes to be human are considered because the existing 'human' design has changed and accordingly ethics and politics have been changing (157). Besides these arguments, the change in the definition of human is also discussed. When Michél Foucault states

that “human was invented” (qt. Nayar, 2014: 26), the questioning of the human-centred approach started. Accordingly when the centrality of human began to be questioned.

In addition to the changings of the definitions of human and being human and the appearance of the new meanings, human subjectivity and its relation to the environment also differed. Posthumanism removes the human from the centre as contrary to what the Enlightenment did so that, for instance, environment is controlled by human because human is not the master of the environment anymore since “...thinking is done by both human and nonhuman actors” (Hayles, 1999: 290). Posthuman studies have been challenging to achieve what modernist theories destroyed practically and ideologically in terms of equality via praising women’s emotional side. What modernism, and the human-centred approach did cause differentiation in womanhood and manhood, not developing equality (Berkday, 2003: 153). Thus, the concepts of womanhood and manhood are significant to be considered if equality is problematised.

In the third chapter, the reasons to study a comic book and a deeper explanation of comic books will be examined. Besides the definition of comic books, the combination of images and words, the ways to comprehend the comics, the developments and changes in the comic book world will be studied. Through the end of the chapter, together with the rise of feminism and posthuman studies, the shift in character creating will be shown in details. Since deconstruction is to shutter the binary oppositions that are predetermined and cause inequality is the common thought of feminism and posthumanism, choosing a comic book, which belongs to a technologically-advanced society and is shaped by the demands of the readers, is a useful apparatus because it reflects the multivocality, the enmeshment, and the embracement of raising the voice of the ‘Other’, the inferior who is against the superior. Specifically, *Shuri* (2019) by Nnedi Okorafor, the amendments it brings to the comic books world will be mentioned. The work is significant because in a male-dominated comics world, Okorafor, as a Naijamerican author, benefits from African myths, her own roots and ancestors, to create a new description for a superhero who is also African-American, female, genius as a protagonist under the label of Marvel Comics.



Figure 1: Representation of *Shuri*, Issue #1

A science-fictional comic book is preferred primarily because of its spontaneous nature as a genre suitable for posthumanist inquiries, and then because of the transition of today's lifestyle to a more science-fictional order. Besides, the consumerism and relatedly comic books' being new folktales since they reflect the society, the multi-effect is another reason to select a comic book in this thesis.

The last chapter of this thesis is the study of *Shuri* in which all the theoretical part of this thesis is practised in. The writer of the *Shuri*, Nnedi Okorafor, has won the Hugo and Nebula Award in science fiction. As she mentions in various conferences she picks her characters mostly as female and from African tribes. She writes about complex female characters in patriarchal societies and tries to mention their challenges and protests that mostly have no happy-endings. She uses science fiction as an element to create female superheroes. Okorafor so profoundly deconstructs the values and notions that are inherited from male dominance in comic book culture. For instance, the superhero *Shuri: The Search for Black Panther* (2019), first appears in *Black Panther* (Vol. 4) #2 (May, 2005) as Black Panther's sister, as a sidekick. Yet, from the very beginning, Shuri's abilities and capabilities are portrayed clearly. Shuri is portrayed as a genius woman and she uses developing technology to be a superhero. She reflects every aspect that is accepted by a

posthuman where she combines technology and human beings on an ontological level. She is accepted as posthuman when she creates assemblages together with her body and technology. This happens by using her own body and technology together as a symbol of assemblage and a created mesh. Okorafor pens the comic book series of *Shuri* for Marvel and she writes about critical posthumanist elements and feminist aspects. This kind of approach in writing reflects that a woman can also be the leader in a technologically advanced society without causing inequalities and discriminating any other being in the world. This is possible with the help of the power of knowledge and intelligence. Okorafor rejects the idea of being an apparatus for marketing that only addresses to American readers or youth. She draws a philosophical approach to *Shuri* where a real tribal female character is portrayed. The setting of *Shuri* is placed in Wakanda that is the most technology-saturated land on earth. Wakanda is derived from the comic book *Black Panther*. Okorafor's using the setting is not new in the comic book world but her claims are unprecedented. According to her, there is no need to create 'black' *Batman* or *Spiderman* and yet to create black heroes with new adventures and stories is essential. Re-writing the same superhero stories is unnecessary however the necessity to create new heroes, significantly sheroes, with new storylines and adventures through focusing on the cultural and social roots and the origins of the very cultures.



Figure 2: Representation of *Shuri*, Issue #1

## CHAPTER I

### 1. POSTMODERNISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALIST LITERATURE

This chapter focuses on modernism and postmodernism together with structuralism and poststructuralism. The latter notion, here postmodernism and in parallel with poststructuralism, contains a lot of attacks against the rational thought of the Enlightenment theories; however, it is significant to start from modernism due to the usage of the prefix 'post-' in the world postmodernism and poststructuralism. Postmodernism, because of its prefix, comes after modernism and to be able to understand postmodernism, modernism will be the departure point here. The prefix 'post-' is Latin and the way it is used in Western languages means after, subsequent, later, the following. The words with 'post-' refer to themselves and also the previous period so that explaining the earlier period is essential. Therefore, the first discussion is what modernism is and since when it is in the foreground, besides its main ideas and concerns. After discussing modernism, how the postmodernist approach draws attention to those ideals of modernism of the society in cultural level is the following argument in this chapter. Also, whether postmodernism is a continuity of modernism or a total rejection remains unclear. Due to the lack of clarity in this regard, mentioning postmodernism both as a continuity of modernism and a rejection of modernism is another approach that is underlined here. Another problem is that whether modernism is comprehended. To be able to understand modernism, the Enlightenment Era and thought should be clarified in which modernism was derived from. Later on, structuralism and poststructuralism are considered in postmodern structure since they are both expostulate modernism and directly related to language and literature which are the issues postmodernism tries to dispatch. Especially postmodernist theorists' studies on poststructuralism, accordingly on language and literature, are non-negligible. Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard enhance the postmodern theory in France before it expands in the United States and Britain, and these French scholars discuss postmodernism and its notion in a more comprehensive way than the notions in the US and Britain (Best and Kellner, 1991: 17-18). These studies that sprung in France help to understand postmodern literature by receiving support from poststructuralist literary theories since postmodernism and poststructuralism intermingle.

## 1.1. MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM

### 1.1.1. MODERNISM

The dramatic changes in societies and cultures have always been seen as chaotic by the traditionalists. It is difficult to assert new perspectives and solutions while shifting from traditional society to modern society because the new ways of life utter new understandings, approaches, notions, and theories. New lifestyles bring new discourses, and they all need new points of view to be analysed and understood (Best and Kellner, 1991: VIII). One of the dramatic changes has appeared while shifting from modernism to postmodernism; however, this shift is not linear and it is crucial to think of postmodernism as both the follower and the rejection of modernism. On the other hand, modernism itself is such a broad area and therefore whether modernism is fully understood in its context and content is another question. Accordingly, in such a vast area, different opinions about the beginning of modernism exist. Modernism “serves as a label for a variety of tendencies, attitudes, convictions” (Anselmo, 2009: np), so that before mentioning various ideas on the starting point of modernism, it is essential to define the words ‘modern’ and ‘modernism’.

Modern and modernism are the words that are derived from their roots in Latin. In Latin, *modernus* has its origin from *modo* which means ‘now, immediately’. First of all, it passes to French as ‘*moderné*’, and then to English as ‘*modern*’ (Williams, 2005: 251). In its lexical meaning, ‘*modern*’ is “*of the present time or recent times*”<sup>1</sup> and “*(of styles in art, music, fashion, etc.) new and intended to be different from traditional styles*”<sup>2</sup> (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, 2020). The intention in ‘modern’ is to be different from the traditional or classical one and to be closer to date’s style, shift, and movement, and the passing time is the concern when to deal with modern. In this case, ‘*modernism*’ is derived from ‘modern’ and means “*modern ideas or methods*”<sup>1</sup> and “*a style and movement in art, architecture and literature popular in the middle of the 20th century in which modern ideas, methods and materials were used rather than traditional ones*”<sup>2</sup> (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, 2020). The term modern defines a differential relationship between now and then. The qualitative aspect of this relationship is to be new and/or contain new. That is why the definition makes the term relativistic. Due to this definition, modern



is continual. These definitions are somewhat informative, but still the use of the term differs according to the area it is mentioned. It is difficult to systematise, classify, or label '*modern*' thought due to its richness and the various disciplines that it contains. The word modernism is always used as a connotation of the novelty of the era it refers to. The meaning has always been contemporary regardless of the era, situation, period, or movement the word points out.

The term was first used by the church in the 15th century, and there is a series of events to point out to the *almost* beginning of the modern, such as the experiments of Newton in order to develop the theory of gravity and the laws of motion, the discovery of publishing by Gutenberg, Luther's reforms, Galileo's discoveries, the Catholic world's criticism on Luther's reforms. Modern points out the scientific, political, and technological upheavals that started at the beginning of the 16th century in Western Europe. Not only scientific, political, and technological alteration modern refers to but also different economic, social, philosophical and cultural changes it mentions. Due to these changes in various disciplines, it is challenging to label its starting point. Some scholars argue that modernism starts with Karl Marx, Max Weber and their contemporaries in the 19th century. They take modernism as a passage from feudality through the Middle Ages and focuses on the economic changes. Some scholars go back to Descartes and the Enlightenment and claim that modernism started after the discussion of 'truth' and systematised knowledge (Best and Kellner, 1991: 2).

The Enlightenment refers to a metaphysical illumination for the human mind and reason. It is the period where the modern thought is born because it points out the advances that create a new social formation and a new way of philosophical thinking. It, as accepted, starts in the 17th century in England and yet it is developed in France and Germany. Unlike in the Middle Ages, with the Enlightenment, the human mind and reason's superiority over scholastic thought is accepted. The reason is beyond and over everything, and religious doctrines are interpreted by the human mind, not by the ecclesiastics. The minds in the Middle Ages tried to explain reasons with divine understanding and transcendental notions; however, the very people who were born during the Middle Ages, started to think about the unnecessary of transcendental concepts to explain the causes. According to them, the human mind

could find answers to questions and church was not the absolute resource or need for explanations because while they were experimenting with a new law in natural sciences or trying to find out a new theory in order to explain a mathematics or physics problem, they were setting the environment of the experiment. They realized that they were the control mechanisms. That led them to think as if the world and universe could be comprehended by the human mind therefore it should be praised and featured. The advances that had occurred in science, politics, society, and philosophy caused the French Revolution (1789) that was the most efficient movement in the modern period. With the effects of the French Revolution, the monarchy was overthrown and the republic was established. This refers to the abdication of all-powerful and the succession of human mind and reason. Consequently, the Roman Catholic Church was forced to reform its dogmatic doctrines. Basically, this motivated the improvement and development in science, politics, society and philosophy. However, the criticism against Enlightenment underlined the limits of knowledge in the human mind. The major criticism against Enlightenment is in its consequence, namely in modernism. Modernity is the term that expresses individualisation, secularisation, industrialisation, cultural differentiation, commodification, urbanisation, bureaucratization, and becoming rational (Best and Kellner, 1991: 2-3).

The results of the Enlightenment appear as modern in the world in a scientific and technological moment; economic production and alteration moment; political and social institution and fighting moment; philosophical, historical, juridical, social, and cultural thought-moment; and formal moment that occurs especially in art and literature. These changes started to dominate the world under the terms of 'modern' and 'modernism', however, there is not a hierarchy between these moments. They are connected. Basically, they are interwoven. For instance; formal level is about literature and art, and it is connected to the scientific and technological moment and at the same time to economic production moment, because when a production of a book or an art piece is the issue, not only its context and content but also its publishing and distribution are important. Nevertheless, the most significant and grand disengagement happens in the scientific and technological moment. The most fast-changing moment happens at the scientific and technological level and due

to the alterations that are ever-growing and ever-developing, the known is changing rapidly. The accepted scientific and technological norms are changing, widening, spreading at an unprecedented pace.

The way to dominate the world happens with science in the developments of natural sciences against scholastic thought which claims that there can only be one answer for a question. At the political level, the change occurs in the resource of potency, it is not God anymore but public. At the social and cultural level, changes happen in the interpretation of God's words. The translations and interpretations of the religious texts caused changeovers in social life. These changeovers were also in the developments of capitalism and Marxism which are related to economic changes. When philosophy is considered, science and philosophy have always been hand in hand. The philosophy of Enlightenment does not claim that God is the source of knowledge but the senses and impressions of human. The enlightenment philosophy is also in art such as music, painting, and literature. In art, modernism aims to break with tradition while practising new discourses and constituting new order of creation. This is called 'avant-garde'; the pioneer art movement which is revolutionary (Anderson, 1999: 38). Modernist art movements try to shift from classical and traditional versions to new and unattempted ways. These ways are experimental and they vary, such as expressionism, cubism, dadaism, symbolism, surrealism, impressionism. For this reason, modernism cannot be explained by one specific thought and definition, but there are different descriptions. All forms require their descriptions under the label of modernism. Modernism is an umbrella term in this regard and each movement and modernist attempt needs its explanations.

When another aforementioned shift is considered, from modernism to postmodernism, the adaptation process is slightly different than the one that happened towards modernism. Today's world is an information society and full of media. The high technology, innovation, and technological developments indicate a new social-cultural formation that necessitates new transformations. These new transformations need new notions and theories because they elicit new processes of alteration and conversion (Best and Kellner, 1991: 3) and yet "this contemporary social order" (Habib, 2011: 248) is somewhat different from the shift that happened from traditional society to modern society. The Enlightenment brings "universal

reason”, “a notion of human subjectivity as autonomous”, “the world as knowable (and conquerable) by scientific and technological advance” (248), however, the contemporary economic and cultural situation has a “crisis of representation” (248) because of “the inability of language to represent reality” (248). This point of view appeared together with the rising poststructuralist action and its dominance in language and literature that is discussed later in this chapter.

### **1.1.2. POSTMODERNISM**

Postmodernism, because of its prefix, comes after modernism and to be able to understand postmodernism, modernism is the departure point in this part of the thesis. The prefix ‘post-’ is Latin and the way it is used in Western languages means ‘after, subsequent, later, the following’. The words with ‘post-’ refer to themselves and also the previous period so that explaining the earlier period is essential. Postmodern indicates a historical period in which for the sake of multiplicity, plurality, inchoateness and indetermination, the coherence and notions of causality of modernism are rejected (Best and Keller, 1991: 4). This historical period appears in the cultural chaos that is caused by modernism since the consequences of modernism create the criticism of modernism. Postmodern is the historical duration when the borders start to collapse, and individuality gains importance over materiality and capitalism sees people as “a consumer mass” (Ecevit, 2001: 58). The problem of the subject is the essential problem in the history of thought after the Enlightenment (Saygın, 2010: 8). The problem of the subject occurred together with the collapse in the understanding of Newtonian science because of Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, black hole theories, Einstein’s theory of relativity and quantum physics. The new studies led people to rethink being the centre of the universe because according to these new studies, Newtonian science was set in an environment that belonged to a human being so that the reality or truth were interchangeable and it is not possible to reach an ultimate or divine truth or reality therefore the human mind is not capable to solve every problem and the mind is not enough to comprehend the universe. From these mentioned physics principles, experiments, theories, and laws, a new way of understanding in world-view and philosophy appears and literature has been affected by this very world-view and philosophy.

The point where literature is affected by physics is where the new world-view and philosophy appears. Postmodern points out this chaotic situation and finds a place for itself in three dimensions; “postmodernity in historical development”, “the broad evolution of capitalist economics and cultures” (through late 20th century), and “postmodern theory (to account for and explain it) in literature and art (to express it)” (Habib, 2011: 247). In its historical development, “postmodernity designates a society and culture that has evolved beyond the phases of industrial and finance capitalism” (247). As it is considered, historical and economic shifts go side by side. In society regardless of individuality, human beings are seen as mass, and this causes labelling, however, the “pluralism and diversity at all levels of culture” (247) is the point that postmodernism focuses on. When postmodern theory in literature and art is considered, a new world-view and philosophy appears as if humans knew nothing and nothing could be certain, human mind could not comprehend everything and human being could not know anything. This way of thinking has been an illumination for postmodern. Postmodern embraces the differences, and all opponents come together without any conflict (Ecevit, 2001: 100). On the one hand, capitalism, which was born with modernism, does not consider individuality and claims as if society was a mass, yet postmodernism focuses on the variations and embraces all differences in society.

Some scholars focus on the negative side of postmodernism. Arnold J. Toynbee mentions the dramatic change in culture and the anarchy it causes in society (Best and Keller, 1991: 6). The modern era was stable and rational; however, contrary to this, the postmodern era was the period when rational thinking and the ethos of the Enlightenment started to collapse. In the USA, the postmodern term started to be used in various disciplines. Bernard Rosenberg in *Mass Culture*, claims that there are radical changes in social and cultural level. His approach is also contrary to postmodernism because he focuses on the irrationality of postmodernism and the threatening chaos it causes (7). As oppose to negative approaches, some scholars such as Susan Sontag, Leslie Fiedler, and Ihab Hassan support postmodern thought (10). Barraclough also mentions the developments in science and technology, revolutionary disobedience to imperialism in the Third World, the transition from individuality to mass society, and the new perspective and cultural

forms to understand the new world; and supports to label this era as postmodern since it is not modern anymore (9). According to Amitai Etzioni, WWII was a turning point in history, and after the war, the ways of communication and information changed together with the energy sources, and this was the time when postmodernism starts. The developments in technology and science either collapse all values in society or they are used as a solution to solve the problems in social life to regenerate it (Best and Kellner, 1991: 12-13). Daniel Bell in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, comments as;

We are coming to a watershed in Western society: we are witnessing the end of the bourgeois idea - that view of human action and social relations, particularly of economic exchange - which has molded the modern era for the last 200 years (1976: p.7). (qt. in Best and Kellner, 1991: 13).

Postmodernist theorists try to avoid descriptions and explanations on purpose because to define means to set boundaries and acting dualist which is strictly rejected by postmodernism. Scholars such as Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, Ihab Hassan, Jacques Derrida and Terry Eagleton avoid definite answers about what postmodernism is. Instead of giving specific definitions, they try to explain their remarks on the very situation in postmodernity. Lyotard focuses on the 'postmodern condition' specifically. His work *Postmodern Condition* tries to eliminate the specific descriptions of postmodernism and avoids methodologies. Lyotard mentions 'grand narrative' that is formed by a metadiscourse which is a set of rules after modern science. It is also called *metanarrative* and an "overarching arguments" (Connor, 2004: 148) that try to explain the context, meaning, and purpose of life. "Metanarratives are a form of ideology which functions violently to suppress and control the individual subject by imposing a false sense of 'totality' and 'universality' in a set of disparate things, actions, and events" (Nicol, 2009: 11). However, Lyotard criticises the universalizing theories (Sim, 2001: VII) and focuses on the richness and hybridity of the postmodern condition. According to him, metanarratives are declining because postmodern subjects lose their faith in metanarratives, they prefer "little narratives" (*petit récits*) (qt. in Nicol, 2009: 12) that aims to have the truth for a significant situation that is qualified. He states that "Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" (Lyotard, 1984: XXV). Steven Connor comments on Lyotard's

argument and asserts that what Lyotard does is to show that “the postmodern represented the acknowledgement of unrepresentability without the retreat into the consolation of form could easily be read as a confirmation of modernist principles” (2004: 5). Namely, according to Lyotard, postmodernism is the reactivation of modernist principles that collapsed before (5). Postmodern society is a fast-changing society that is caused by rapid changes in computers, information, scientific knowledge, high technology, science and technology (Best and Kellner, 1991: 166). Lyotard also comments on language and cultural differences. He mentions the unnecessary expectation of having a common language in different cultures (Connor, 2015: 54).

Like Lyotard, Baudrillard also enhances the postmodernist theory in France before it is developed in the US and Britain. His theories on art and consumption in postmodernism and his focus on the sign, image and image-based society, are the main concerns he talks about (Toffoletti, 2011: 1). He was with French intellectuals Derrida, Deleuze, and Foucault and influenced by them. His thoughts affect the way to understand reality, virtuality, communication technologies, consumer society, media, and much more (Toffoletti, 2011: 2). Baudrillard has always been mentioned together with his contemporaries Lyotard and Frederic Jameson because they “chart the shift away from the certainty of modernist grand narratives and coherent categories through which to order and understand the world” (5). According to Baudrillard, modernity was the production period where the industrial bourgeoisie controls the codes and models, and postmodernity is the period of simulation that is governed by models, codes and cybernetics of information (Best and Kellner, 1991: 118). Notably, his theory of simulation mentions the way to comprehend reality in a postmodern and post-industrial society where “the commodification of everyday life” (113) stands. According to Baudrillard, the political economy system rationalises the objects and needs by producing a system of objects and rational subjects. These objects reproduce the labour and consumer system again by gratifying the need of these rational subjects (115). Baudrillard attributes autonomous powers to objects rather than subjects, and in fact, it is like objects become free from production. Accordingly, subjects become null without creation. This is caused by the capitalist system. It aims to make an inversion between the

roles of subject and object. Baudrillard mentions what the capitalist system aims for (132).

Together with Roland Barthes, Henri Lefebvre and other situationists, Baudrillard tries to analyse daily life in which culture affects capitalist systems during the 1960s and 1970s (Toffoletti, 2011: 72). His postmodern theory mostly contains the end or discredit of production, reality, history, modernity, and community (Best and Kellner, 1991: 133) because the capitalist system also affected cultural forms and specifically art because everything becomes meta and value of money in the capitalist understanding. Baudrillard sees art as null and claims that there cannot be anything new created in postmodern. Here, postmodernism cannot be considered regardless of poststructuralism where language and art are on the focus; so that in this point, post-structuralist thinkers comments; “everything is a quotation: everything is textualised in the past, everything has always already existed”, (Baudrillard, 2005a: 55–6)” (qt in Toffoletti, 2011: 48). Only the way of representation changes because mass society requires to consume according to their changing lifestyles and habits. He claims that the second radical change from modern to postmodern society causes emptiness because the postmodern world lacks meaning; it is a nihilist universe. Meaning requires a secret dimension and yet in postmodern, everything is apparent, loud and clear (Best and Kellner, 1991: 127). The secret dimension is revealed through meaning hunting but in postmodern, the hidden dimension is already explicit.

Above all, postmodernism is an art movement. In its historical development, it appeared towards to end of the 1960s in France, and after the 1970s, gained importance in the United States as an artist and thought movement (Doltaş, 2003: 20). It is developed under the influence of the Nietzsche and Heidegger thought system (Rosenau, 1998: 35) even if it is originated in France as an art movement. Lyotard, for the first time in the 1960s, expands the content of postmodernism and postmodern exposition by having published *Postmodern Condition*, he expresses postmodernism in general terms. He reports on knowledge and states that “The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged within this context of general transformation” (Lyotard, 1984: 4). This is the commissure of postmodernism and literature. He mentions language games and gives three remarks about a literary



textbook; first, language is an object; second, language is not enough; third, everything is an intention of a book (10). Postmodernism is related to becoming apparent of the society after industrialization together with the studies on languages. The form of value has changed and “knowledge is and will be produced to be sold, it is and will be consumed to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is an exchange” (4). In a world of information society, knowledge is a commodity. Therefore, if something is valuable to be exchanged, then it is a source of money, so money is precious. Through language, information spreads. After the industrialized society, even the language started to be used as an apparatus of industrialization. Language began to be shaped accordingly and it shaped the system of thought. The reason for having a new understanding of language lies under this. Lyotard states this as ‘language games’ and establishes a direct connection to poststructuralism. He finds the “experimental art as revolutionary in releasing desire” (Habib, 2011: 252), and ‘language games’ helps to release desire. The transformations also find a place for themselves in literary works because it was also shaped according to the changing thinking systems and ideals. When structuralism limits the postmodern thought, as Eagleton asks, it focuses on language and brought some problems to the texts;

How was one to write, in an industrial society where discourse had become degraded to a mere instrument of science, commerce, advertising and bureaucracy? What audience was one to write for in any case, given the saturation of the reading public by a 'mass', profit-hungry, anodyne culture? Could a literary work be at once an artefact and a commodity on the open market? Could we any longer share the confident rationalist or empiricist trust of the mid-nineteenth-century middle class that language did indeed hook itself on to the world? How was writing possible without the existence of a framework of collective belief shared with one's audience, and how, in the ideological turmoil of the twentieth century, could such a shared frame-work possibly be reinvented? (2008: 121).

So, the discussions on literary works required new ways of critical theories that were both useful and suitable for the postmodernist literature because the discourse had been changed from modernism to postmodernism, thus from structuralism to poststructuralism. New versions of discourse were set by the society which was covered with industrial and technological revolutions. In this case, the performance of language differs from what it was in the nineteenth century because the ideological disorder in the twentieth century required new ways of thought and this happens with a new approach towards language. The reinvented way of thought is

happened by language with the help of poststructuralist philosophers' studies in which they try to deconstruct the invented and predetermined values in society and culture via language itself.

Postmodernist literary and cultural theory have been developed by scholars such as Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and Michel Foucault who have also known as 'poststructuralist'. Their studies on language, its form and style, and its relation to society are in the foreground in postmodern criticisms. First of all, postmodernism recognizes ethnic, sexual, and cultural diversity and aims "to give the other a voice", besides "exposing the structures of cultural coercion and domination", and lastly "exhibiting difference, diversity, incoherence" (Habib, 2011: 249). With this wide array of diversity, poststructuralism finds a place to itself because as new styles require new theories, new theories utter a discourse and language to reflect. Poststructuralism, as a term, is known for stating the theoretical discussion which is related to "linguistic turn", "crisis of representation", "decentralisation of subject" (Angelmuller, 2017: 15). When the representations are not efficient to represent anymore, a crisis occur and mentioning this crisis is the very first step that leads to talk about the solutions.

## **1.2. FROM STRUCTURALISM TO POSTSTRUCTURALISM**

### **1.2.1. STRUCTURALISM**

The theory of 'poststructuralism' rejects the structuralist point of view and its forceful structure to draw specific frames of meanings under rules, and it embraces difference, diversity, and incoherence that postmodernism encourages without chronological and linear historical order. In point of fact, as Eagleton states; "With the advent of post-structuralism, what seemed reactionary about structuralism was not this refusal of history, but nothing less than the very concept of the structure itself" (2008: 122). The notion of structure became regressive in a progressing environment and to be able to comprehend the progression, the structuralist approach was inadequate. Yet, firstly, it is beneficial to mention briefly structuralism and then explain poststructuralism to give a clear understanding of the terms that are used in structuralism and accordingly in poststructuralism.

Due to modernist systematic knowledge, different disciplines require systematization. When knowledge, truth, and meaning started to be questioned with modernisation, Ferdinand de Saussure tried to figure a formula to make the questions clear with solutions and specific structures. As a linguist, Saussure systematized language and meaning in his studies which makes him a structuralist. To Saussure, “meaning resides in the sign and nowhere else” (10) and he divided the sign in two as the *signifier* that is the sound or the visual appearance of the words, phrase, or image, and the *signified* as its meaning. “Neither element of the sign determines the other: the signifier does not express the meaning, nor does the signified ‘resemble’ the form of sound” (11). There is not a natural connection between the signifier and the signified, but the contingent choice and combination exist (19), so the relationship between the signifier and the signified is ‘arbitrary’. Saussure does not focus on what people say but his attention is on the structure that allows people to say it (Eagleton, 2008: 99). “Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system” (Belsey, 2002: 12). French philosophy affected Saussure, and he makes a structural relationship between the signs; the signifier and the signified. The signs are arbitrary but still used commonly, so, they are not created by necessity but for convention and common usage.

Structuralism “represents a remorseless *demystification* of literature” (Eagleton, 2008: 92) because structures are formed and determined so that according to them, there is only meaning. Here, Catherine Belsey explains more on meaning as pointing out Saussure offers;

Meaning, Saussure proposed, did not depend on reference to the world, or even to ideas. On the contrary. He argued that, if the things or concepts language named already existed outside language, words would have exact equivalents from one language to another (2002: 8-9).

Language exists regardless of individuals, and structuralism is the one that studies the very language and tries to systematise and formulise it. “The meaning of language is a social matter: there is a real sense in which language belongs to my society before it belongs to me” (Eagleton, 2008: 61). However, the generalization is not fruitful worldwide; different geographies, cultures, societies utter different

systems in their language, although there are common concepts and notions in each language. Structuralism refers to a language system and creates a division from object and subject. However, “At the same moment as structuralism bracketed off the real object, it bracketed off the human subject. [...] The work neither refers to an object nor is the expression of an individual subject” (98). The language system becomes the subject and in this system and case, the individual is traditionalized. However, the structuralist system that studies language and tries to form it, almost erases the human subject from the system. With the richness that appears in society and culture through the 1950s and 1960s together with postmodernism, new ways of thinking started to be required in a rapidly-changing society.

Structuralism aims to reach objectivity, consistency, certainty and truth and to be able to reach them, it creates rules, codes, and systems that are lingual and social. Especially, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss “wanted to find the common element of all cultures, traceable ultimately to universal structures embedded deep in the human mind” (Belsey, 2002: 42), and he mentions the social structure that an individual is born into and how it has already been shaped before the individual is arrived in this structured world of modernism. This structure shapes the lives of individuals together with the social codes that are inherited (Saygın, 2010: 13). These rules, codes, and systems also describe social phenomenons and reject humanism that shaped human and social sciences before (Best and Kellner, 1991: 19). Structuralism also rejects, or mainly decenters, the subject and sees it as an outcome of language, culture, or unconscious. These new notions are originated from Saussure’s semiotics in which he mentions signifier and signified as two products of the sign. “Traditionally, words had been thought of as signs. The sign seemed to represent a presence that existed elsewhere, to stand as the sign of something” (Belsey, 2002: 10). What bothers structuralism is to be capable to determine the definition and explanations of bigger systems than individuals such as the society itself and the language that society produces and performs. Yet, when postmodernism started to encourage individuals and diversity in cultures, structuralism started to be demolished because formulations and bigger structures were not enough to define individuals anymore. Definitions started to be dependent on the subjects.

### 1.2.2. POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Later on, when richness and diversity are encouraged by poststructuralists, Lévi Strauss, Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard produce an impressive amount of (either structuralist or) poststructuralist perspective and its critiques (Sarup, 1993: 1). “Poststructuralism names a theory or a group of theories, concerning the relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of making and reproducing meanings” (Belsey, 2002: 5). The aforementioned scholars are French and there are reasons that postmodern theories are enhanced in France by French scholars. After WWII, France started to be dominated by a fast and forceful modernisation. This caused student and working-class revolts during the 1950s and 1960s. France, also, is the country where the French Revolution experienced and has affected the whole *fin-de-siècle* and is still affecting. The dramatic changes utter new analyses so that French scholars try to define these new ways of lifestyles. Transitions in social and cultural levels are always hand-wringing still they are not recognizable to the individuals like it is to an outsider. For all that, French scholars experienced theories and practices at the same time as field research, since in 1968, the May Riot erupted and due to the changing in the social system when an agricultural society became industrial, and welfare increased. This changes lifestyles and also brings chaos because of the struggle between the traditional and the new (Best and Kellner, 1991: 17). The scholars witnessed the changing dynamics in society, culture, education, and politics and together with theorizing the alterations, they practised them during the riots because riots took control of the streets in Paris.

In 1968, the May Riot helped postmodern theory to be developed. The riot held in France wreaked havoc on Europe as well. Governmental institutions were on the edge of collapsing. Student riots criticised the production of information as a sign of power, and this relationship between power and information is tried to be analysed by postmodernist theorists (23). Students wanted to create solidarity with the working class, and police and army clashed with students. However, consistent leadership was lacking, therefore the riot regressed. France reordered the forces for the sake of patriotism, law, and order. Poststructuralism was a product of this very 1968. It was born from the thought that it was not possible “to break the structures of state power” (Eagleton, 2008: 123) so that, alternatively, “to subvert the structures of

language” (123) was the intention. Nevertheless, the frame is narrow so that postmodernist theorists changed their angles to feminism, ecological groups, gay and lesbian people in which capitalism created problems. The repressive effects of capitalism on sexism, racism, and homophobia needed to have a voice (Best and Kellner, 1991: 24). Thus, postmodernists are called “politically radical”s (25).

Concurrently with the May Riot in 1968, French philosopher Roland Barthes coincidentally published an essay that is called *The Death of the Author* which will be an underlying study for the poststructuralists and for the scholars who study authorship. In this essay, his argument was the shifting structure of the signifier *I*: it depends on the speaker who is using it and each can claim to it. Linguistically speaking, the author is just a figure who is produced by the use of *I*. When someone else uses *I* to be able to constitute themselves, then the use of *I* means just the same. Barthes insists “Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing” (Belsey, 2002: 9). According to Barthes, the text itself should be read regardless of clues and without looking for any reliances that guarantee the only interpretation in which the correctness is not questionable. His concern was not the author but the critical institution. The critical institution claims a “control over the meaning of literary texts by making knowledge of the author’s life and times the key to the only possible reading” (21). The author is not a departure or arrival point in literary texts nor it can be considered as the explanation of the work or the final signified.

After the 1960s, structuralism which is related to the new language, theory, subjectivity, and social notions appeared and was applied to human sciences. For example, basically under the influence of the structuralist Levi-Strauss, linguistics applied to structural studies such as mythology, or kinship system; and psychoanalyst Lacan developed structural psychoanalysis while Althusser developed a structural Marxism (Best and Kellner, 1991: 18). Mentioned studies were about the bigger systems yet they varied. In addition to this, developments in cultural and literary criticism reveal new writing, theory, and discourse notions. Besides Barthes’ study *The Death of the Author*, the journal *Tel Quel*, and the scholars shaped the structuralism and post-structuralism because their academic works were on *Tel Quel* in which they also shaped the intellectual life via their experiences from the riots on

the streets of Paris. Between the years of 1960-1983, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Julia Kristeva focused on capitalist consumerism and stay against a stable meaning by considering the language and writing notions. That was the time structuralism started to leave the stage to poststructuralism. The enhancements in social and economic life were parallel, and structures were not enough for diversity in social and cultural life. After WWII, this continued until the 1960s when Marxism, existentialism, and phenomenology were discussed in France.

After the 1960s, poststructuralists started to reject structuralist insights further, mainly when structuralism aimed to create 'one' basic, true, objective, and precise system to define culture (Best and Kellner, 1991: 20). Derrida's philosophy oriented 'deconstruction', Foucault's focus on cultural history while mentioning 'archaeological' and 'genealogical', and Irigaray's 'difference feminism' are the theories that have shaped and influenced the mindset after the 1960s (Sim, 2001: IX). Poststructuralism is a term that responds to structuralist paradigms and "revolves around the separation of the realm of language from the real world" (Nicol, 2009: 6). It is influenced by French thought. Poststructuralists stop approaching language "as a system of signs", "the construction of identity, subject, and objects", and also they reject "the concept of structure", "the use of binary oppositions", and "structuralism's ahistorical approach"; instead they encourage "the polysemic nature of semiotic codes" and "the arbitrary and constructed nature of the foundations of knowledge" (Habib, 2011: 230). Kristeva and Barthes were pioneers who rebel against structuralism theoretically. Postmodern theory is related to history and culture in France; however, in the English speaking countries, the US, Britain, Australia, and Canada, the postmodern theory is carried towards art. This helped postmodern theory to reach various disciplines and areas (Best and Kellner, 1991: 26).

During the 1960s and 1970s in France, poststructural criticism helped postmodern theory to be enhanced because its discussions are related to literature, philosophy, sociology and politics (Best and Kellner, 1991: 25). Fundamentally, postmodernism takes poststructuralist critics that are against modern theory and expands it through new theoretical fields and disciplines by radicalizing them, so postmodern is a broader phenomenon than poststructuralism (25-26). Still,

postmodernism is poststructuralist because “in problematizing the question of ‘the real’ it signals that it comes after *structuralism*, the implications of which also triggered poststructuralist theory” (Nicol, 2009: 6). Poststructuralism does not support a closed, universal, or completed structure/form like in structuralism, and “when it first emerged in the mid-sixties, that movement was pleased to be regarded as a guerilla insurgency against the old-boy humanism that in one guise or another had ruled the academy for well over a century” (Crews, 1993: VII). Poststructuralism does not seek the answers that are claimed to be only as it is in the structuralist system. “...poststructuralism [is] to challenge traditional theories of language and culture, and with the traditional accounts of what it is possible to know, as well as what it is to be a human being” (Belsey, 2002: 6). The understanding of the structure of the subject, language and meaning, and reality changes through the historical process and this is directly related to social realism. In this case, the individual has an active role to create social life and meaning since it is dynamic and always in the process (Demirtaş, 2015: 24).

### **1.2.3. DECONSTRUCTION**

Poststructuralism problematizes the binary oppositions and rejects the idea of superiority and inferiority, privileged and disadvantaged, that create hierarchies. Since the hierarchies inherited in societies and cultures, the opposition between man and woman is one of the most efficient and dangerous oppositions that poststructuralism tries to solve (Eagleton, 2008: 129). The first principles of the structures are created by the dominant, a particular system that is under the ‘manhood’. So “man is the founding principle and woman the excluded opposite of this” (114). Manhood, the physical power-holder, label itself as the knower and thinker, and woman and womanhood become ‘the Other’ since they belong to neither man nor manhood. To give voice to ‘the Other’ and having an idea about the inferior uttered individual voices. At least the people of similarly suppressed groups came together, and this created multiplicity and diversity. Thus, the predetermined systems were not enough or sufficient to discuss the suppressed groups and individuals, and their existence and rights. “Poststructuralism proposes that the distinctions we make are not necessarily given by the world around us, but are instead produced by the symbolizing systems we learn” (Belsey, 2002: 7). The new form of understanding that is the postmodern required deconstruction of the determining systems because



these determined systems are already fixed and it is not possible to go that deeper and find the sources that create the mentioned thought systems; however, it is always possible to deconstruct the resources and roots of these systems since Derrida evaluates all of the thought systems as ‘metaphysical’ (Eagleton, 2008: 114). Deconstruction is what poststructuralism offers as “the conventional antithesis between subjective and objective doesn’t hold, because the subject is produced outside itself” (Belsey, 2002: 73). Derrida contributes to deconstruction by focusing on language. In *Of Grammatology*, he claims that;

...there is no linguistic sign before writing. Without that exteriority, the very idea of the sign falls into decay. Since our entire world and language would collapse with it, and since its evidence and its value keep, to a certain point of derivation, an indestructible solidity, it would be silly to conclude from its placement within an epoch that it is necessary to “move on to something else,” to dispose of the sign, of the term and the notion (1997: 14).

Here, he supports the idea that signs are meaningless without writing, regardless of their interpretation and production, are confined to the one who receives the signal. He tries to reveal the inconstancy of subject and meaning (Saygin, 2010: 20). He precisely focuses on the structure and categories of language and the way to use language to present an identity. Before him, Saussure’s theory sees the language as a system and “emphasize that language and the world are always separate” (Nicol, 2009: 6). The structuralist system of the language provides the exact comprehension because the connection is arbitrary between the signifier and the signified, yet, still “language works principally by convention” (7). Derrida rejects the idea of predetermined systems and brings forward the fluidity of signs.

Derrida rejects Saussure’s linguistic study because Saussure claims that there can be an exact comprehension; however, according to Derrida, this is not possible. The relationship between signifier and signified is metaphysical, and signs are creating parole (speech) and langue (language) accidentally by gathering together. Derrida adds writing to langue and parole and claims that writing is also not connected to the exterior things that describe and characterise. Just as it happens in langue and parole, writing also lingers. As a difference, langue and parole are supported by facial expression and mimicry, and intonation. In the speech, the vocalic signs are used; in writing, emblematic signs are used. In both of them, signs take the place of the things that do not exist. Yet, in *Grammatology*, he put writing

superior to speech; “writing comes back to haunt us in a way that speech, with its attachment to the present, does not” (Mikics, 2009: 74). While writing or speaking, the mentioned thing is far away from the signifier so that the thing that is happening between the signifier and the signified is to exchange the sign. This happens in a roundabout way. Derrida states that “since we associate – wrongly- speech with life, we run in fear from the written world as from death itself. We desperately wish to disguise writing as speech” (77). The truthness of the sign is not clear because the distance between the objects and the signs are spatial and timewise. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claims that “Derrida seems to show no nostalgia for a lost presence” (1997, np) so that the disconnectedness of word-thing-thought is underlined. The sign brings the presence of the signified in a heterogeneity way, for the diversity and the multiplicity in comprehension are changed by the receiver.

Poststructuralists focus on the signifier instead of the signified and mention the instability of meaning because the representation changes from person to person (Best and Kellner, 1991: 21). Derrida defends that dualisms (subject/object, aspect/reality, statement/inscription), which try to conduct Western philosophy and culture, not only try to embark on guaranteeing the reality but also cause exclusion and trivialise of supposedly inferior terms. Therefore, the hierarchy of values appears (21).

Western culture, Derrida argues, depends on binary oppositions. In this respect, the structuralists were heirs to twenty-five centuries of thought. Moreover, the oppositions are always hierarchic. One term is highly valued, the other found wanting. Nature is privileged over culture, just as speech is privileged at the expense of writing. But these terms can never sustain the antithesis on which they depend. The meaning of each depends on the trace of the other that inhabits its definition (Belsey, 2002: 75).

Derrida is influenced by Heidegger’s metaphysical criticism in which he develops the analysis that is about the representative subject, the abrading effects of technology and rationalism; and Nietzsche’s attack against Western philosophy in which instead of facts some constructions are created by specific individuals or groups (Best and Kellner, 1991: 22). Poststructuralists focus on the importance of differences when unity and identity are considered. They rejected the totalitarian, centralised theories (22). Derrida focuses on the multivocal signifier and the level of expression (Zima, 2002: 44). “Derrida denies both the presence of meaning in a text

and of a text functioning in the communication process” (Zima, 2002: 54). Namely, there is not a constructed identity for objects and a defined set of mind for subjects. “Deconstructionist scenario is only a possibility; it is not inevitable (59). However, as Eagleton puts it in this way:

Structuralism was generally satisfied if it could carve up a text into binary oppositions (high/low, light/dark, Nature/Culture and so on) and expose the logic of their working. Deconstruction tries to show how such oppositions, to hold themselves in place, are sometimes betrayed into inverting or collapsing themselves, or need to banish to the text’s margins certain niggling details which can be made to return and plague them (2008: 115-116).

When Derrida’s thoughts are considered, there cannot be an accurate understanding of a literary text, so, there is no need to find a correct way or analysis for the comprehension of the text. Deconstruction deals with the reasons to restrain the correct understanding and rejects the interpretation. “ ‘Deconstruction’ is the name given to the critical operation by which such oppositions can be partly undermined, or by which they can be shown partly to undermine each other in the process of textual meaning” (Eagleton, 2008: 115). Signs prescribe partially, and they are limited, that is why the exact comprehension is not possible. Signs are open to semantic shift. The situations that affect the subject, such as the way of reading, social norms, reading habits, the connection to notions, are also caused by this semantic shift. All speech acts become signs of leaving a trace. The traces lead readers to different connections and meanings. The person, who chooses to speak or write, has to accept the fact that the only thing they do is leaving traces since the meanings are changing in time and space. As Eagleton states; “Meaning..., is thus never identical with itself. It is the result of a process of division or articulation, of signs being themselves only because they are not some other sign (2008: 111). For this reason, the singularity of a literary text is also not possible. The text cannot be a close and completed product because it is shaped together for example with the previous texts, readers’ backgrounds, the cultural, political and economic returns of the era. The text is a composition and renewal.

Both structuralism and poststructuralism bring out criticism, and Sarup categorizes these critiques as “a critique of the human subject” (1993: 1), “a critique of historicism” (2), “a critique of meaning” (2), and “a critique of philosophy” (3). Namely, structuralist Levi-Strauss sees the human subject as the centre of being;

however, a poststructuralist Foucault deconstructs the concept of being and decentres the human together with Barthes' elimination of the sign *I*, mentioning its dependency according to the user of *I*. When historicism is considered, structuralism glorifies past days to the present-day, and Foucault does not see history as the notion of progress. Moreover, Derrida states an everlasting process for history. He desired "a new, even revolutionary, truth" (Mikics, 2009: 62). Additionally, structuralism does not fit in a progressing and developing lifestyle and culture. It does not provide efficient solutions that are required from new ways of thinking and understanding societies and cultures that started to exist through the 1960s to date.

In sum, poststructuralists focus on propositions and reality. In this case, Lacan mentions the signified is shaped by the signifier. Furthermore, Derrida believes in the purity and simplicity of signifiers (1-3). Derrida goes further and states that "A written sign is preferred in the absence of the receiver" (1988: 7). He puts words (script) before the speech, unlike the previous studies. The poststructuralist approach is not only related to language but also the human subject that produces the language and the meaning that the produced language contains. Besides these approaches, poststructuralists also focus on historicism and philosophy. Postmodern and poststructuralist theories emphasise the conventional and arbitrary importance of subjectivity, society, language, culture, and practices unlike structuralism supports the idea that language games are constituted by contrasts that are adjacent structures (Best and Kellner, 1991: 20-21). Deconstruction is in which language is unreliable because reality determines the language so that words are neither stable nor fixed and meaning is a production of difference. When Derrida mentions deconstruction, it is not a method but there are ways to deconstruct and it reverses the inherited values, forms, and structures. That also means the acceptance of language as it is not stable and meaning is not something that is agreed on so it is interchangeable, the author is not in control of the text that is written, literary works are not internally consistent and do not have external relevance, and the interpretive tools are not set because deconstruction is about binary opposites in the text and they depend on experienced values. Since the text is not in author's hand, readers' participation in reading process is rather significant while reading postmodern fiction.

### 1.3. POSTMODERN FICTION

The radical changes in socio-historical level are responded in postmodern fiction because “there can be no doubt that literary change works ‘symptomatically’, as a result of what occurs at a wider social and cultural level” (Nicol, 2009: 17). To be able to understand what postmodern fiction is, a poststructuralist critical theory comes forward due to its focus on language and the structure of the language. Since postmodernism and poststructuralism interact, a poststructuralist literary theory helps postmodern literature to be examined. In other words, poststructuralist literary theory aims to widen readers’ concept of identifying and understanding the world (Demirtaş, 2015: 21) by deconstructing the predetermined and inherited structures and definitions. The significant thing is to consider postmodern fiction “in terms of form rather than context” (17). The reflection of the social and cultural changes and the response of the readers to this reflection are studied by postmodern fiction. “...the capacity of postmodernism to cut across and combine different styles, traditions, and even disciplines. This is precisely what we find happening in postmodern fiction” (Dix, 2010: 9).

When the dates between 1960-1990 are considered, the political, social, and cultural events that occurred caused uneasiness to the world. “This was a world uneasy with rapid technological change and ideological uncertainties” (Lewis, 2001: 121). Literature responded to the climate in this period of history, and Philip Roth and Tom Wolfe indicated some comments on how literature discussed everyday life. “Roth’s piece declared that the daily news was more absurd than anything fiction could render” (121), and that caused authors to behave experimentally with self-consciousness. Also, because of the rapid changes in technology, visuality gained importance on the social level and “the printed world can no longer compete with the visual media as far as surrealism is concerned” (122). Correspondingly, the way to express the postmodernist situations required new ways of writing because modernist writing was dissatisfactory in a rapidly changing lifestyle. One of the ways was ‘publishing graphic novels and cartoons’ because to be able to have a place in a consumerist society with a great hunger for rapidly consumable images, writing and publishing had to adopt themselves to be preferred.

According to postmodernism, fiction is more “constructing” than “transcribing” (Nicol, 2009: 23). To construct a fictional world, some features are established to make the writing postmodern however they are not methods since no method is available in deconstruction. Postmodern theory is an eviscerated theory in which lists are not given or it cannot be theorized since it is against theorization yet there are methods that are used to be postmodern. However, not every work that uses the methods is postmodern either. Postmodernism destroys its own ideals by rejecting the conclusions because reaching to conclusions means supporting metanarratives. The tool is irony to empty out the meaning and this is the method to avoid the conclusions. What postmodernism prefers is the travel, not the destination. An example is given when the hero fails to reach a conclusion or the text is solved in a ridiculous way, but the main problem cannot be solved. Firstly, constructing a fictional work and then the deconstruction of it is a lifestyle, and this is seen in literature when the constructed values and structures are declined by postmodernist authors. This caused richness and wider voices in literature. In general, poststructuralists states that meaning and language are open systems, meaning goes through from context to context, so it is not stable (Demirtaş, 2015: 16). Also, postmodernist fiction “disorders the linear coherence of narrative” which means both a shift in time and that it plays with the nature of the text as content. It is also called anachronism where past meets present. Another feature is pastiche which is well-described by Fredric Jameson as he states; “the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds... only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already” (qt. in Lewis, 2001: 126). Eagleton adds more on the definition of pastiche that is:

All literary texts are woven out of other literary texts, not in the conventional sense that they bear the traces of ‘influence’ but in the more radical sense that every word, phrase or segment is a reworking of other writings that precede or surround individual work. There is no such thing as literary ‘originality’, no such thing as the ‘first’ literary work: all literature is ‘intertextual’. A specific piece of writing thus has no clearly defined boundaries: it spills over constantly into the works clustered around it, generating a hundred different perspectives which dwindle to the vanishing point (2008: 119).

There is fragmentation in postmodernist literature. Authors fragment plot, characters, setting, and theme, because they reject “the wholeness and completion” (Lewis, 2001: 127) of the structure of the narrative since the aim is to deconstruct.

The wholeness and completion happen in traditional fiction. In postmodern texts, the fragments are also created by “spaces, titles, numbers, or symbols” (127) in between the text. There are chapters or sections to create fragments in the text. The lack of order between chapters is another significant feature of postmodernist literature. The reader may read the chapters by skipping. There is no need to follow the page order. Worth to mention, not following the page order is not valid for every postmodern literary work but it may be applied to some texts. Related to this, the postmodernist plot contains the feeling that Tony Tanner explains as “a dread that someone else is patterning your life” (qt. in Lewis, 2001: 129). This is also called paranoia. In postmodernist literature, the literal and metaphorical exist together; the author has a voice in the text, or “real-life historical figures appear in fictions” (131). When these features are taken into consideration, the link between postmodernist writing and insanity is inevitable. “Some major poststructuralist thinkers enlist ideas connected to schizophrenia in their diagnoses of postmodern society” (132). The experimental way of writing is not an accident. The postmodernist features are “symptoms of the language disorders of schizophrenia as well as characteristics of postmodernist fiction” (133) because postmodernist fiction responds to the language itself in which the meaning depends on the subject and it is subjective unlike determining a specific meaning or interpretation in that literary work of that very language. This is where postmodernist fiction is separated from modernist fiction. Before postmodernist way of thinking, fiction was never affiliated with a mental illness.

When the poststructuralist condition of postmodernism is considered, accurate understanding is not achievable. This is explained by the poststructuralist theory that rejects the homogeniser representations of society (Angermuller, 2015: 100). According to poststructuralist literary theory, text, author, or writer are not stable or depend on the essence. They are open to change. The text is not a completed product but it is a process of production. The process contains the relation between texts and the interaction between the reader and the text with the author (Demirtaş, 2015: 12). Poststructuralist literary theory problematises subject, language and meaning, and reality. Due to language and meaning challenges, texts are open to many ‘readings’. Postmodernism takes away justice because it is something that can be shaped the way everyone wants. It eliminates human value and

all values of its own nature. This leads to a multi-part structure, a fragmented structure that everyone can use as they wish. In this case, deconstruction is helpful to find ways for comprehension. In the postmodernist text, the comprehension is up to the readers, namely “postmodernism in fiction is not simply a matter of how authors write, but how readers read” (Nicol, 2009: 40). In this regard, Derrida also states that the text never belongs to the writer but to the reader, at the moment it is produced and revealed from the author’s pen (Saygin, 2010: 21). Authors talk about complex fictional worlds, yet, they constantly remind one that the created world is fictional. This may be instructive to the reader to learn about the real world. Readers’ approach to reading the text is also efficient because they bring a “certain logic” (Nicol, 2009: 46) to the text. Readers interpret the fictional work. “Paranoid reading” (defined by Siegel in 1976 and McHale in 1992, qt. from Nicol, 2009: 46) and “rhizomatic” maze (Eco in 1985, qt. from Nicol, 2009: 47) are the approaches that readers bring to the texts unwittingly.

The ‘paranoid reading’ is the approach that is related to assumptions. Readers go “beneath the surface” (46), and assumes that symbols, images, repetitions, colours are not a coincidence, but they mean something. The ‘rhizomatic maze’ was used by Umberto Eco to describe the other reading approach. The term ‘rhizome’ is used by Deleuze and Guattari referring to its botanical meaning. In botany, a rhizome is a rootlike stem in a horizontal position without any levels and each shoot and root can produce new shoots and roots. By using this term in philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari try to show the “principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other and must be” (1987: 7). They used the term to define the relationship between different disciplines, philosophy, language, the arts, and social sciences. The “connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity and rupture” (Eco in 1985, qt. from Nicol, 2009: 47) give an alternative reading than ‘paranoid reading’. Deleuze and Guattari say that the rhizomatic way is the way that language works, it is alive and “there are always numerous other meanings suggested” (47) so that the number of interpretation is also high; inasmuch as the number of the readers.

Where poststructuralism focuses on language and works with it, language constructs the subjectivity; namely, it is “socially produced” (Weedon, 1987: 21).



Poststructuralist studies are on language, subjectivity, knowledge and truth while language sets social reality, which does not discuss the given social reality (22). Since the social reality changes from culture to culture or/and from geography to space and place, the discourses also change. This causes changings in interpretation and comprehension because a constituted meaning in a language is not possible. Derrida's moves against Saussure's focus which is on set concepts of sign, signifier, and signified show that language "offers (us) various discursive positions" (25-26). Besides language, poststructuralism focuses on subjectivity and defines it as conscious and "unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual" (32). According to poststructuralism, subjectivity "is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in each time we think or speak" (33). Meanings are not dependent on the texts or authors but the consumer, namely to the reader. Meaning only exist with reading acquisition by the reader (Saygin, 2010: 21).

Since postmodernism is giving voice to 'the Other' and poststructuralism helps this by deconstructing the pre-produced structures, it is essential to mention that the source of the creation of the structures is the patriarchy. The establishing experiences were already there as Derrida states, all structures are metaphysical and open to be deconstructed to reach the sources and roots of the structures that cause binary oppositions since it is not possible to avoid or save oneself from the structures because they are already in deeper history and culture and yet it is possible to extend the causes that are pre-determined according to power holders (Eagleton, 2008: 114). This is the connective, reproducing and intersectional side of poststructuralism that advances with feminist thought and theory. It is not beneficial to tear the structures and culture apart from each other because it points out the source that creates hierarchies that postmodernism and poststructuralism try to shutter. Postmodernism encourages and enhances poststructuralism and vice versa because deconstruction in poststructuralism aims to undermine the binary oppositions. Since the structures are determined by patriarchal structures and man is on the power, woman is described as "other", "she is non-man", "defective man" (Eagleton, 2008: 115). However, man still needs a woman to identify himself, his existentialism requires woman even in his way of thought. Theories have the power to explain patriarchal structures, and the aims are to change them because women are determined by men in these man-

created systems. The questioning of the hegemony of man starts with poststructuralist theory because the language, subjectivity, and power relations should be shattered down, deconstructed and reconstructed to study the notions in a rhizomatic way. Here, poststructural theory helps feminism to define and redefine itself by deconstructing the definitions that are predetermined by patriarchy (Weedon, 1987: 11). The binary oppositions that are created by structuralism are ideologies that are also created by patriarchy, and poststructuralism is appropriate with the feminist concerns by conceptualizing the connection between language, social institutions and individual consciousness (19). The struggle between man and woman has been happening for centuries and together with poststructuralism it is seen that the core reason is a metaphysical illusion. This metaphysical illusion, the mentioned core reason, is created by patriarchy due to its interests and benefits. (Here, patriarchy is not defined as a metaphysical illusion, on the contrary this kind of a comment may cause underestimation to the reality of patriarchy. Instead, metaphysical illusion refers to the struggle between woman and man that is predetermined). In this case, feminism is not only having equal power and status but also questioning the sources of power and status. “It is not that the world will be better off with more female participation in it; it is that without the ‘feminization’ of human history, the world is unlikely to survive” (Eagleton, 2008: 130).

## CHAPTER II

### 2. MARKING THE ENEMY: MAN OR MANHOOD

Postmodernist features has helped posthumanities together with the feminist literary criticism by being against the gender discrimination. Poststructuralism is also against mentioned notions however, posthumanists like Rosi Braidotti supports that poststructuralism is not enough to shutter the obstacle of the human-centred approach (Çelik, 2019: 158). As Braidotti states that posthumanism inherited some concepts from postmodernism, it goes beyond the argument of postmodernism by considering the notions of ethics and politics (2019: 55). Postmodernist and poststructuralist theorists have studied on a radical paradigm shift related to humanism. In the light of their theories, the suppressed has found a place and gained a voice. Feminist theory also avails postmodernist and poststructural theories to shape the posthuman ideas because they both problematise the dualisms that are created by the patriarchy, namely the *power-holders*. The meeting point for feminism and posthumanism is deconstruction because they both try to shatter the inherited and pre-determined definitions and structures.

The mutual problems that the two theories examine, help critics to analyse the written works from today's perspectives. As Neema B. Jimmy mentions, the world is experienced as well as how the textual representations of nature construe the meaning of the world around human beings (2015: 373). To be able to analyse a text without any binary opposition which causes a sided perspective, feminist literary criticism proposes ways. Feminist literary criticism praises poststructuralism in ways; since feminists claim that women have always *become* women so that it is important to discuss the structure of gender and language, and the theories that break the borders between language and genders (Humm, 1994: 16-17).

Here, it is beneficial to mention the change in feminist thoughts in time and what it means to be a 'feminist' in today's technologically advanced world. To do that, first of all, whether feminism is the enemy of manhood at the social, cultural, political, and economic level will be discussed. Later on, how French feminism shaped more the literary arena besides European and Anglo-American feminisms' priorities will be eliminated. The reason to discuss French feminism is that their focus has been on language and literature. In this chapter, besides French feminism,

the connection and relation of French feminism to postmodernism, poststructuralism and deconstruction will be mentioned. Later on, together with scientific and technological revolutions, how feminism has been shaped and is shaping the literary arena in today's scientifically and technologically developed world will be studied. Science and technology are today's reality which cannot be denied so that posthumanists who call themselves the supporter of critical posthumanism and their ideas will be considered with its critics on human-centred approach and the consequences which happened due to the discrimination in gender, race, speciesism. Human is a historical concept but humanism gives importance to significant features, being Western, white, male, and both feminism and posthumanism try to shatter this inherited, traditional understanding of humanity.

### **2.1. FEMINISMS**

“Feminism is the radical notion that women are people” (Shear, 1986: 6) and in a brief explanation, feminism is an ideology and a social, political, philosophical, economic, psychoanalytic, and linguistic movement that focuses on the rights of women and problematises the patriarchal dominance of women. These rights include social, political and economic equality between genders. The dichotomies that were created in decades and the suppressions and the oppressions that are caused by these dichotomies and binary oppositions are against individual rights and they are the main concerns of feminism. Individual, here, thinks rationally and is an autonomous being. René Descartes, by putting the rational individual at the centre, coded the male as “fully conscious to himself, in control of his actions; thoughts and meanings” (Francis et al., 2003: 10). This seems like an ideal system however, rationality is assigned as a male quality and women or other people are not considered as rational. This shows that some specific features have more value than others. Moreover, when patriarchy takes over the authority and the power, it starts to generate ‘institutions’ which distributes “the mainstream social values and beliefs” within society (14). These institutions exclude women from the social system because, in the eyes of patriarchy, women are considered weak, lacking power and authority. According to Foucault's description, power is not institutional or structural but is “a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (qt. in Francis et al., 2003: 66). So power is a concept that is created by patriarchy.

Male hegemony creates the binary system since they have the authority and the power, and they are the decision-makers. Masculinity and maleness become superior and privileged, and patriarchy is “a social system in which maleness and masculinity confer a privileged position of power and authority; where man is the Self to which woman is Other.” (Francis et al., 2003: 14). Blaming white, élité, European men is not helpful to create a solution to the problem of patriarchy, yet, still; “Forms of oppression from both the present and the past have left their traces in Western culture as a network of dualism, and the logical structure of dualism forms a major basis for the connection between forms of oppression.” (Plumwood, 2003: 2). So, in general terms, the world view that Descartes presented caused binary oppositions. Feminism is against dualisms that are causing suppression and oppression. Feminism is trying to avoid hegemonies, dichotomies that are the results of patriarchy and hierarchy. Yet, feminism itself has many roots and it is manifold. Feminism itself is an umbrella term because it maintains a lot of different point of views and priorities. In time, the priorities changed and different feminist ideals support and focus on different agendas yet it has been gaining power from the ‘othered’ women in society. It manifolds the oppression against women and other non-man beings in social, political, psychoanalytical, economic, and philosophical life.

Feminism is a social movement because it criticises the unequal social rights between genders. Feminism is politics since all the systems are created in a social realm and this social realm has rules that are defined by politics together with the authority. Since the authority is under male hegemony, namely, the rules are defined by patriarchy and patriarchal society. In the process of building up hegemony, it is mostly the male ecclesiastics, journalists, politicians, academicians, actors, advertisers, and sportsmen, who are intellectually influential on society, that have a role (Bozok, 2009: 275). In patriarchal systems, the power-holders, save their authorities by controlling and suppressing the others (Crispin, 2017: ch.4, para. 5.). Namely, not only the male characters in the society define the rules, yet, the supporters of this authority, regardless of gender, the power-holders examine them. Feminism is also a psychoanalytical movement because it goes deeper towards unconscious parts of the mind and analysis the linguistics, visual or behavioural

practices through cultures and societies to be able to find the very beginning of the power relations (Francis et al., 2003: 44). Feminism is economic because it problematises the hierarchies in society. Woman is the one who does the housework so that the participation of women in society in economic level is limited by the pressure that is applied towards women. Feminism is philosophical because, on both an ontological and an epistemological level, it questions the pre-determined definitions for 'woman' and 'man' which cause suppression and oppression. Western thought developed rational thought by focusing on Newtonian science, yet marginalized groups and individuals excluded from the production of knowledge. "Historically, among those groups and individuals who have been the slave classes, the working classes, the uneducated (or uncredentialed), and women" (Calvin, 2016: 2).

There are some widely accepted standarts to be leaders, and personality is not the reason that women cannot be leaders but the patriarchal society. There are the obstacles women face because of male hegemony from the very beginning. Male hegemony takes the power and authority in different ways. It is the result of the hunting and agricultural structure of societies. Some approaches support the very idea of it all started from being a forager. Men went to fight against animals and women stayed in the caves and cooked food. The physical capabilities and abilities were a way to choose the physically stronger one in those days but time does not require a forager lifestyle anymore. In today's postmodern world, Foucault's term 'biopower' is the modern time power and it is the control of the body and the species "through methods of categorisation, measurement, definition and validation" (Francis et al., 2003: 188). The understanding of power is updated to biopower now. From a feminist point of view, bio-power is also turned into a bio-pirate situation because this time it aims to exploit the productive power of women, animals, plants, genes, and cells (Braidotti, 2009: 239). 'Power' is the problem in all institutionalised areas of life which are the results of male hegemony. Institutionalization is patriarchal (Francis et al., 2003: 188), and authority tries to dominate and control what is around. In this case, women are suppressed, so as nature. Men dominate everything, from women to nature and there is no place will be left to live after the destruction of the planet if patriarchy continues to dominate. Feminist theories try to

optimise ways for any beings and the world. Feminism problematises the language and tries to eliminate the patriarchal authority figure in language because language is a system as well which is defined by the authority. Feminist literary theory, in this case, states the feminist ideologies and their applications on literary texts and how the feminist ideals shape literature. Feminist literary criticism has shaped the teaching of literature, writing literature and the way of thinking literature (Humm, 1994: VIII). Especially French feminists' works, such as Julia Kristeva's, Helene Cixous', and Luce Irigaray's, help to shape this way of thinking in literary theory. Their way of concerning man-made and pre-determined language aims to consider women not as an "other" but as a being.

There has always been a women's movement, moreover, the first feminist book was written by Christine de Pisan in the 1400s, named *Book of the City of Ladies* but not until the 19th century when the women's movement developed. During the time, feminism has had different waves which focus on different issues. During the 19th century, there was the First Wave of feminism. Women were fighting for the right to vote. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was the book that was the pioneer of the movement. Women insisted on the equal political and legal rights as men have. The movement's predominant goal was female suffragette since it was believed that if women had a right to vote, all other forms of inequality and sexual discrimination or prejudice would disappear quickly. Ironically, winning the right to vote devitalised the women's movement. Monique Wittig remarks on the failure of the First Wave Feminism by saying that the first feminists did not consider history as a process that was actually the result of the clash of interests, moreover, just like men, they believed that the reason and resource they are suppressed was lying in them and they believed in the "myth of woman" (1993: 106). Second Wave's motto was "Personal is political," and it was not only political freedom or social emancipation but women's liberation and became increasingly radical and revolutionary. The movement started to show itself in the 1960s thanks to Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) in which she states that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". Also, Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique* had a significant role in the movement. Beauvoir's statement helped feminist studies problematise gender and sex after the 1970s (Öztürk, 2009: 5).

Instead of homogenising the concept and assumptions related to women, De Beauvoir helped to raise the awareness of the differences between women and theorising these variations. Women focused on the ways to legalize abortion, to earn equal pay laws, anti-discrimination legislation and wider access to education, political and professional life. In academic disciplines, there was raising consciousness about gender issues. Especially Judith Butler's studies on gender and its being performativity is significant for the Third Wave of feminism. Third Wave has been about third world women and this time it was the years 1990s and movement became wider and inclusive and focused on mixed types. Judith Butler's studies. The main focuses were stereotypes, media portrayals and the language to define women. Women tried to strike about gender violence, reproductive rights, reclaiming derogatory terms and rape ("Feminists: What Were They Thinking?", 2018).

In addition to these, feminist literary criticism finds a place to itself in the increasing feminist movement. The two are not separate and they both support and enhance each other. Feminist literary criticism cannot be thought of without the feminist movement and vice versa. Firstly, feminist literary criticism focuses on gender forms. These gender forms are determined beforehand. The difficulties to be defined by a pre-determined language are on the focus of feminist literary criticism. Secondly, it gives the reasons to form the genders repeatedly. Thirdly, it helps to find the hidden germs or the ignored texts and authors in women literature. Besides, feminist literary theory became a part of the women's movement during the 1960s and the following 1970s. For instance, Kate Millett and her *Sexual Politics*, Simone de Beauvoir and her *The Second Sex*, Betty Freidan and her *The Feminine Mystique* and Germaine Greer and her *The Female Eunuch* stated the questions related to literature and culture. They all mentioned the binary oppositions in gender and try to find the universal explanations for the reasons for women's second place in society, culture, and literature. Nevertheless, none of the four studied specifically on literary criticism (Humm, 1994: 8).

On the other hand, other feminist approaches drew attention in time. Various feminist thoughts gained voices due to their appearance in a specific time and place. For instance, Marxist and socialist feminists believe that literature, first of all, is



shaped by institutions and their historical background. Lilian Robinson and Michele Barret are Marxist – socialist feminists. Psychoanalytical criticism’s relation to feminism is dealt with for various reasons. They both focus on the relationship between child, mother and father figure, gender and the way to represent the gender in a pre-determined language, and an approach to literary texts as codes and limited sayings. They both try to find the hidden realities. Black feminism focuses on the African diaspora, African-American culture and the Caribbeans. The traditions, history and culture, and the representation of motherhood is the concern in this criticism. Audre Lorde, Barbara Christian, Alice Walker and Barbara Smith are black feminists. Lesbian feminist criticism challenges the heterosexist and homophobic literary texts. Third World feminist critics are Rosario Castellanos from Mexico, Chandra Mohanty from India, Gloria Anzaldua from Texas, and Rey Chow from China. Their focus is on writing autobiographies and memoirs so that they can have their voices, not the representations. They have been represented for a very long time regardless of their existences. Third World feminists challenge this.

French feminist criticism criticizes and is against the form of women that is from the point of view of patriarchy. They focus on the representation of binary oppositions such as man/woman and mind/soul. French feminists target to create a positive representation of ‘the Other’ and ‘oppressed’ with a new language. The way of French feminists is also known as *écriture féminine*, women’s writing (Humm, 1994: 21-25). French feminists’ approach to language makes them different from other feminist thoughts. Foucault’s statements on the relationship between knowledge, authority, and language, and Lacan’s reinterpretation of Freud’s psychoanalysis are helpful to French feminist criticism. By doing so, since the patriarchal ideology starts with the language, French feminists focus on the secondary roles of women that were caused by language.

## **2.2. FRENCH FEMINISM: “ÉCRITURE FEMININE”**

Behind all French feminism, there is Simone De Beauvoir’s concept of ‘woman as other’ since she studies what is being a woman “historically, sociologically, anthropologically, and psychologically” (Direk, 2009: 16). De Beauvoir points out the decision-making mechanism of men via stating that; “Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe

it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth” (1956: 162). Second-wave feminists focus on the gender stereotypes that are determined by men in literature, and following feminists also focus on language as much as they focus on literature. During the 1970s, in France, feminist authors and critics focused not only on the fictions that were sexist but also the sexist thinking system that supported the structure of literature (Humm, 1994: 93). French feminism includes various authors and literary texts from psychoanalysis to utopia. French literary criticism is shaped by the works of Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva; however, the contributions of Toril Moi and Antoinette Fouque are also significant. Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray are the pioneers because they study language and subjectivity in literature. Due to their thoughts, a ‘woman language’ started to be discussed in the literary arena.

These three French feminists have a common point and that is the belief that the structure of understanding is encoded in language by language. They are also deconstructivists because they believe that languages are systems that are created by power systems and can be found and deconstructed. French feminists mostly focus on the processes of language, especially the process of learning a language from infancy. By focusing on infancy and the language learning process, they aim to deconstruct the patriarchal discourses. Since the female language is suppressed, it is ‘the Other’ in the cultural and social realm (Humm, 1994: 93-94). French feminist criticism focuses on deconstruction but they also aim to reproduce. Reconstruction of the female language is an agent to be able to break down the history of language, literature and philosophy in which society has been formed. The patriarchal ideology is in the language which puts male genitalia at the centre. For instance, the French language with its letter, silent ‘é’, is not an accident to be considered by French feminists because silent ‘é’ is feminine. The silent é is feminine in French which also means that silence is attributed to femininity and these kinds of connotations of the word, silence paved the way for a discriminative stereotype that female should be silent. The way to change the secondary role woman has been placed in society is to deconstruct the phallogocentric thought and destroy it. After that, a new language will be required and then reconstruction starts. As Irigaray mentions that it is forcing

human beings to believe pre-determined descriptions without experiencing any concepts and this causes extirpating human beings from life (2013: 35).

In *écriture féminine*, critics focus on the significance of femininity and the relationship between gender and writing style. Patriarchy is symbolised and represented with a phallus. In shape, it is strict and direct so it gives confidence. However, de Beauvoir states that it is not the sexuality they have but the authority that shows as if their sexuality are superior and what women lack is not sexuality but power that men have (qt. in Demir, 1997: 96). Man is rational but the woman is defined differently in this organisation, therefore, if the woman does not reject the patriarchal rationality, they trap in a society that does not belong to them. That is why, women's world experience has to be different than men's (Walby, 1991: 97). The writing styles are shaped in the subconscious so that it is psychoanalytical because the language is pre-determined. Women's subconscious can break the pre-determined forms of language because language is on the surface and what is happening is hidden. Women writers may put the real necessities and happenings on their writing and this happens not by using a pre-determined language but a reconstruction of a female language at first via deconstructing the patriarchal language.

The deeper changings in language started to be happened with the student riots in May 1968, in France. Aforementioned in the previous chapter, the student riots also helped poststructuralism to be developed and find a place to itself in social, political, economic, and philosophical systems. The authority was questioned and both poststructuralism and feminist movement benefitted from this movement. Considered as a short period, postmodernism becomes the movement which is started in art, literature, thought, philosophy, architecture, science, music, shortly in every field of human life (Demir, 1997: 81). Besides social, political, economic, and philosophical changings which were radical, the riots also shaped the understanding of femininity, womanhood, culture, and subjectivity. "Even if it was (sometimes) being disparaged, feminism was in the news, on the television, and people's minds. This public awareness of feminism and women's issues assisted in the emergence of a new wave of feminist science fiction" (Calvin, 2016: 16). Feminists rejected the isolation of literature from the politics in which women had a secondary role because

they produced in both areas. The shattering borders between various and different disciplines gave importance to transparency in borders so that poststructuralism and the developments of feminist theory and women's movements were hands in hand. Both postmodernism and feminism criticise the philosophical system, focus on a deeper and different criticism on philosophy and culture, and try to stay away from the traditional concepts of philosophy (Demir, 1997: 87). Therefore, both poststructuralism and feminism problematise the dualistic world view, binary oppositions and authority that shapes the culture and society.

When feminist theory detects a problem in society, the rejection of the patriarchal thinking system and the need to find new less violent concepts start blooming in society. In this case, the feminist theory presents a specific attitude and a frame to detect the patriarchy and the inequalities it causes. Feminist theory criticises the phallogocentric point of view in Western philosophy and the unbalanced male thoughts in history. As Jessica Benjamin highlights, "...Western culture has privileged and institutionalised the masculine ideal of separation, autonomy, self-reliance and individualism as the model for subjectivity..." (qt. in Francis et al., 2003: 61). Understanding the very concept of gender and generating new politics to find a standpoint against gender-based violence and hatred in society are not only women's duty. Feminism is not just for women, but all people. Especially, the education that is crucial in a patriarchal society, in which men's gender-based violence and hatred against women have been drastically increasing the prevalence of femicide each day more, is not and should not be just women's concern. The Cartesian thought which was shaped together with the Enlightenment philosophy causes a constructed social system that normalises the gender inequality. The rational mind of the Enlightenment praises only the white male Western European bourgeoisie's mind, but meanwhile, it trivialises women and body. As a solution and critic to the Cartesian dualism, Gilles Deleuze offers that the body is also precious. This way of thinking is also a challenge against the belief that supports gendered thought on the social level (Stark, 2017: 2-3). Deleuze undermines the suppressed philosophy against women so that his studies enhance feminist theory.

In Enlightenment philosophy, rationality is a significant feature to be a human. This means that women, who are alienated from rationality, also considered

inferior and less human. Deleuze's criticism of the Enlightenment thought frees the mind from the hierarchies and frees the body from its valuelessness. He states that body and mind are intertwined (Stark, 2017: 8). Cartesian thought offers a system that is problematic for women and it is asserted by Rene Descartes who puts men together with mind and reason. [As Calvin states; "To be sure, dualism does not originate with Descartes. For example, Plato discusses a mind/body split in zher *Phaedo* and is evident in zher *Theaetetus*" (2016: 4)]. This causes women to be inferior to the idea of the body. The binary oppositions require a superior and an inferior. In Cartesian dualism, superior has always been man, reason, and culture because he has the owner of the phallus, a straight and direct object which is not unclear or uncertain. According to Lacan, the phallus is not the penis but it points out the universal signifier of loss (Francis et al., 2003: 63). So, inferior and needy has been thought as woman, body, and nature because she 'lacks' phallus and what she has, uterus, is hidden in her body all the time. This dualist system makes it impossible to be a woman and reasonable at the time (Stark, 2017: 10).

Humanist thought is a secular philosophy because it rejects the scholastic thought which supports the religious doctrines and beliefs that are enough to explain the world. Instead, the explanations and definitions about the world can be made by reason and mind. Since men have the idealised version of mind and reason, they have been automatically prioritised. This is not only giving authority to man but also giving power to human over non-human. Ecocriticism, human studies, and posthumanities have been criticising the Cartesian thought which puts human at the centre. Rejecting the binary oppositions and criticising anthropocentric thought help non-human beings and woman to become 'beings', not 'others'. Deleuze states that the subject cannot be the source of thought because it is under the influence of the things that happened before the subject (Stark, 2017: 19). In this case, Deleuze and Guattari offer an alternative system to a way of thinking which is known as 'rhizome' instead of having binary trees.

Posthumanist thought is influenced partially by Deleuze's studies. Posthumanism starts from burning the borders and dichotomies that were created by Enlightenment thought. It deconstructs the hierarchical oppositions starting from Western thought and aims to shatter the privileged side of the human-centred

approach by focusing on the connection between human and non-human (with a scale from animals to artificial intelligence) (Çelik, 2019: 146). Posthumanism is also a feminist project because they both problematise the oppression of woman and the suppression of patriarchy (Stark, 2017: 113). In today's technologically advanced world, the Anthropocene in which human actions shape the systems of the world is discussed because definitions are changing. New terms are created and it is significant to redefine humanity. Patriarchy, capitalism, or anthropocentric dualisms are not helpful to define what means to be human anymore. Instead, posthumanist feminism takes the problem from the very beginning. It takes the subject to animals, technology, and non-human while criticising the norms that exclude woman.

### **2.3. FEMINISM IN A TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED SOCIETY**

The reliance that everything is to serve to human needs and demands, and the hierarchical appreciation is collapsed by the different way of thinkings and movements from time to time. One of the very remarkable rejection is from Foucault when he “rejected the centrality of human cognitive processes in the production of knowledge” (Nayar, 2014: 26), namely, that is to say, that, knowledge is as constructed as a human which means that there cannot be sovereignty. When it comes to sovereignty, in today's information era, one of the arguments raised from the human-centred approach created the ‘anthropocentric’ worldview. Anthropocene, which defines the era that is described by how human actions and existence have negative affect and impact on the environment and nature, was firstly defined by Nobel Prize winner, chemist Paul Crutzen, in 2002, and he used this term to be able to define a geological era which is formed by human actions for the world's sustainability (Braidotti, 2019: 57). In Anthropocene, there is the human-centred approach and how this approach causes problems are explained. In the last thirty years, the contrary studies to the human-centred approach come together under the umbrella term ‘posthumanism’. Posthumanism is a philosophical approach where human and non-human come together, “the machine and the organic body and the human and other life forms are now more or less seamlessly articulated, mutually dependent and co-evolving” (Nayar, 2014: 19). Posthumanism treats subjects as enmeshed which is also seen in feminist theory's problem in terms of equality.

One of the that puts human aside and glorifies nature is ecocriticism in which human and nonhuman entities, especially human beings and nature, are discussed hand in hand, not as one of them is superior and the other is inferior. Peter Barry mentions “For the ecocritic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironised as a concept by enclosure within knowing inverted commas, but present as an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it.” (Barry ch. *Introduction*). Ecocriticism has been trying to destroy almost two-hundred-year domination of the human-centred thinking system, and it has been challenging to shutter differing kinds of hegemony and dominance against nature. Since blowing down the superiority and inferiority, and hierarchy through deconstruction is a feminist trouble, ecofeminism started to be a problem solver mechanism in both the field of inequality and environmental problems. “What ecofeminism harshly criticises is all forms of oppression, the reverse, the relationship among all forms of living and nonliving beings is embraced.” (Kumbet, 7).

When ecofeminism first appeared as a wing of feminism, it started to problematise the adventitious and politically, socially, and culturally constructed connections that were determined by patriarchy between women and nature. It has been politically, socially and culturally activist and political since then. The issue began where and when the patriarchal dominance and decision-making mechanism find a place for itself in the system. As Plumwood mentions “We need a common, integrated framework for the critique of both human domination and the domination of nature” (2003: 1), ecofeminism sees a relationship between the destruction of nature and domination to women and has a gender perspective which states that the environmental problems’ base is the inequality that patriarchy caused. Patriarchy causes destruction and it sees itself as privileged.

Feminism has a great role in the environment. We define nature with female voices and more important than this, feminism rejects suppression in any kind. Radical ecofeminism states that women and nature are both suppressed by the male sovereign. Another perspective mentions the productivity in woman body and nature, and claims that there is a connection because of this; however, it is a humiliation to woman and nature to make this connection according to radical feminists (Milner-Barry). By doing so, both the value of nature and woman is degraded. They do not

have to describe each other or have a connection. Nature is beyond there, before and after every being. Ecofeminism is one of the approaches which gathers gender and environmental problems together, queer theory is also efficient in this case because they both put “identity of humanism” as “multiple, fractures and unstable” (Nayar, 2014: 34) which means that both of the theories are aware of the fact that the conception of the identity of humanism is socially constructed and created by patriarchy. Therefore, both of the theories give importance to the idea of multivocality, integrity, co-emerging, enmeshed and embedded agents/subjects.

Ecofeminism attacks the forms that are hierarchical and related to domination, and patriarchy is the one that creates suppression and hegemony against women and nature. Equality between genders, species, and sexuality is the main aim of ecofeminists where Braidotti extends Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘being-animal’ or ‘being-world’ to ‘being-cyborg’ through a posthumanist perspective (Çelik, 2019: 152) where she makes a connection between human and all non-human. She widens her angle until the cyborg and includes *it* because now, it is the era of artificial intelligence and the definitions of the concepts of mind, reality, artificiality, truth, soul, being, existence, meaning and knowledge are analysed and redefined. The computer age requires new theories and practices in which there is a paradigm shift in the way of understanding. Certain conceptions/concepts are coming to an end. Especially, the terms ‘information’ and ‘knowledge’, for example, require new definitions because old explanations are not enough to exemplify them anymore.

Ecofeminism is against inequality, injustice, racism, homophobia, ecophobia, discrimination, segregation not only to the woman but to all species, either organic or inorganic, either human or nature and robot. Because “human life has always been symbiotically connected to many life forms and technologies” (Nayar, 2014: 46), the blurriness between human/non-human concepts is discussed now. There has always been discrimination against women, namely, women have been seen as objects. Women are seen as pleasure material and either inorganic or organic, only the femaleness matters in this case. Ecofeminism intends to transparent the borders and create an enmeshment between species/beings. The manner to do this is to make ‘beings’ equal by breaking down the binaries.



Donna Haraway in *Cyborg Manifesto* mentions the transgressing boundaries and hierarchical institutions. She does that via mentioning cyborg as “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (1991: 149). Her cyborg figure deconstructs fundamentally established norms, longlived gender binaries, and patriarchal influences, racial tendencies, phallogentric and anthropocentric ideas. Haraway focuses on identity politics and gender norms and deconstructs gender binaries. That is why *Cyborg Manifesto* is a strong feminist work. Moreover, it opens up a new perspective to posthumanism because she tries to eliminate the pre-determined gender concepts in a “post-gender world” (Miah, 2008: 83). At first, she used ‘cyborg’ as a metaphor and her aim was “to deal figuratively with the new technologies and their impact on human society” (Francis et al., 2003: 72). She uses ‘cyborg’ as a figure to deconstruct all established notions and norms in terms of identity, race, gender, nationality (whatever this established and imposed idea is); there is no race, gender, no specific identity, no history, no parenthood background in cyborg’s life but it *still* is a being.

While explaining *Cyborg Manifesto*, Andy Miah brings forward an analysis in his article, “Posthumanism: A Critical History”, in the “Cyborg Rights & Wrongs” part. He starts with and mentions Katherine Hayles who has a significant role in cultural posthumanism and posthumanities in general besides Haraway, and how Hayles’ posthumanism takes its actions from Haraway’s cyborg. Miah also mentions the connection between Haraway and Hayles, and how Hayles desires “to erase burden of the body” (Miah, 2008: 83). In the current era, “to translate bodies into information” (7) is in the foreground, yet, information and knowledge are also socially constructed. Hayles’s starting point is Haraway’s cyborg since she attributes a different meaning to cyborg; now it is a world people prefer to be cyborg rather than being goddesses (82). Haraway focuses on the liberation of women, especially women, and all forms of marginalised groups, from limitations, restrictions, constraints in society. Since Haraway used cyborg to mention the hierarchical institutions and shattering the boundaries, “the moral status of artificial life” (8) are both Haraway’s and Hayles’ concerns. According to Hayles, humanity reached a kind of an end as Foucault mentioned, however, it is also a starting point of a new

era for the new definition of human, information, and knowledge. Miah mentions “For Hayles, posthumanism is characterised by a (desired) loss of subjectivity that is based on bodies losing their boundaries.” (83), as Haraway tries to mention how twentieth-century information technology fails human creations.

The concept of ‘losing boundaries’ is very significant in posthumanism, because posthumanism studies the blurring images of transitions of bodily borders between humans and non-humans. “The posthuman is not a distinct ‘other’, and entirely new species; instead, the posthuman is a hybrid that is more developed, more advanced, or more powerful version of the existing self” (Seaman qt. in Nayar, 2014: 35). The connection between ecofeminism and posthumanism lies in this belief in the transparency between borders and how existing selves are connected. Miah makes a connection in blurring transitions and losing boundaries in Haraway’s cyborg. Haraway’s thoughts on not radicalising but reforming the socio-cultural sphere by posthumanism show that she is more on how to become posthumanist rather than posthuman. At first, Haraway’s cyborg is “to deal figuratively with the development of new technologies and their impact on human society – both the material transformation of the workplace and the sociocultural transformation of individual subjectivities.” (Francis et al., 72); however, it is not figuratively dealing anymore; “embodiment is constituting experience into the constantly evolving body. (83)”. Thus, ‘cyborg feminists’ serves the creation of transparency between natural-unnatural and organic-inorganic because it is difficult to identify the determinants of which is which anymore. Embodiment, as Hans Moravec states, is not enough to identify human but human identity is rather an informational pattern (Hayles, 1999: XI-XII). Therefore, the concept of information and knowledge makes the borders transparent and gives importance to the development of posthuman studies. Approaching the subject by stating that it is embedded rather than being embodied is essential in this case.

In today’s postmodern world, subjectivity is crucial in the understanding of socially constructed concepts. Since it is difficult to identify what is natural and unnatural, there are different approaches appear and transhumanism is one of these concepts that is bringing together the ‘organic’ and ‘inorganic’, moreover, it goes forward and claims that with the help of technology there will be superhumans in the

future (Transhumanist Declaration, 2012). In transhumanism, there is still an anthropocentric approach, unlike posthumanism. It is believed that as Nayar mentions that “Transhumanists believe in the perfectibility of the human, seeing the limitations of the human body (biology) as something that might be transcended through technology as a means of ‘adding’ to already existing human qualities and of filling the lack in the human.” (2014: 16). In this case, the possible futures and how they are combined with technology, transhumanism and posthumanism in different examples are seen.

The question arises; if humans will be enhanced via technology, then do they have any responsibilities to inorganic ‘beings’, which is the ethical part of the concept. While transhumanism puts human at the centre, critical posthumanity “offers a more inclusive and therefore ethical understanding of life” (Nayar, 2014: 19). Posthumanism is fully represented by feminist theorists in the 90s and today the theorists call themselves critical posthumanists who point out the connection between human and non-human beings via including animals and artificial intelligence. Thus, the connection between ecofeminism and critical posthumanism is crucial in this very point because ecofeminism and posthumanism question the hierarchy and domination, critical posthumanism considers the ethical part as well. Critical posthumanism also rejects the idea that humanity has features that are unique, and superior to other beings. Such features such as “altruism, consciousness, and language” (Nayar, 2014: 12) are not special for humans as it was thought before posthuman and animal studies.

A posthumanism is a philosophical approach, it concerns the co-evolution of machines, animals, and humans. “Critical posthumanism sees the uniquely human abilities, qualities, consciousness and features as evolving in conjunction with other life forms, technology and ecosystems” (Nayar, 2014: 14) so that there is a multidisciplinary and rhizomatic approach here. Posthuman does not exclude human from the scene, on the contrary, the logic is that; how can we define humanity anymore in this biotechnologically and biomedically advanced world. There is no exclusion of humans from the system in this approach, but more likely, the awareness of human is overwhelmed by a human is underlined. Technology alone cannot be considered as fully good or bad and yet the important thing is who

produces new technologies and why (Çelik, 2019: 149). Critical posthumanism tries to include all beings. It does this with the embodiment, but rather focusing on the concept of information and it is a multidisciplinary approach that studies cognitive science, biology, philosophy, besides, seeing the complexity of human systems (Nayar, 2014: 20). Posthumanist feminism is a way to collect postmodern, poststructuralist, feminist, and posthumanist features together. In today's anthropocentric world view, it is rather essential to mention environmental studies. Environmental studies, feminism, and posthumanism enhance each other. The mentioned theories study the problems that belong to society, culture, and connecting literature. These problems lay under the influence of the male hegemony and dominance, and find places for themselves in the existing societies and cultures. The main bother is to deconstruct the notions and values which cause hegemony and dominance.

Environmental studies focus on the disruptive portion of human beings and the ways of destroying and shaping the environment by power-holders via suppressing all other forms and genders unlike theirs, and creating hegemony. Feminist studies, in the most general sence, focus on the repressing side of patriarchy and problematises inequality between genders in cultures and societies. Posthuman studies inherit all these concerns and attempt to find resolutions to this dualistic approach. The common goal is *to deconstruct*. With the help of feminist studies and critical posthumanism, the awareness of the predetermined concepts increased. Together with feminism and environmental studies, posthumanism tries to demolish the binary oppositions in cultures. The happenings of the cultures and societies are seen in literature precisely as literature is the way to reflect and represent the society and culture. Literature "is the field where 'nature' of the human in all its experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and possibilities might be witnessed" (Nayar, 2014: 49). So, the new definitions, descriptions and debates on human take a part in literature. This helps to take into consideration 'the different' or 'alike'. One of the best ways, in a technologically advanced world, is to use the visuality in texts to make them more remarkable, attention-grabbing, and efficient. It is difficult to catch such changings in a fast-changing society so that it is important to temporise accordingly. In the case of literary works, graphic novels and comics are beneficial apparatus to create

awareness in societies and cultures today because they also get their share's of the paradigm shifts in economic, political, social, and cultural level of deconstruction.



## CHAPTER III

### 3. FROM CAVE PAINTINGS AND COMIC STRIPS TO GRAPHIC NOVELS

Here, it is useful to mention the effects of graphic novels, comics, science fiction, and superheroes on society since society reflects the norms and notions that are happening in time, and then. From a very far technologically backward village to a technologically developed city, while walking around daily, one comes across to people who wear superhero t-shirts, and schoolgirls or boys who carry superhero backpacks, or groups who talk about an upcoming superhero movie that mostly belongs to Marvel or DC. Marvel and DC first appeared as publishing houses and became “mainstream companies” (Duncan, 2009: 9), and now, not only their superheroes appear on comic books’ pages but they also have started to appear on the screen. The mentioned two companies started to dominate popular culture with the characters of their comic books, especially with superheroes by publishing superhero comic books for decades and then producing fantastic/science fiction superhero movies which are adaptations from the comic books. These companies have a rich history behind them together with other publishing companies concerning the development of popular culture via comics from the 1930s until today, and Marvel and DC are the ‘publishers’ that shape the popular culture elements today as the leaders of the industry.

Some billboards show the upcoming superhero movie in theatres. Some stores sell superhero clothes or types of equipment as accessories. This seems like only children and teenagers are attracted to superhero stories, or superheroes only address to ‘low culture’, because there is the belief that comics are for “the lowest level of cultural hierarchy in the United States” (Gabilliet, 2010: np); but this belief is adaptable to any other country. There are various reasons to consider when mentioning the addressing to low culture. However, it is significant not to underestimate what comics have gone through because they “...increasingly become identified as a mark of ‘low’ cultural status when directed to literary texts” (Gardner, 2012: 59). While arguing whether comics are literature or not, and their addressing to low culture or high culture, the reasons will be mentioned briefly in this chapter.

Although comics address low culture as some say, when the graphic novel *Maus* won the Pulitzer Prize for literature in 1992, comic books have been recognized more. Also, the readers have been helping this medium to develop and enhance. There is a generation of ‘geeks’ who have a lot of knowledge of superheroes and their adventures. The geek culture is a fan club in which people who wait for the next adventure of a hero, shape the market with their wants and requests which directly show the popular culture elements to producers, artists, and authors. “Fans make considerable investments in terms of their finances, time, and emotional involvement because of their love for the medium, its characters, and their creators” (Duncan, 2009: 173). Fan letters have been helping creators while organising the stories because readers’ speculations, and/or requirements show the demand, and need. For example, as a marketing strategy, Stan Lee, who was the chief editor in Marvel, was directly referring to readers to make them excited and feel familiar. With his tone, “readers felt that they got to know Lee and, through him, the other members of the creative team” (180). Geek culture and being a fan of comics has post-war anxiety under it, “the rising popularity of the comic book form, a form that openly inspired not isolation but collaboration, community, and communication” (Gardner, 2012: 104). This also disproves the idea that superhero stories are only for youngsters or low cultural level but it is an element of popular culture. That is to say, “the value of high culture is only to some extent tied to the quality of the text, to how well it engages and entertains its readers” (Kukkonen, 2013: 115). Therefore, comic books reflect social and common issues, catches the *zeitgeist*, and touches readers lives so that they are preferred and loved. Also, comic books started to be taken places on university syllabuses which also make it scholarly valuable to discuss and worth to pay attention to. Comics are “effective pedagogical tools for enhancing literacy and second language learning” (Duncan, 2009: 270). There are scholars, academics, and the published articles on comics and comic book culture so it has become a “publicly shared understanding that comes from systematic ways of knowing” (271).

Comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels may engage teenagers’ attentions mostly, but the reasons behind their fame are quite predictable. These works belong to popular culture which is a fast-changing system that is shaped by

consumer needs and requests; they “are created to sell, and their popularity is directly dependent on consumer demands and preferences” (Babic, 2014: 111). As Kammen also mentions in a detailed manner, popular culture is about “the growth of leisure time, the commercialization of organized entertainment, the expanding audiences thanks to innovations in transportation and technology, ...” (qt. in Gabilliet, 2010: np). People decide to consume a specific piece to entertain themselves and this is mostly a piece of art. Producers produce or create that very piece. These pieces are easy to access in most of the parts around the world. Especially in the 21st century, it is easier to reach the movies, TV series, video games, and comics via internet connection. For the comic book industry, the 21st-century digital world is designed for this need. The popular culture elements are presented to people who want to consume them via finding their demands in them. Surprisingly, people are not only attracted to superheroes but mostly. At first, there used to be heroes without superpowers when the comic book industry was established, but today, it is the age of superheroes. Still, “the role of the image culture” (Toffoletti, 2007: 2) is effective on people’s choices of what to watch, play, and read. People desire what they do not and cannot have and the different features of characters may be highlighted in movies, TV series, video games, or comics.

The representations of the characters change in time due to political, social, and cultural changes in societies. Different heroes appear in different decades with or without superpowers. One of the most effective ways to highlight these political, social, and cultural changes is to focus on people’s choices of reading. In this case, an analysis of a comic book as a significant apparatus for popular culture; to show how culture, needs, and requests have changed in time, and where do they stand in technologically advanced societies in today’s posthuman world, will be beneficial. This chapter is dedicated to the definition of comic books. Its features and whether it is literature or not will be studied in the first part. Historical development of visual storytelling in decades and political, social, and cultural situations of the decades will follow in the next chapter. After that, the female superheroes will be analysed, and where black heroines stand in a white-male-dominated ‘society’ which is also known as ‘boy’s club’ will be examined. Since being black and female at the same time gets more difficult to handle.



### **3.1. DEFINITION OF THE COMICS (AN ESSENTIAL INFORMATION PACK BEFORE DIVING INTO THE COMICS' WORLD)**

In the first instance, it is efficient to identify comics. Contrary to the popular opinion, “comics are not a genre; they’re a *medium*” (Wolk, 2007: 11). Medium is an agency or means of doing something. In this case, a medium can be described in three ways; “(i) it is a MODE of communication, (ii) it relies on a particular set of technologies, and (iii) it is anchored in society through a number of institutions” (Jensen qt. in Kukkonen, 2013: 4). There is a various medium like mass media, printed media, and digital press, so “a medium is a channel for communicating” (Duncan, 2009: 1). When a “literary work published in a medium that combines text and image to present a narrative” (Goldsmith, 2005: V), it is called a comic book or a graphic novel (since the differences between comics and graphic novels are almost arbitrary now). When comics are presented as “ ‘picture narrative’ or ‘drawn stories’ ” (Gabilliet, 2010: np), it is underestimating what comics contain and present. Will Eisner asserts that comics are ‘Sequential Art’ in which the consecutive images are used to create an expression, and the “arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story, or dramatize an idea” (2000: 5). Comics have the unique combination of “design, drawing, caricature, and writing” (5) which should address greater moment, because “Great artwork alone is not enough” (5). Topics, themes, plots, characters, updated issues, current problems, etc. should be included in the artwork. As a cartoonist, artist, and author, Will Eisner states that “I found that I was involved with an ‘art of communication’ more than simply an application of art” (6) which also shows how comics are effective in polling.

#### **3.1.1. THE WORLD OF IMAGES AND WORDS**

Comics have not appeared out of blue, but it is a process that has been developing in time. As Francisca Goldsmith sorts from the very beginning of sequential art; first there was cartoon/comic, after comic strip, then the comic book, comic strip album, and graphic novel (2005: 24-25) and yet this ordering may not be extensive. The vocabulary and terms in this medium need clarification, and the process does not start directly with cartoon but it goes back to the cave paintings. In this medium, images and texts are used together but it is not that simple. To clarify, all of the mentioned family members of sequential art have a common “anatomy” (19) in which the physical features of sequential art is mentioned. The sequential art

piece is printed on a 'page'. Each page has a 'panel'(s) that presents a specific action or a moment. Panels have both image and text. Between panels, there are spaces most of the time and these, mostly white spaces, are called 'gutter'. Gutters help to separate the panels, namely actions and moment; however, they are not that essential. To mention a dialogue, there are 'balloons' in rounded shapes and in these balloons, there are texts written. "By their design can change the way the text is read" (Petersen, 2011: XIX); for example, sharply rounded balloons represent anger, or horror, however smooth rounded balloons with minimal heart drawings around it may represent a love speech. Balloons "contribute to the measurement of time" (Eisner, 2000: 26), because they appear in an arrangement that follows the action. "The earliest rendering of the balloon was simply a ribbon emerging from the speaker's mouth – or (in Mayan friezes) as brackets pointing to the mouth" (27). Like balloons, there are 'bubbles' to show the thoughts of the characters. Sometimes, the artist and writer need an explanation or clarification so they use 'captions'. Iconography is very much used and it is "the meanings people attach to certain images and symbols are specific to their culture and reflect idiomatic speech" (Goldsmith, 2005: 21). To show the environmental sounds, like when the door shut, the 'onomatopoeia' is used. Sometimes, swearing is shown by 'visual hyperbole', that is to say, by typos.

When it is time to categorise and define sequential art forms, it is not that easy because each of them is intermingled, alternates and interacts. In very basis order, a cartoon/comic is a single panel, an image with a joke, or pun, and an image on it. This panel presents the action related activities to the joke, pun, or whatever is the text. When a couple of cartoons follow each other in panels, this is the comic strip. As Eisner states that "the first appearance of comic strips was in the daily press at the turn of the century" (2000: 7). When a couple of comic strips gather together in a relation, a comic book appears. Graphic novels are both all of them and none of them. They are not pictured books, or comic books but literature, art, and particular culture, namely requires literary skills and yet the differences are also blurry nowadays. To clarify, Jessica Abel's published work "What Is a 'Graphic Novel?' " (2005), a piece is taken from Goldsmith's *Graphic Novels Now* (2005: 14-15):



Figure 3: Jessica Abel's *What Is a 'Graphic Novel?'*, p.14, 2005.



Figure 4: Jessica Abel's *What Is a 'Graphic Novel?'*, p. 15, 2005.

As it is seen in the example below clearly, in visual narratives, “images, words, and sequence are the three constituents of comics as a mode of communication” (Kukkonen, 2013: 5). Here, in this example, the two pages are full of images and texts. A storyline is followed, and the story is the definition of a

graphic novel. There are panels to show the very action or moment, sometimes instead of gutters, arrows are used. Speech balloons show the dialogues. This comic strip is used to describe the graphic novel in a detailed manner by showing and telling it.

### 3.1.2. FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH THE HIGH INTELLIGENCE

Comic arts present ideas or stories and “to deal with the *capture* or encapsulation of these events in the flow of the narrative, they must be broken up into sequenced segments. These segments are called panels or frames” (Eisner, 2000: 38). Although the images follow each other in order through panels, they are fragmented. This means that there are spaces between panels in order. These spaces should be completed by readers and this necessitates capable readers who can “fill[ing] in the gaps in time” (Gardner, 2012: XI). Considering space limit on pages, “a comic book does not present each moment of action in the narrative; the writer and/or artist must decide which images (pictures and words) to show to tell the story” (Duncan, 2009: 131). This is called *encapsulation* and contains the most important “prime action from the imagined story” (131). Gutters help to separate the vital panels and specific moments are presented to the reader. Readers’ mind and body work together while reading a comic art, and this shows the “insights from the cognitive sciences and the neurosciences” (Kukkonen, 2013: 2). When all these notions are considered, actually instead of being a “literary diet” (Eisner, 2000: 7) of young people, it requires a high-level intelligence and comprehension capacity to fill in the blanks on the page of the story. To summarize with Eisner’s description;

The format of the comic book presents a montage of both word and image, and the reader is thus required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills [...] The reading of the comic book is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit (2000: 8).

Kukkonen explains Eisner’s statement by focusing on “a very broad-ranging understanding of closure” which helps readers to participate in the storytelling by completing “the missing information between panels” (2013: 10). Since comics are printed pages, the way to read them is not different from reading a written text. As Kukkonen remarks that, various clues may help readers to “find their way through [this] comic page” (2013: 18). Eisner explains this by considering the Western

reader. He says; “The Western (culture) reader is trained to read each page independently from left to right, top to bottom... This, ideally, is the normal flow of the reader’s eye. In practice, however, this discipline is not absolute” (41) because sometimes the climactic image appears in the middle of the page to attract the attention of the reader, so the reader’s eyes first catch the image that is in the middle of the page.

### **3.1.3. IMAGES ARE FROM THE ARTIST, WORDS ARE FROM THE WRITER**

Producing a comic work is a work of collaboration in which artist and writer work together. Sometimes these two titles are combined in a person in which the artist and the writer are the artists, however, it is not that common anymore; the industry has become bigger, wider, and richer. The product does not belong to a single individual today. To add more, Eisner’s explanation is helpful; while creating a comics art, an artist must be ready to captive himself of the story or the idea, and the writer must be ready for the interpretation of the story by the artist (2000: 123). The artist and the writer work collaboratively in order to create the story in a visual form that is combined with text. So, layout and composition are essential after encapsulation. The layout is not an easy feature to create on a page because it is the relationship of each panel and them to the page, and then to the whole story (Duncan, 2009: 139), which involves a comprehensive way of thinking and formulation. The composition involves “background details, colour, ‘lighting’, distance, angle, and ‘movement’ ... visualized sound, the blending of the pictorial and the linguistic, and art style” (141). Since there is a collaboration between the writer and the artist, the shared experience of the reader, or audience cannot be ignored because; “Comics communicate in a ‘language’ that relies on a visual experience common to both creator and audience” (Eisner, 2000: 7). When Eisner compares “writing with words alone” (122) to comics, he states that “the author directs the reader’s imagination. In comics the imagining is done for the reader” (122), but still, without the reader’s comprehension abilities and skilled reading and filling the blanks capabilities, the artwork alone is not completed. A relationship between storyteller and audience is built collaboratively (Petersen, 2011: XV).

### 3.1.4. COMICS ARE LITERARY FORMS AND YET COMICS ARE “NOT” LITERARY FORMS

There are contrary arguments of comics' value as a literary work. Aforementioned, comics are collaborative work and require reading skills but they “have been a consumer item since they debuted” (Duncan, 2009: 105), so the image of comics as easy to read, and to behave them as consume and throw away, devalues comics. Also, when the psychiatrist Fredric Wertham published a research on comics and claimed that comic books cause ‘juvenile delinquency’ in 1954, comics' popularity declined. The term ‘juvenile delinquency’ was used to define the increasing criminal activities such as vandalism, theft, and murder, after WWII (274), and Wertham's study will be mentioned in the “Comics in the 50s” part. When comics' reputation was affected negatively, more arguments appeared against the belief that comics were ‘literary forms’. According to the grandmaster of American comics, Will Eisner, comics were literary works. Unlike Eisner, Douglas Wolk summarises the reasons why comics are not literary forms. Accordingly, “Comics are not prosed. Comics are not movies. They are not a text-driven medium with added pictures; they're not the visual equivalent of prose narrative or a static version of a film. They are their own thing: a medium with its own devices, its innovators, its clichés, its genres and traps and liberties” (2007: 14), namely he says, comics are literature as much as movies are books. Nonetheless, he contradicts when he states;

It's worth noting that what comics are closest to, in the way we physically experience them, are prose books. We watch a movie, we look at a photograph (or a single, wordless drawn image), but we read comics. that's the process: holding them in our hands, turning their pages, getting stories from them as we burrow from one end to the other (25).

It is apprehensible to put comics on a different scale than novels because “they work through images and words in sequence, and they rely on the page layout to create meaningful units of their narrative matter” (Kukkonen, 2013: 94). However, this does not make comics less literary. Comics should not be considered traditionally literary because they have their “own affordances and narrative strategies” (94) which requires ‘deconstruction’. After all, comics already shutter the very image of literature in minds. Comics criticism differs from literary criticism, more inclusionary and detailed in terms of style (Wolk, 2007: 24). As Goldsmith underlines that; “to read a graphic novel successfully, a reader must consider input

from two types of communication at once, abstract from each, and refer between them” (2005: 12).

### **3.2. FROM CAVE WALLS TO THE 21ST CENTURY DIGITAL SCREENS**

Aforementioned in the previous chapter, sequential art family members; comics, comic strips, the comic book started to be produced through the end of the 19th century. Scott McCloud explains this and adds; “Most books about comics begin shortly before the turn of the century, but I think we can venture a bit farther than that” (1993: 9). Telling stories and sequential practices to do it via using images have always been in human history. Writing pictures may have appeared on cave walls primarily and “both scholars and pundits have asserted that comics are descended from cave art...” (McCloud qt. in Goldsmith, 2005: 5). Nonetheless, as Duncan shows that the painted images on cave walls, carved drawings into stone, baked clay figures, or figure tapestries to tell a story “are far removed from the modern manifestations of sequential art – comic strips and comic books – in terms of production, distribution, and function” (2009: 21-22).

Hernán Cortés discovered an epic story around 1519 which is called *Tiger's Claw*; a “36-foot long, brightly-coloured, painted screen folded tells of the great military and political hero” (McCloud, 1993: 10) picture manuscript. Before Cortés’ discovery, France produced the work *Bayeux Tapestry*, a 230-foot-long tapestry that resents the Norman Conquest of England, a hundred years ago (12). Also, Egyptian hieroglyphics are pictorial and in sequence (12). In addition to these, *Trajan's Column*, *Greek Paintings*, *Japanese scrolls*...may be explored as the ancestors of sequential art. The historical distinction goes back until the very beginning of human history, yet “ancient cave paintings, the Bayeux tapestry, or stained-glass church windows ... are historically and culturally distinct from the modern kinds of comics storytelling” (Stein, 2013: 5).

Robert S. Petersen mentions the similar trajectory of graphic narratives; visual literacy, and the invention of the alphabet. During the Paleolithic age, narrative art before writing was rock painting or cave drawings (2011: 1-2), and “several people work together on one painting, pooling together their ritual knowledge and artistic skills” (4). Literacy and narrative art expanded in Ancient

Egypt and Assyria, circa 3200 BCE and 2525 BCE, and with Mayan Culture in Central America, and the common thing is “the development of a written literature” (10). Single-frame narrative art developed in Ancient Greece through black figures on vases (11). The “continuous narrative” (15) which was panoramic and progressive was subsequent and easier to “adapt well to scrolls” (16). Multiple-frame narrative art, which is also known as cyclic narratives, were “picture recitation” (18) which firstly flourished in India in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain texts. When the “performers spread outward from India to Sweden, Spain, Japan, and Indonesia” (18), the local stories from India started to be adapted to other cultures. The next achievement of the imaged language of graphic narratives occurred “with the invention of caricature and the development of a popular press” (20).

The printing press was invented in China but they mostly used it for official documents (21), and when geographical discoveries took place during the Renaissance, and the printing press was carried to Italy then to Europe, the religious stories started to be published (24). Besides the scenes of Christ on the crucifix, a ‘modern phenomenon’ appeared which was ‘caricature’ further in the Italian Renaissance (30). The grotesque images in caricature were mostly humiliating (30). “Caricature directly challenged the unity and order of the world by foregrounding subjective and idiosyncratic ideas over social conventions and understood meanings” (Petersen, 2011: 34), so caricature was an element of satire when it first emerged. Goldsmith clarifies as;

Juxtapositions of humans with symbolic beasts or in allegorical settings, with deformed or otherwise exaggerated body parts, and with melodramatic facial expressions were among the formal attributes through which caricature began evolving to the cartoon (2005: 5-6).

After all, the invention of printing helped this comic art form reach not only to the rich and powerful but for everyone (McCloud, 1993: 16), but still, these mentioned notions did not present image and text in a balanced manner. Either there were mostly images with a little text or no text at all. Indeed, “a balance and a degree of interdependence between picture and text” (Duncan, 2009: 22) started to happen firstly with broadsheets around the 1450s and were popular until the 1800s. These broadsheets were today’s poster-like or billboard-like. Cave painting or the Bayeux tapestry might sequentially tell a story; however, text and image were not combined



to narrate collaboratively. Broadsheets brought balance to text and image usage on paper.

As McCloud states that; “The sophistication of the picture-story did grow, however, reaching great heights in the nimble hands of William Hogarth” (1993: 16). Hogarth’s published work *A Harlot’s Progress* (1731) had pictures to tell a story in a detailed manner by taking its motivation from social concerns. Hogarth was a famous painter in London and he addressed London’s upper class, and because of his talented background and fame in painting, his “paintings can be acknowledged as the first direct forerunners of the comic strip” (Horn qt. in Duncan, 2009: 20). McCloud focuses on Hogarth’s works and explains as; “Hogarth’s stories were first exhibited as a series of a portfolio of engravings. Both the paintings and engravings were designed to be viewed side-by-side in sequence” (1993: 17). Due to Hogarth and his work, engraving became a popular medium in Britain (Petersen, 2011: 44). Serializing the paintings and engravings side by side was also created by his idea.

In modern means, Rodolphe Töpffer is seen as the father of the modern comic (McCloud, 1993: 17). Starting from the early 1830s, his “light satiric picture stories, starting in the mid-1800s, employed cartooning and panel borders, and featured the first interdependent combination of words and pictures seen in Europe” (17). Petersen explains what Töpffer did differently than before in a detailed manner; Töpffer did not use one picture per scene but he fragmented the story in pieces, which are panels, and set them in small frames and put them on a page in an order; and thank him, for the first time montage was created (2011: 49). So, the story was told with several linked pictures and all of them created the action/story. Töpffer also thought that some actions were requiring more impression so that the sizes of the panels might differ in the story (49). He was known for his ‘doodlings’ so “his greatest innovations were not in content, but in the form” (Duncan, 2009: 25). His stories were mostly for entertainment. The first published comic book, *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck* (1837) in the United States was Töpffer’s, which was Swiss (Gabilliet, 2010: np).

Töpffer’s contributions cannot be ignored in comic books’ development, culture, and society, however, there is another significant apparatus that helped

comics to develop, which was newspapers, and cartoonists, such as Richard Felton Outcault, who developed Sunday pages and daily comic strips during the 1890s and 1900s (Stein, 2013: 5). Also, modernism's experimental ways in novel and painting "announces the death of the Book" (Gardner, 2012: 1), and to be able to survive, novels needed graphic tensions. For instance, Petersen (2011), exemplifies some modern art graphic narratives as Blake's illuminated printing (55), Goya's *Los Caprichos* (58), when the printmaking became an art (60), expressionists' *Wordless Books* (62), surrealist narratives (65), and Charlotte Salomon's *Life? or Theatre?* (68).

When the daily press started to develop, newspapers became the most-sold publishings throughout the 19th century, and literacy rates were increasing in Europe and the U.S. due to modern publishing (to note that, there were weekly newspapers during the 17th century and daily publications in the 18th century) (Petersen, 2011: 74). In the 19th century when the cheap manufactured paper was found, the production of mass media started. There were French and British humour magazines that were satirical and for "people who wanted a humour magazine with more playful jibes at society and a little less political rancour" (79). Besides French and British humour magazines, there was blood-and-thunder, which way pocket literature since it was the least expensive. That version had huge popularity because the stories were about "depict[ing] a violent crime and natural disasters" (81). They were popular, but illustrators earned very little money. Children's illustrated literature was also on the stage, yet they could not go far from "well-worn folktales and nursery rhymes" (Petersen, 2011: 86). To be sold, newspaper owners hired illustrators to strip daily. To attract attention, illustrators started to create stories so the reader had to buy the newspaper on the next day, or a week, to catch up with the serialization of the illustrated story.

The modern comic book was born from newspaper circulations of comic strips. Comics became the new way of storytelling, and weekly comics started to appear in newspapers which were about shared jokes and familiar personalities (Gardner, 2012: 17). *Little Nemo* (1905) was the early serial story strip and it appeared as the installments. The seriality of comics helped publishers to earn money (46). Specifically mentioning, British comic magazines had a lot of illustrations, and

“to accomplish this, they relied more on advertising, promotional gimmicks, and the creating comic characters” (Petersen, 2011: 90). On the contrary, comic magazines in the U.S. had no words at all or “narrative text was placed below the image” (93). *Yellow Journalism* in Europe was for humour but in the U.S., they mostly addressed political and social comics (95). When the publisher realized the selling rates of comics, they started to produce Sunday supplements which “were filled many extravagant and comical illustrations” (96). Additionally, they were published in colour. By the 1920s, daily comics and continuity strips were first about sports events, then for family entertainment. The reason for becoming so popular in society for the comic was not hidden. McCloud explains it as focusing on British caricature magazines but the U.S. can also be considered under his analyses because the adapted versions of European comics created the comic culture in the U.S, so “British caricature magazines kept the traditions alive and as the 20th century drew near, the comics we call comics began to appear and eventually to thrive in a steady stream of waking dreams that have yet to abate” (1993: 18). People needed to live their dreams and a story with illustrations did not force them to dream actually, but to live that dream directly. The illustrations, namely the dream, was ready for the reader.

### **3.2.1. COMICS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Between 1900 and 1920, newspaper comics were dominant. Micheal Uslan states that “the comic book first arose in America in the mid-1930s” (SmithsonianX, 2020: 0:06). Actually, “the first mass media products that began to look like modern comic books – and were called comic books – were reprint collections of popular newspaper comic strips” (Duncan, 2009: 26), because after the Great Depression and before WWII, specifically in 1933, 1934, 1935, the demand for a new entertainment appeared. Dwight Bowers presented the cheapest way to entertain people; telling the stories of gangsters. Due to the Great Depression, organized crime was the problem and gangsters were the celebrities at that time. As Bowers states; “I think we seek a hero who can solve all our problems, and they sort of seemed to offer us that possibility” (SmithsonianX, EdX, 2009: 4:06). Warner Brothers understood that and took their plots from anti-heroes. The publishing was very cheap, the paper quality was low and because of the rounded edges of the pages, this version of publishing

was called 'pulp fiction'. Together with newspaper comic strips, pulp fiction remained its popularity. "Twentieth-century pulp fiction was a holdover from the 19th-century blood-and-thunder pocket publications that had cultivated a reliable formula for escape" (Petersen, 2011: 133). Also, superheroes appeared in pulp fiction such as *The Shadow*, *Tarzan*, *Superman*. The mainstream publishing companies, DC Comics (1934), and Marvel Comics (1939) were also born in that era.

Comic books do not only consist of superheroes or science fiction but these are the dominant notions that are seen in comic books. Actually, "the U.S. comic book was born from the convergence of two different media markets: first, a thriving popular fiction market of adventure, science fiction, and romance; and second, a less reliable market for newspaper comic strip reprints compiled into book form" (Petersen, 2011: 133). The hunger for adventure caused superheroes birth which was dynamic in action, furthermore, "as the economic depression deepened, humour strips took a darker turn and many began to flirt with adventure" (136). It cannot be understated that superheroes first arose out of chaos, a time of economic disintegration, corruption, and bloody world conflict. When pulp magazines and newspaper comic strips started to appear in comic book format, publishers of the comic books did not want to pay the licensing fees so, original stories and heroes were needed. Petersen explains the process;

The new action strips began the work of teasing out longer and more complex narrative action, but they also began the process of creating a more complex visual language of dramatic action, one that tried out more challenging perspectives, more detailed environments, more compelling human anatomy, and more striking use of solid blacks (2011: 137).

Therefore, the first superhero was *Superman* and the title was *The Reign of Superman*, published in June 1938 in Action Comics. The writer was Siegel and the artist was Joel Shuster. Superman was coming from a far planet, he was an outsider with superpowers and giving what people needed to escape the depression and to deal with the onslaught of WWII. All along the decade, between the 30s and 40s, pulp magazines were foregrounded with their themes. They became the sources for upcoming superhero stories. The birth of the comic magazine industry became prominent, and action comics, Superman, and other costumed crime fighters were significant.

The 1940s are known as The Golden Age of comic books, and the golden times started with *Superman* in 1938. Towards the end of the 30s, Eastern European and Russian Jewish immigrants went to the U.S. with great expectations, however, they could not find the golden streets because of the Great Depression. People were looking for new businesses that nobody wanted to touch, because “profit margins were too small and unpredictable since the books appeared at irregular times” (Petersen, 2011: 139). Producing comic books from comic strips via establishing publication houses was one of the lines of work. Superheroes were very popular and comic books were produced on weekly basis during the 30s and 40s. Due to the felt atmosphere of WWII, and the Pearl Harbour attack, patriotic heroes occurred as wartime propaganda. Together with *Superman*, *Batman*, and *Wonder Woman* appeared, they became very popular. When *Superman* had the success, “DC Comics editors rushed” (Petersen, 2011: 142) to publish *The Batman* in 1939. Apart from these, *Wonder Woman* was created by William Moulton Marston and his wife, Elizabeth Holloway Marston, who were both psychology researchers, and was working on a “lie detector based on systolic blood pressure” (144). *Wonder Woman*’s weapon, Lasso of Truth, was a rope that was used against enemies and made them tell the truth. *Wonder Woman*’s creators might have been influenced by their research. Before *Wonder Woman*, there was *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle* (1937), *The Woman in Red* (1940), *Fantomah* (1940), and *Miss Fury* (1941), however, “*Wonder Woman* was the first conceptual superhero specifically designed to send a feminist message” (144). *Captain America*, as a patriotic hero, also appeared in 1941 by Marvel. “This newfound desire for comics derived from the growing social anxieties of war: fathers gone, moving homes, working mothers, and shortages” (Babic, 2014: 14). People needed an escaping point, a door, to move away from their daily life and problems. A hero was needed.

After WWII, in the 1950s, superheroes kind of died down and new genres of comics appeared, such as westerns, war comics, and more romance. The reason was because that illustrators went to the war and when they came back, their experiences became adult-oriented drawings (Petersen, 2011: 153-154). Meantime, science fiction was gaining more and more importance together with crime comics. After the war, there was a threat of communism and also the impact the Soviet Union was

having on the world. Fears began to build (of being communist), America had a political response and investigated people whether they were communists or exhibiting un-American activities. This era is also known as The McCarthy Era. Joseph McCarthy was the senator and his attention was on Hollywood. He claimed that movies were elements to infiltrate people's minds. He also pointed the finger at comic books and by presenting lurid behaviour, overt sexuality, and horrible things, comic books were affecting people's mind negatively. When Dr Fredric Wertham published his work *Seduction of the Innocent* in 1954, that was the last straw for comic books culture. "Wertham encouraged the fear of subversion by comic books and managed to bring hysteria to a peak in 1954" (Babic, 2014: 115). The 50s were already a period of paranoia; because of the Cold War, there were spying, and geopolitical manoeuvres either communism or democratic capitalism, and "Wertham's nightmare vision" (Gardner, 2012: 70) and assaults on comic books did not help public opinion to reject his sayings. Nevertheless, if the 1940s were considered as the Golden Age of comic books, the second half of the 50s were the Silver Age.

In 1954, the Comics Code Authority was arranged for censorship in comic books at the federal level. According to CCA; "crime shall never be presented in such a way as to create sympathy for the criminal; no comic magazine shall use the word, horror or terror in its title; all scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, all lurid unsavoury gruesome illustrations shall be eliminated; suggestive and salacious illustration or suggested posture is unacceptable; sex perversion of any inference to the same is strictly forbidden" (1954). "In the upper right-hand corner, there's the seal of the Comics Code" (Wolk, 2007: 4) to prove that the comic was checked and corrected for children. The rise of the Soviet Empire as a genuine threat to core American values and a scapegoat was needed. Not only comic books, but Rock & Roll, or Dungeon & Dragons, or Marilyn Manson, or video games could have been scapegoats as well. The 50s were the dark ages for comic books because Wertham's focus on how comic books caused the rise of juvenile delinquency did not help superheroes to save themselves from downfall.

Still, the brand new revised version of *The Flash* (1956) in DC Comics, then *Green Lantern*, and the *Justice Society of America* (newly called *Justice League of*

*America*) changed superhero features; they were not born with superpowers, yet as scientists, they gained their powers after some experiments with chemical and radioactive matters. Science, science-fiction and gaining superpower as normal human beings were more preferred themes by the readers because “the transformation of the ordinary person into a superhero established a wounded character who was riddled with self-doubt ... a mixed blessing, both elevating and alienating him or her from ordinary life” (Petersen, 2011: 163). This direction, core formula of creating superheroes, was so fortunate and fruitful; “a rise in superhero comics marks the age, with DC and Marvel Comics gaining more acceptance and commercial success” (Holston, 2010: 11).

### **3.2.2. COMICS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

In the 1960s, anti-war, civil rights, youth and feminist movements rouse, and their effects started to be seen as a revolution in music, fashion, and political trends. Also, during the 1960s women and minorities progressed significantly in pressing for their rightful claim to be treated as politically equal to man. Moreover, second-wave feminism increased sexual freedom, reproductive rights, and work opportunities for women. Meanwhile, comics were addressing these issues and more superheroes were demanded from the market. Martin Goodman, after talking with Independent News’ head who was the North America distributor, about DC Comics which was National Comics then, went to Stan Lee, who became the editor of Marvel Comics in the 1950s, and wanted a superhero group. In 1961, *Fantastic Four* was published.

Becoming two mainstream companies, DC and Marvel worked in different ways; DC hired several different editors for each hero. Editors created their team, found writers and artists for each hero. In Marvel Comics, there was only Stan Lee. When lots of heroes started to appear, Lee was still in charge of the hero. He gave the outline and concept to artists, then wrote the dialogues himself. Stan Lee created villains as heroes; with backstories. Characters were grey, not only black and white, and this was an eye-opener. He gave the moral lessons subconsciously. His first intention was to write something people wanted to read, not to write a moral story. He was materiality-based in the first case. He left following the CCA silyly; yet the late 60s and early 70s were already embracing the social changes. The youth

movement in America hosts the hippie generation that was in charge of political protests. Demonstrations against the Vietnam War, civil rights, and women's liberation were significant from that era. Comic book companies wanted to stay relevant to this generation under such huge, rapid, revolutionary change. So, in superhero comic books, subplots were designed to include racism, pollution, overpopulation, political corruption, and the problem of drugs. Besides all of these, the first black superhero was created in the 60s by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, and appeared in 1966, in *Fantastic Four*'s 52nd issue. He was *Black Panther* who joined the team Avengers. He, T'Chala, was the leader of the African nation Wakanda, a peaceful and technologically advanced society whose territory was rich in the precious metal vibranium (used in making Captain America's shield), T'Challa mixed it up with the *Fantastic Four* before becoming an Avenger. Among his chief enemies was Ulysses Klaw, who was responsible for killing his father, T'Chaka.

In the 1970s, as a result of the restrictions of CCA, the underground comics culture was born. Artists felt under pressure because of the restrictions from CCA, and they started to produce self-published works. "These usually self-published magazines were dubbed 'comix' with an 'x' to differentiate them from mainstream comics and to indicate a racier subject matter not bound by the restrictions of the CCA" (Holston, 2010: 11). So there were interdependent publishers that published their comics regardless of checking CCA regulations. The first appearance of the graphic novel was in 1978 which was Will Eisner's *A Contract with God* and no superheroes were presented. The radical new storytelling, graphic novels, was born from comic books culture, and differences were blurry because it was all about the "format" (Goldsmith, 2005: 28). Yet " 'graphic novel' is not a replacement for the term 'comic book', nor is it simply a novel with pictures. Graphic novels exist as a form of the comic book, and as a subgenre of sequential art" (Whaley, 2016: 15). Unlike comics, graphic novels are longer narratives or illustrations of series that are regular; and the constructive themes and the alternative ways to express the stories make the graphic novel a lot more comprehensive (Eisner, 2000: 141). As Holston states; "graphic novels have made the move into mainstream literature" (Weiner, 2010: 9).



The 1980s presented more anti-heroes and grittiness because with the depiction of the complexities in the lives of superheroes more ethical ambiguities appeared in comic book storylines. When Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons published *The Watchmen* in 1986, that was the ultimate deconstruction of the superhero. *The Watchmen* was twelve-issue series and later collected into the new-familiar single volume, *The Watchmen* made Time Magazine's list of the one hundred best novels from 1923 – 2005. It is, in the estimation of many fans and critics alike, a masterpiece of the genre. The technique was postmodern, but the story was all about a man who became bad while trying to do good.

### **3.2.3. COMICS IN THE 90S AND BEYOND**

The 90s comics were appeared as more mature, richer, and more sophisticated; henceforth, it was obvious that comics were not only for kids. There were universal stories because publishing companies grew bigger and they started to distribute the comics all over the world. Stories needed to address a wider community. Also, the generation who grew up with a sincere love for the comics started to get into positions of power around town. Publishers knew that touching with the 'zeitgeist' is needed to sell books, and a new marketplace and new opportunities were needed. Technology had advanced and producers needed to catch to the technological advancement both for the forms and contents of their stories.

From the beginning of the 2000s, digital/new media has been evolving. Readers' access to content has become easier because maybe no bookstore or comic shop near, so to reach the consumers, content creators and distributors, and publishing house, owners called readers through any digital media or the internet. This has been a paradigm shift in storytelling because artists and writers have been creating comics for reading through technological devices; phone, iPad, computer monitor, etc. and the page does not follow the 'from left to right and then from top to bottom' order, but instead, scrolling down and up, zooming in or out. So stories should be created via considering panels, their design, and composition. The paradigm shift has not only been in storytelling but also fan culture has been affected by so. The Comic-Cons, namely comics conventions, started to get more attention in the 2000s. The 'geek culture' which was born from fan letters made the events happen and The Comic-Cons have become traditional that is held every year. Last

but not least, and the most important thing about the 2000s comics is, when “Marvel and DC have made small steps, incorporating more characters of coloured transgender characters, and more queer characters into their comics” (Whaley, 2016: 357).

### 3.3. FROM WHITE HEROINE TO BLACK HEROINE

As Douglas Wolk mentions; “If there’s such a thing as a golden age of comics, it’s happening right now” (2007: 10). When the diversity of characters is considered, this statement is acceptable. From the very beginning, there have always been female characters in comics, yet they were not recognizable. Women were represented as victims most of the time. “The misinterpretation of women, ..., as extremely thin with disproportionately large breasts” (Duncan, 2009: 257) shows that women were sex objects and used as a tool to sell more. Also, the message that stories and female characters were attributed was not going out, empowering each other, saving the world, or being aware of their power but rather “becoming a homemaker” (257) in which happiness lies. In the industry, there were very few women as illustrators, artists, and writers, and that was why the representation of women was oftenly absent from the comics before the 1970s. When Jeanette Kahn became the publisher of DC Comics in 1976, that was a huge success for women in the industry.

Like female characters, also coloured characters were misdepicted in racist ways. They were shown mostly as “ignorant savages” (260) until the *Black Panther* (1966). Namely, female-coloured-people were two times disadvantaged. As Deborah Elizabeth Whaley states that “researching a book about Black women in comics has been like an ongoing treasure hunt” (2016: X), however, via mentioning “the absurdities of life, the politics of surviving, and the vast diversity of people” (Nicholson, 2017: n.p.), the medium reaches more people who need to be represented.

Throughout the 1930s, “artists were not allowed to depict fully nude women or men but naked female corpses were okay” (Nicholson, 2017: np). When the industry was born, the fan conventions were born too. Women attended the events as organizers, fans, or essay writers. Regardless of ethnicity, or race, female characters

started to appear from the very beginning of the industry. Yet, specifically, there were coloured female characters too, such as *Torchy Brown*, who was not a superhero but still black, in 1937. *Torchy Brown* was humorous and melodramatic in its storyline which was about moving a young woman to New York City and her adventures.

During the Golden Ages in the 40s, male creators went to WWII so that woman creators were hired by the publishing houses. The moral code of conduct was not adopted yet, and the characters were mostly female detectives, photographers, spies, or pin-up girls. Although the most popular superheroes were *Superman* and *Batman*, the most released issues belong to *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*. In 1941-42, *Miss Fury*, who has a black panther catsuit, was released. Actually, “the grande dame of all superheroes, *Miss Fury* is not only one of the first superheroines to see print – she predates *Wonder Woman* by eight months – she’s also the first female superhero created by a woman” (Nicholson, 2017: np), yet, the icon of the decade was *Wonder Woman*, not *Miss Fury*.

When WWII was over, and men were back from the war, women working in the comics industry went back home and left their careers. They “had to” heal the wounds from the war, and raise children. The Comics Code Authority started to be applied in 1954. Before CCA, comics were dirtier, more sexy and queer. When the superheroes return in the 1960s and the aged readers' impatience with the limitations of the CCA rose, comix, the counterculture underground way of creating and publishing, appeared. Midst the 60s, female characters were mostly “stereotyped and deformed”, and “sidekicks or one-dimensional” (Whaley, 2016: 7) in superhero stories. The 1970s were fruitful for superheroines. Underground comix arose, and Marvel and DC presented superheroines such as *Spider-Woman*, *Ms Marvel*, *Red Sonja*, *Supergirl*, *Isis*, *Night Nurse*, and *She-Hulk*. Marvel also presented black heroines such as *Storm*, the weather controller mutant, and *Misty Knight*, the bionic detective, but the first black female superheroine was *The Butterfly* (Whaley, 2016: 4) appeared in *Hell Rider*'s. The 70s were the Golden Age for women in the comic because “feminist comix appeared as a reaction to the male-dominated underground movement” (Nicholson, 2017: np). Feminist comix reflected the social changes by

showing women's bodies and minds. The superheroines *Nubia* and *Vixen* in DC Comics, and *Storm* in Marvel Comics represented black women.

During the 1980s, the deconstruction of the superhero understanding was collapsed by *The Watchmen*. The 90s were the year when it was understood that comics are not only for kids. "By the end of the 1990s, comics were considered as real literature (well, at least the graphic-novel format)" (Duncan, 2009: 266). *Martha Washington*, who does not have superpowers but still black, also belongs to the 90s. The 2000s became the era of webcomics and Comic-Cons, "the centre of all nerd pop culture, which itself was rapidly becoming just regular pop culture" (Nicholson, 2017: np). After 2010, digital versions and the diversity of the characters have been increasing. Especially, when African-American writers and artists started to appear more in the industry. More coloured female characters have been started to appear without showing off large breasts but with their genius, such as *Shuri: The Search for Black Panther* (2019), and with the writer of it, Nnedi Okorafor, the notion of Africanfuturism became apparent. People from Africa were not represented by outsiders but they started to represent themselves and their reflections on comic books. For example, not a surprise but Shuri was once a sidekick in a comic book and she became the superhero of a comic book that was dedicated to her comic book character. This has become a big turn both for the rising equality movement and for the industry. The suppressed has gained the voice, not only with the existed coloured female characters, or superheroes, but also with the writers, artists, or editors of the very comics.

To begin with, it is worthwhile to discuss Nnedi Okorafor and the renamed notion 'Africanfuturism' by her. As one of the coloured writers, and creators of the most updated story for the coloured female superhero, *Shuri*, Okorafor mentions the notion of Africanfuturism. Africanfuturism is a redefinition of the notion by Nnedi Okorafor (@Nnedi) since she believes that there is a need to redefinition or stops using the word Afrofuturism (2018: Tweet). Afrofuturism is the concept that is used to define people of colour, however, it is not enough. The black body is defined by non-black bodies (Amaro, 2018: 17). Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism were different at first. With political, social, technological improvements, the black people decided that the inherited notions were not enough to describe the black people so

that they wanted to define themselves with their own definitions where they started to reject the pre-definitions. Yet, this questioning began with the post-era when the concept of misinterpretation became apparent in postmodern, poststructural, and posthuman ways of thinking and studies. On the one hand, Afrofuturism includes only diasporic experience and it still inherits the definitions of patriarchal thought. It excludes the origins and roots. However, Africanfuturism chooses the places to set in very Africa and portrays the characters within the African tribes, with the real African experiences, agents and subjects. “Africanfuturism rooted first and foremost in Africa” (Okorafor, 2019: ASLE). Afrofuturism shows the self-representation of black people within the black diasporic experience, but it is still an “American rooted thing” (Okorafor, 2017: Twitter). Africanfuturism is more inclusive and convenient to create assemblages, and together with the studies on the collective cultural memory, as Guattari mentions that black bodies decide how to be represented in Africanfuturism (qt. in Amaro, 2018: 18). Okorafor, here, deconstructs the existed definition and understanding via mentioning the difference between the terms that should not be confused to provide a clear approach. Once she deconstructs the definition of the terms and then reconstructs it.

Okorafor prefers to use Africanfuturism elements in her literary works. She defines Africanfuturism on ASLE 2019 as; “Africanfuturism is interested in technology, it is optimistic and people of Africa, black people, are decent. Africanfuturism acknowledges the past, does not rewrite it”. The term is about portraying the African continent which evolves from being and experiencing, not searching (her speech on ASLE). Okorafor also experiences the notions both in America and Nigeria as an outsider and an insider because she is a Nigerian-American living in the US. Via practising, not only theorizing, her works are the apparatus of deconstruction of inherited beliefs, values, thoughts and understanding in society and culture.

## CHAPTER IV

### 4. THE CONTRADISTINCTION OF *SHURI*

In comics and popular culture, the 21st century but especially after the 2010s are the period that readers, audiences, writers, artists, creators, and producers witness an overdue and substantial turning point in the representation of women and minority groups, and the increasing and expanding amount of inclusiveness of these characters. There have always been female characters, and characters that are considered as a minority, such as Wonder Woman, Black Panther, X-Men. However, besides the number of representatives is not enough, fans also know that stories about women and minorities have been rare and exceptional. Telling stories about women or minority groups have not been considered a rule in comics and popular culture, but after the turning of the century, this point of view has started to change. Unlike Okorafor's statement, which is about creating new characters but not coloured versions of existed superheroes, depending upon the demands from the market, some exceptions occurred. Old heroes with new versions with minor differences, such as the differences in nationality, heritage, gender started to be created. For instance, Ms Marvel is presented as a Pakistani-American Muslim teenager, Kamala Khan; Captain America is African-American, Sam Wilson; Spider-Man is half African-American, half Latino, Miles Morales; Green Lantern is African-American; and Thor is a woman, nevertheless Shuri is relatively new to the comic universe since she is first released as a supporting character in *Black Panther* Vol. 4, #2 in May 2005 which was created by Reginald Hudlin and John Romita Jr., and has become a cultural phenomenon since then.

Shuri's first appearance is not solo, she was a minor character in *Black Panther* Vol. 4, #2 when she first appeared in Marvel Universe. She was created as the princess of Wakanda and started to appear in various comic series, especially in *Black Panther*, from time to time. When she was loved, her solo adventures started to be penned by Nnedi Okorafor and illustrated by Leonardo Romero and Jordie Bellaire. Sometimes, the comic book series includes more than one writer or illustrators; in *Shuri*, two issues #6-7 are written by Vita Ayala and artists are Paul Davidson and Triona Farrell. For issues #8-10, the illustrators are Rachel Stott and Carlos Lopez when Okorafor is the writer again. This is harder than to write and

illustrate alone because the work is already connected to other storylines in different comic book series which makes it intertextual. Since Shuri first appeared and was developed in a different work, her solo comic series shows the features of intertextuality. Intertextuality is one of the most essential notions in postmodernist theories and practices. Herbrechter states that as;

Every text is not only an open system of textual relations, a form of generalized textuality which alone guarantees the readability of our cultural universe. Thus intertextuality is the very condition of perceiving social reality and therefore has quasi-ontological status. This also explains the proliferation of narratives about narratives, the fragmentation and loss, the dissemination of identities and the critique of the 'unified self' in postmodernist writing (2017a: 59).

Shuri is open to textual and cultural analyses because it reflects the social and cultural realities and possibilities about the future in today's cutting-edge technological era and multicultural societies. Her roots are from another story and context, and she appeared as a supporting character first, yet she got attraction from the fans whose demands shape the mass culture, and the idea and the belief of creating her own story and giving a chance to her character as a representation of coloured female superhero deserve to be analysed in terms of popular culture, postmodernism, poststructuralism, feminist literary criticism, deconstruction, and critical posthumanism features. Besides intertextuality, also metanarrative that reminds regularly readers that they are in a fictional world is used to present the nature of human and as a postmodern method to create a deconstruction in *Shuri*. Since Shuri is released in issues, her character's mission, her powers and identity, the supporting characters and supervillains to create a conflict will be mentioned under the light of close-reading. The trajectory in techniques of deconstruction, narrative, and subject location or position will be mentioned specifically to prove that the conceptual boundaries of the human and the nonhuman in hegemonic discourses and practices underlie social and cultural crisis/portrayals.

Even though superheroes are still mostly white men, women and minorities started to appear in comic books with their adventures and solo stories, and this version has not been seen in comic book history for decades. This helps and causes an increase in awareness of the ways that they are portrayed. Specifically, female superheroes have mostly been portrayed as unnecessarily sexualized, and this trend

has been fantasised so much that this version of portrayal and representation have been slowed down, but not out of context yet. The demanded representation is not some Puritanical one that presents the female superheroes as sexless. Rather, woman readers are around fifty per cent of comic book readership, appeal to read female superheroes who are more independent, powerful, and aware of their sexes. With her unconventional model of womanhood, genius, and knowledge of technology, *Shuri* is one of the perfect examples that demands for the readership's help to shape the popular culture. That was why, once before she appeared as a minor character next to other superheroes and her brother T'Challa, who was the Black Panther, in 2005, her first solo series was released on October 17, 2018, by author Nnedi Okorafor and artist Leonardo Romero.

As a rising social and cultural phenomenon around the world, the increasing multiculturalism and diversity have faced some resistance because it is not easy for the audience and comic book fans to adapt themselves to the changes that happen to the characters, and their favourite superheroes, but the resistance does not have a backup and it is destined to fail soon. In different decades, comic books have challenged different cultural, social, and political notions because comic books give voice to the movements, thoughts and ideas. Comic books have been willing to introduce various social, political, and cultural changes through creating new characters via the requests from fans which establish the popular culture in the comic book market. The established superheroes are mythical heroes, so their background stories have always been with human beings, and that is the reason why the stories are seen as relevant for the readers, nonetheless, some characters and stories come across as resistance.

Some resistances are about African-American Captain America, or female Thor, which are still heroes. New versions of existed superheroes may not address depending on the historical knowledge of the readers. The newly established superheroes are much more interesting with their own background stories and conflicts. Old superheroes need new investments of renewed meaning and significance, otherwise, they are risked to become uninteresting. At the end of the day, they are destined to perish as happened to many other superheroes through decades. These days are the real golden days for cisgender and transgender of all



ethnicities, nationalities, and orientations because all of them may find meaning in the stories of these costumed crusader/contender. Shuri is the representation of postmodernism, poststructuralism, posthumanism, multiculturalism, and feminism in a technologically advanced society that was also once under white-male authority. Those were the days when the female body was humiliated with witchcraft (Silvia Federici, 2019: 50), and now a female and the coloured superhero is the protagonist of her solo comic books whose writer is also female and coloured. Shuri is the best example to show the way how the voiceless gained a voice concerning the postmodern and posthuman features in contrast to the cultural coding about gender and coloured community. Oppressed ones were there, have always been here, and will be there in the future, and the representation is precious. It is time to revalue the existence of the oppressed because what is left from patriarchy is not enough to describe or understand. It is time to deconstruct so that the significant thing is to shatter the binary oppositions and not even mentioning the ‘oppressed’. This term should not even exist.

#### **4.1. THE NECESSITY OF DECONSTRUCTION OF A COMIC**

In comic books, the images and words are mixed, so reading comic books also means ‘symbol decoding’ (Wolf qt. in Eisner, 2000: 8). Comics create a language; “In its most economical state, comics employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols. When these are used again and again to convey similar ideas, they become a language – a literary form, if you will” (8). This language, since it reflects the culture and address society needs decoding, and deconstruction, too. The artist already deals with making a point with the storylines to appeal to readers, namely to a mass audience. The audience demands a relation of life and comics so that “some cohesive language, as the vehicle for the expression of a complexity of thoughts, sounds, actions, and ideas in a sequenced arrangement separated by boxes” (41) is created. Since the comics are “intertextual and inevitably incomplete” (Gardner, 2012: 81), the popularity of the medium was born, also some kind of a mass mind-control by portraying and reflecting the demands from the audience via fans, which it creates an interaction. The readers’ need for prioritising their own interpretations of the comics and the comics’ capability to be open for many diversified interpretations have also helped the medium become catchy.

The comics are an art form and the originality of it, for instance; the new literacy that requires both words and drawings and brings blurriness between two, and its historical significance in which the social, political, and cultural circumstances are directly shown and represented, and the potential of the medium makes comics worthwhile to be analysed. Yet “while comics aspire to and are capable of being valued as artistic achievements, one cannot dismiss the fact that the roots of the medium are firmly entrenched in commercialism” (Duncan, 2009: 106). When the readers and viewers are considered, some more likely viewers may complain about depictions in comics (Goldsmith, 2005: 86), however, unlike Wertham claims and then CCA adopts, not all readers stop at the same panel and get affected by the violent image (Gardner, 2012: 89).

The social causes are represented in the comics over the decades and comics may bring awareness to existing problems, apparently, “While comics, like other forms of art, can function as catalysts for the raising of social consciousness among their readers, the industry that produces them has a less consistent record for taking more direct action to change existing disparities in power relations” (Duncan, 2009: 265). Multiculturalism, as one of the most-mentioned notions, in this case, has existed with its “coexistence, interaction, integration, intersectionality, negotiation, power” (Ayaka and Hague, 2015: 1). All the mentioned notions refer to today’s technologically advanced societies which are also known as the apparatus in ‘The Era of Post-’, thus, the features of feminism and critical posthumanism. For instance, when *Shuri* is considered as a solo superhero for the comic book, adding women to comic books whether the same as producing feminist comic books or not should be considered as well. Including a coloured female superhero does not make the work a feminist work and yet it still is a good start for giving the voice to the Other and to represent them. Also, another big step should not be ignored; a coloured female African superhero is penned by a coloured female Nigerian-American popular contemporary author who should be supported to make an effective movement in feminist works.

One should not ignore the fact that professor and independent feminist scholar Sara Ahmed, who is very well known with the book *Living a Feminist Life*, refused to use male authorities’ resources in her book, and provided references only

from female authorities to the woman appearance in academia and media. This is challenging but still a shift for equality crusaders. One may claim that praising one side does not mean providing equality, but one should be heard in order to be equal. Thanks to the academia and professors who decide to put comic books in their syllabuses, and agree to research on them, the prejudgement of comic book culture has started to change. Just because “the word ‘comics’ has had such negative connotations” (McCloud, 1993: 18), does not make it a sign of low intelligence. On the contrary, academia should point out today’s realities and catch the ‘zeitgeist. Analysing *Shuri* is killing two birds with one stone; praising the Other in the comic book industry, a Nigerian-American female author who pens a female coloured superhero in a male-dominated industry, and being aware of the importance of popular culture in the literary arena.

Especially for the analyses of *Shuri*, the adaptable methodology to *Shuri* is apparent and cleared by Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of rhizome and assemblage yet in deconstruction, the methodology does not exist. Rhizome and assemblage are helpful tools so that deconstruction is possible. Since comics are the reflections of the culture and society, they require analyses to understand what and why happened and what are the explanations of these very events. As Lisa Diedrich mentions that; “Comics are themselves a kind of assemblage” (2017: 98). In this case, Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of rhizome and assemblages are efficient. These two concepts attempt to avoid all binary categories. Since posthumanism has no exact beginning, middle, or end history, the concepts of rhizome and assemblage are adaptable to comic books.

Rhizome becomes a model of thought in which there is no fixed origins and hierarchical structure so that the whole is not possible. “Within rhizomatic thinking, there is no ‘truth’, no single reality, no static beings or essences. There are always many possible truths and realities that can all be viewed as social constructs” (Jeffrey, 2016: 14). When assemblage is taken into consideration, Deleuze and Guattari believes that; “bodies are ‘assemblages’ whose, ‘function or potential or meaning’ becomes entirely dependent on which other bodies or machines it forms an assemblage with” (Jeffrey, 2016: 29). Comics are kind of an assemblage in this case. “In their very form, comics thematize boundaries and their leakiness: panels are

breached, borders dissolved, lines are drawn and undrawn, boundaries are played with, on, and beyond” (Diedrich, 2017: 99), and it is also rhizome because in rhizome, everything is connected and the “connections are multiple and shifting” (Jeffrey, 2016: 17), and also “[...] comic book culture can be considered as a rhizome formation, emerging from the interactions between multiplicity or reader-assemblages, comic book-assemblages, creator-assemblages, corporate-assemblages and critical-assemblages” (37). Especially, the posthuman body in comic book is linked “to the social and cultural environment, defining its capacities and limits” (29). The posthuman body in comic books connects art, science, and society so that it is a “rhizomatic assemblage” (227). In comic books, the superhero genre is an assemblage because it is “made up of heterogeneous, overlapping genres, and characters drawn from the publishers’ back catalogues” (41) as Shuri appeared firstly in *Black Panther* and was introduced, and then when it got attention from the audience, a solo series is created for Shuri. It became a response to the demand by the readers.

#### **4.2. FORM IN *SHURI*: A GRAPHIC NOVEL OR A COMIC BOOK**

In comic books, the format is the significant element that makes the comics different from the other books, like novels. The development is happening from issues/numbers to series, and then series together may create volumes, or comic books, however, the next step is not graphic novels. Collecting comic book series together does not make them or turn them into graphic novels. Graphic novels are novels that are graphitised. Specific to Shuri, the adventures were published in numbers/issues at first. In total, there are ten issues. All the issues have their names, #1 is *Gone*, #2 is *The Baobab Tree*, #3 is *Groot Boom* – dedicated to the late, great Aretha Franklin, The Queen of Soul -, 4 is *Timbuktu*, #5 is *The End of the Earth*, #6 is *A Friend in Need Part 1*, #7 is *A Friend in Need Part 2*, #8 is *24/7 Vibranium*, #9 is *Godhead*, and #10 is *Living Memory*. After releasing the 10 series, the first five issues were gathered together and it became the 1st volume whose name is *The Search for Black Panther*. The last five issues appeared as the 2nd volume, and its name is *24/7 Vibranium*. In every issue, the first page is left to remind readers that what happened previously in the story. This same reminder happens in TV series as well, yet graphic novels do not have reminders because they are not serialized. They consist of a single story-line that is supported by sub-events.

Shuri is in series and each issue has its sub-plot which act as the main plot and differs from issue to issue, for example, she faces different problems or meets different characters or superheroes in each number of the series. This proves that it is a graphic novel, but it is a comic book. The main plot may cover the whole ten issues, yet the sub-plots are creating the *Shuri* comic book. For a graphic novel, at first, it is a novel that is illustrated. The context is organised as such. To make it more clear, today's famous internet entertainment service Netflix may be considered; it is a TV-series channel, but it publishes a whole season of a TV series at once. So audience may watch the whole season just like watching a movie but spend more time on it than watching a movie or may watch the episodes one by one; this depends on the preference of the audience. Watching the whole season in one sitting does not make it a movie, it still is a TV series. The comic book series is like this. Whole episodes, issues are available to be read and whether to read them at once or one by one depends on the reader. Graphic novels are more like movies; watch and leave, read and leave.

#### **4.3. CONTEXT IN *SHURI*: AFRICAN MYTHS IN SHURI**

The context of the comic book is as important as the format. There are many different genres in comic books that appear either/both in literary and media formats; historical fiction, romance, science fiction, fantasy, realistic fiction, humour, and “the superhero genre is arguably the most important of the comic book genre” (Duncan, 2009: 242). Specifically mentioning the superhero genre, in the conventions of it, like in *Shuri*, there are specific features that can be found in the story. First of all, the character types who are either born with superpowers or gain powers after being exposed to radioactive matter, are portrayed together by mentioning their mission, powers, and identity. There are supporting characters to help the subplot flow, which are also known as sidekicks. They may have their own stories, adventures, or challenges besides the main plot. The conflict is required so that since there are superheroes, there are supervillains. Themes are mostly focusing on the things one should do and can do. The choices depend on the story, and character. Narrative patterns are related to the story. Superheroes' nature is told in the original story, and this mostly follows “mono-myth” (Duncan, 2009: 232) patterns. The typical monomyth is described by Joseph Campbell and many Western tales follow this mythic pattern in which a superhero goes on a journey, handles the problem and

becomes wiser, and comes back to enlighten his/her community. Academics Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence describes month-to-month comics' monomyth patterns as follows;

1. A community is threatened
2. A selfless hero emerges
3. The hero renounces temptation
4. The hero wins a victory (through superheroism)
5. The hero restores harmony to the community
6. The hero recedes into obscurity (qt. in Duncan 2009 232 which is also qt. in Coogan 123; Lang and Trimble 159).

Continuity is also the essential element in comic books so that, the monomyth is followed in series and is supported with the subplots, sidekicks, or other minor adventures with other minor supervillains. Visual conventions, the organisation of the panels for example, and the look of the superheroes are other essential features to be discussed.

In *Shuri*, all these conventions, namely the complex narratives exist. The back story, character development, and ongoing subplots show considerable examples to be argued. Since the comic books are serialized, the "braided narrativity" (Duncan, 2009: 129), which is also seen in soap-operas, nourishes the excitement and interest of the audience. However, in braided narrativity, there is no global plot, it does not have a macrostructure, but numerous subplots and characters. This version is applied mostly to TV series, yet, some mainstream comic books are also like soap-operas. In superhero comic books, a fictional universe is created, and there are complex structures in the universe. This is proliferating narrativity in which "neither characters nor plots are stable concepts" (Duncan, 2009: 130). The macro and microstructures create flows and provide continuity-conscious serialized comic books. The heroes are modified and integrated as well. "The never-ending, intricately interlinking, periodically reconstructed stories of mainstream comic books constitute a unique form of narrativity" (131).

When content and context are considered, *Shuri* is a reflection of Africa, technology, and coloured women. There is nothing more normal than coming across to African myths in *Shuri*. Since Africa is the world's second-biggest region, there is a vast number of tribes. The region of Africa is considered the birthplace of human

beings by scientists because there are key discoveries that belong to human evolution. Due to European colonialism, the region is divided into countries but some of the ethnic tribes still exist in the area. Some of the tribes are still nomad, yet the others adopt permanent settlement. Besides affecting the lifestyles in the region, European and other colonizer countries taught their systematic belief in religion such as Christianity or Islam to African people. However, some of the tribes rejected to adopt the systematic religious beliefs of colonizer because all of the tribes have their religion and mythology even though some of the lifestyles tribes are pretty similar to each other, yet not identical. The only cultural tradition and mythology are not seen in Africa but a vast number of diversity in beliefs. They are not homogenous but still are affected by other cultures around the world or affect them. In general, not only human beings have a soul but also every being, subject and object, in nature has a soul and life in African religions. Either tree, lake, animal, the Sun, the Moon, or stars, all of them are precious and venerable and attributed power and importance. This way of nature worship is called animism. There is also humour, intrigue, cheating, and wit in African gods' behaviours which embellish the mythology. From the beginning of the world to the souls of the ancestors, African legends and beliefs are some of the richest and colourful mythologies around the world. Especially respecting and commendation to ancestors have a big role in African culture which is also seen in the comic book *Shuri*. When Shuri goes to Djalia, a kind of purgatory, and meets the ancestors there and learns from them, African mythology, religion, and beliefs find a place for themselves in the story.

Graphic novels and comics are making things visible via giving form to them and different experiences are shown through drawings. This helps readers to picture the images but a cognitive effort is still in need in order to understand the narration. With this effort, readers participate in storytelling. This experience is both subjective and not because the universality of the image is valid for everybody, nevertheless the comprehension of the narration depends on the readers' cognitive abilities and capabilities. "Graphic narratives work formally to deconstruct subjectivity in general" (Diedrich, 2017: 103) so that the analyses for *Shuri* is required to get a universal meaning and understanding from it. "Humanism deconstructs itself whenever 'the human' is observed not as a unity but as an assemblage" (Clarke,

2017: 141) and in *Shuri* the clear example of the deconstruction for the definition of human that lays in presenting the superhero as an assemblage.

#### **4.4. THE PROGRESS AND REPRESENTATION OF “WOMAN” AND “TECHNOLOGY” IN LITERATURE AND *SHURI***

The aforementioned in a detailed manner, according to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment thinking, mankind was supreme once, however, human beings faced downfall and their authority shattered a couple of times in history. First was when Copernicus stated that the world is turning around the Sun, and the Earth is not at the centre. The second downfall happened because Darwin talked about evolution, and mentioned the relation between humans and animals. The third event was when Freud's theories tried to explain the reasons for abortions that lay in the unconscious part of the human mind and actions are triggered by the unconscious mind. Donna Haraway takes these three occasions and claims that they are “three great historical wounds to the primary narcissism of the self-centred human subject” (qt. in Tarr and White, 2018: X), and adds a new step which contains the informatics or cyborgian in which organic and inorganic beings are enmeshed. This fourth step is developed by posthumanists who reject the idea that humanity has boundaries, exclusive, unique, extraordinary, or superior by nature. The posthumanist thought offers another point of view in contrast; “(...) [our] intelligence, [our] bodies, [our] behaviour are all interconnected with other species and the environment” (X). What posthumanism tries to do is to give a voice to the voiceless and “acknowledge the Other within us” (XI), and to point out the interrogating conceptual boundaries of the human and the nonhuman, and to expose the violence inherent in anthropocentrism, androcentrism, and speciesism as hegemonic discourses and practices underlying social and environmental crises. Moreover, the voice of the Other is not a new concept in posthumanism. In literature, the posthuman agent has always been there, and as Scott Jeffrey states that:

From the Classical myths of Icarus or the Minotaur, forms that blurred the line between the human and technology and the human and animal, through to the modern superhero comic, humans have entertained themselves with posthuman visions and engaged in arguments about the very category of the human itself (2016: 1).



In literature, the reflections have been started by science fiction writers when they told stories “about technologically enhanced and augmented people” (Yaszek and Ellis, 2017: 71). Throughout the 19th century until the early twentieth century, authors got their stories from the Enlightenment ideas that mentioned the superiority of human being, and theories of evolution and developing science and surgery methods to create new species based on human. After WWII, authors started to mention engineering, artificial intelligence and relatedly cognitive and computer sciences so that the exact meaning of being human has started to be demolished because the condition has become multiple and mutable and evolved to posthuman.

Women writers have been contributing significantly to speculative fiction Mary Shelley publicised *Frankenstein* (1818), and they developed the ideas of posthumanism and it was not until the advent of the women’s liberation movement in the 1960s and the development of an overtly politicized feminist science fiction in the 1970s that cyborg politics becomes central to stories about science, technology, and gender” (80). Frankly, the developing technology and its domination over nature may have started with the Industrial Revolution but its starting point goes back until the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, and since then literature has been an apparatus for social, and cultural changings so that authors portrayed “the relationships between human beings and new or developing technologies” (Rutsky, 2017: 182) in their works, and by doing so “technology becomes an *a priori* causal force that not only operates independently of environmental, cultural, economic, political-ideological, or even human determinants but serves to mould them” (185).

Cultures coexist in modern societies via literature and criticism. The comprehension of what happened and why, and then how to formulate an explanation about it or an argument in favour or against a certain idea are aroused by literary texts and their criticism. Comics does this together with words and images which show that the integration is possible because life itself is intermingled like human and nonhuman subjects’ effect on each other. Comic book readers, namely fans, prove that this integration of words and images is desirable. Especially, when the different social categories started to involve in comic books both solo series or minor characters, the outcome appears as the equality in representation is necessary. The universal themes, such as the superhero genre but with multicultural features,

and with the characters who portray universal values with specific cultures are the channels that reflect the relationship between cultures are negotiated in society. The popular culture and mass media demand the claim of this power because unheard is heard anymore, and producers follow the requirements from society to be able to bring profit.

Shuri, the Wakandan female superhero in Marvel comics, reflects poststructuralist, feminist and posthuman features. It is poststructuralist because it has its language; comic book language which is derived from images and words together, pages are not linear and narratives are changing according to the storyline, and it is an example of science fiction but not in suitable concepts of the modern novel. It is postcolonial because of the reflection of African people and their experiences in the very continent of Africa, in a hidden country named Wakanda with full of technology together with African politics and spirituality. So, as oppose to the yields of comic book industry, a science fiction comic book does not have to address or reflect the issues of white black élites. Shuri, is feminist because it is a story of a black African woman. It is posthuman because of the portrayal of the transparent relation and connection of human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic beings, specifically human and technology.

Posthuman literature shows a distinctive, not a traditional way of faculty. It is a practice of multivocality and transdisciplinarity. It defamiliarizes the accustomed tendencies and de-territorializes the stable status and subjects. The linear existence of truth and centrality of man in posthuman literature is impertinent. Posthuman literature and criticism considers the interconnection of human and non-human elements together with landscapes and nature. This new concepts appear with including the rise of global and digital citizenship of today's requirements, not excluding but rejecting.

A posthuman variant of feminist and postcolonial criticism studies literary works that reflect on how technology prompts or hinders subject revision and formation, and the extent to which it encourages radical dis-engagement from dominant gender and racial assemblages and categorical differences. (qt. in Lau 2018, 348 - Okorafor 2015; Adichie 2013; Shteyngart 2010; Diaz 2008; Cole 2012)

Shuri is a character that shows a brilliant woman, who grows up watching her brother training as the future King, and uses her brilliance to work with technology

and becomes posthuman herself. She becomes a mesh, an assemblage of technology and her own organic body. When Shuri was released in the Black Panther comic book series by Marvel first, the dominant gender of the superheroes was male and has been male since then. Okorafor shows radical assemblages of female superheroes because it is a need to display coloured people's portrayals in the comic book industry. Moreover, with Shuri, this depiction extends to female people of colour in posthuman viewpoint. Also, she is using highly advanced vibranium-based technology for her inventions which puts human and technology together each empowering the other. For the next chapters, the detailed analyses, namely deconstruction, of Shuri issues will be presented. Character's mission, prominent powers, and identity, changing supporting characters, and supervillains for conflict will be presented specifically besides mentioning the techniques of deconstruction, the focus on narrative and subject location or position, and to identify subjectivity will be used in close reading. Her character changed from being the queen and superpower adult to a tech-nerd teenage girl as the smartest person in the Marvel Universe and how popular culture affects the comic book industry. With the new version of her characters, young girls of colour are interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and little girls believe that they can be heroes, too, because Shuri becomes a role model for young girls of colour and women who are underrepresented in STEM fields.

#### **4.5. BACKGROUND STORY, OTHER STORIES WHEN SHURI IS A SIDEKICK, FIRST-TIME APPEARANCE OF *SHURI***

The background story of the character, Shuri, is pretty rich with feminist and posthuman elements. In the Marvel Universe, a fictional country Wakanda is located in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are various religious cults in Wakanda such as Panther cult, White Gorilla cult, Lion cult, and Crocodile cult-like happens in Africa in which variety of religious beliefs exist today. These cults are devoted to Heliopolitans who are the Originators that were expelled from Ancient Egypt in the times of pharaohs. The Panther *Goddess*, Bast, is the primary deity of Wakandan religion, and it is worth to mention that Bast is a goddess so that it is effective in the place of the woman in Wakandan society in which women are praised not suppressed. The story of Wakanda starts with a goddess, not with a god. This step is considered huge in the male hegemonic world of comic books. Moreover, when the superhero is named

after Bast as Black Panther, the female identity and entity pass from generation to generation. That is to say, Black Panther is given to the chosen chief of the Panther tribe. Wakanda is the most technologically advanced country on the planet and the reason to become ahead in time is that; in ancient history, a meteorite which is made of vibranium hit Wakanda. This material makes Wakanda a potential target from the exterior because it is invaluable to avoid exterior attacks, the current Black Panther, T'Challa's father T'Chaka, old Black Panther, disguises Wakanda from the outside world. Here, the effects of the material, which is called vibranium, on human lives is mentioned. The way to focus on the effects of a nonhuman element is to see the effects on human beings and their lives. Because of vibranium, the Wakandan nation has to hide from the world. The nonhuman element has a faculty and it does not have to be physical. On an epistemological and ontological level, the effects are exemplified via the example of vibranium in Wakanda. Besides that, since vibranium is an element from outer space, it is highly mutagenic. When the meteorite hits the soil, the flora and fauna have changed. For example, the Heart-Shaped Herb which is eaten by the Black Panther Cult is significant because it is consumed by the chosen Black Panther in cult's ceremonies. The herb enhances physical abilities. A large number of Wakandan Mutants also exist. Later on, T'Chaka decides to send genius students and scholars abroad to study and then they come back to use their knowledge to make Wakanda the most advanced society. In Shuri's solo series, the sub-plots have many critical posthuman and feminist criticism elements besides the original story. For example, all-female bodyguards in Wakandan special forces, Dora Milaje, refers to another feminist attitude besides having a goddess ancestor in the story.

The first appearance of Shuri is in *Black Panther* Vol. 4, #2, *Law of the Jungle*. She attempts to fight against her uncle S'yan who was the Black Panther back then, however, S'yan was defeated by T'Challa before Shuri. T'Challa becomes the current Black Panther, nevertheless, from her childhood, Shuri trains herself to be the Black Panther one day, and T'Challa helps her in martial arts training. In 2009, she appears in *Black Panther* again. In #5, *She-Panther*, in which T'Challa is in a coma, Shuri takes the responsibility to fight against the Spider-Man villain Morlun and Doctor Doom who wants to be the leader of Wakanda without Black Panther

powers, and defeats Morlun. In this version, Shuri understands that she would never be the Black Panther but becomes the one whom she always wants to be and becomes legendary. In 2013, in *New Avengers #7, A Game of Thrones*, Shuri appears as the Queen who declines to sign the treaty between Atlantis and Wakanda. In 2016, *Black Panther #8, A Nation Under Our Feet*, her Djalia adventure is portrayed. Shuri is the Wakandan princess, daughter of T'Chaka and sister of current Black Panther T'Challa, heiress of the throne, and afterwards becomes the Black Panther. There are different storylines of her becoming the Black Panther as mentioned. For instance, in one of the storyline, she becomes the Black Panther after her brother struggles in a coma after a fight (Hudlin's *Black Panther*, 2005), and in another story, she becomes the Black Panther after her brother's loss in the space on a mission (Okorafor's *Shuri*, 2019).

As a fictional superhero, Shuri was trained as a martial artist before becoming the Black Panther (*Black Panther* vol. 4, #39-41). Either in this story or that story, when she becomes the Black Panther somehow, she follows the traditions. There were trials to become the Black Panther and, like the previous Black Panthers before her, she takes the heart-shaped herb which gives her enhanced speed, agility, strength, endurance and senses (*Black Panther* vol.6, #13). She wears a uniform that is made of vibranium (*Black Panther* vol. 5, #3-6). The storyline has been changing due to the series and there are numerous sub-plots, but when she sacrifices herself in *Avengers: Time Runs Out* (2016) for the sake of T'Challa's escape, she dies. When Shuri goes to Djalia, which is portrayed in Coates' *Black Panther* (2016) #2, #3, #5, #6 and #7, kind of a purgatory where Wakanda's entire memory consists. The great spirit of her mother Ramonda's appearance teaches her the secrets of ancient times and she gains supernatural abilities. These supernatural abilities are about transforming her body into a stone-like material that is flexible. This material protects her from gunfire and energy weapons. She has also the ability of anamorphism which leads her bodily transformation into the flock of blackbirds (*Black Panther* vol.6, #9) or a singular dark bird (#11). Here, the blurry images of the boundaries between human and nonhuman are portrayed as transparent, as if they question and show the relativity of perception of truth, reality, subjectivity, and power as posthuman theories point out. Spending her time and training in Djalia,

Shuri gains another ability which is to reanimate Wakandan corpses (*Black Panther*, Vol. 6, #15, 2017). This requires putting lots of effort into it so that she can do it for a short period. T'Challa comes together with Manifold, a mutant who can bend reality, and brings back Shuri with the technology and his help. The interconnection of the series and numbers of these series shows intertextuality in comic book series. The storyline is not chronological and each of them is written by various writers in different series so that the complexity in stories and character developments other significant elements in the comic book universe.

The Shuri-centric story begins with twelve issue Black Panther comic from 2008. In this storyline, T'Challa is in a coma and leaves Shuri to be the Black Panther. Shuri takes the heart-shaped herb from where it is grown on soil in which sleeping panthers sleep, and faces the Panther God who refuses her claim on the role of Black Panther because of her jealousy of her brother and arrogance. The first six issues show Shuri's ascent to the throne, yet, T'Challa's wife Storm from the X-Men is at the centre. The last six issues portray Shuri's travel to the U.S., as the new chief of Wakanda. Meanwhile, Shuri and her team face conflicts, T'Challa tries to recover in Wakanda. This Black Panther story is significant because Shuri is in the protagonist status. Then in May 2018, the new *Black Panther* series was released that was written by Ta-Nehisi Coates and drawn by Daniel Acuna. In the new series, Black Panther leaves Wakanda for a mission and goes to outer space and gets lost. In Okorafor's series, after this period is told, namely Okorafor's story is tied to Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Black Panther*, in which Shuri becomes the leader of Wakanda and rules it in her brother's absence. This version of story-telling is called spin-off and refers to intertextuality as a postmodernist notion in literature.

Okorafor is the award-winner novel writer but she is not the first novelist or poet who works with Marvel. Coates also worked with Saladin Ahmed (writer) and Eve Ewing (author and poet). Marvel offers to work with novelists or poets into new perspectives at Marvel, however, since the stories are intertextual, it is not easy to adapt the stories for novelists who did not create the storylines and characters. Okorafor shifted from prose to comics smoothly with sharp dialogues, and in some parts, she left the work done to Romero's art. Instead of using excessive words in panels, she trusted the artist and the art which points out that active comic book work

should be cooperative. When Okorafor states that the reasons why she accepted to work at Marvel for *Shuri* via email to *Bustle*, she says;

“[Shuri is] an African young woman of genius level intelligence who is obsessed with technology and has travelled so far into the past that she’s seen Wakanda before it was Wakanda. The Ancestors call her Ancient Future. And she’s super ambitious. What do I love about her? All that and more. She’s a character in the Marvel Universe who sings to me.” (<https://www.bustle.com/p/black-panthers-sister-shuri-is-getting-her-own-comic-book-series-its-happening-so-so-soon-9782595> )

Shuri is African, from Wakanda, she is a genius, she is aware of the place where she comes from and the traditions from the ancestors, but Africa is such a vast region full of different/various cultures, beliefs, rituals. Shuri’s representation points out the richness and goes beyond. There should be a starting point to be heard. For instance, according to the research by Caroline Heldman, PhD in Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, when *The Hunger Games* and *Brave* were released in 2012, girl participation in archery doubled (2016: 2 - [www.seejane.org](http://www.seejane.org) -). *Indiana Jones* showed the way to study archaeology, meanwhile *Jurassic Park* palaeontology. Kids want to become an engineer or astrophysicist after watching *Star Trek*. When *The Hobbit* was on the screen, the tourism income in New Zeland increased, the same for Croatia after *Game of Thrones*. The effects on society are clear.

#### 4.5.1.SHURI, ISSUE #1 AND #2

##### 4.5.1.1.#1, *Gone*



Figure 5. #1, *Gone*

The issues #1, #2, #3, #4 and #5 are brought together and create Vol.1. Nnedi Okorafor's experiences on writing and Leonardo Romero's artistic style which is minimalist and seems like it is taken from Egyptian hieroglyphs but extremely detailed features of clothing get together in the comic book series of *Shuri*. The first issue represents the character work, a possible Shuri-Manifold romance is set up, and together with Queen Ramonda's, Shuri's heroic nature are presented. The main characters, setting, and plot are represented with a backstory. Shuri's love of science, genius, courage, thoughts about becoming a princess and her childhood are shown. She is responsible but also fun and adventurous. The story starts with a one-page recap of the previous story. The very first panel shows how Shuri watches her brother as a Black Panther and with her genius how she develops skills on her thanks to vibranium technology. As an independent character, Shuri's capacity to exist in society is portrayed here. Together with technological enhancement, adding accumulated skills to a female character is significant. Also, as an example of the intertextuality, the very first page mentions what happened before; T'Challa is needed somewhere else and he leaves for the mission to outer space when Shuri has to be the Black Panther. Meanwhile, when Thanos' Black Order invades Wakanda, Shuri loses her life in the battle. (Thanos is the supervillain in Marvel Universe and tries to restore balance by killing half of the life in the universe). When her soul is in Djalia, she learns about the spirits of her ancestors and Wakanda's legendary warriors and its history. She comes back to Wakanda and tries to keep her nation safe.

In the first issue, after the recap, daily life in Wakanda is shown. From the very beginning, the market in the city and citizens are portrayed. The launch of a space mission whose information is given by panels is expected by the citizens. When the civilians are included in the storyline, it shows the society whose safety is under the responsibility of superheroes. With a space shuttle that Shuri built for T'Challa and his associate Manifold, the mutant, they will go on an exploratory space mission. Shuri's contributions to the space program are praised which is relatively not common in patriarchal standards. Her interest in science and technology is also mentioned since she creates nanotech wings to be able to fly. She has enhanced herself with a nonhuman element and when she wears the wings, she



becomes the wings and wings become her. Both elements are consistent. As a narrator, she also uses history to enlighten the future; “Not that long ago, I almost died defending Wakanda. While in a state of ‘death’, my soul travelled to Djalia.” / “There, the spirits of my ancestors, the griot, taught me all the stories of Wakandan history – and how to use skills from those stories.” / “At first it was difficult making the transition back to the land of the living, especially with all that wisdom of my ancestors bouncing around my head” (all of them are written in bubbles). When she mentions how she saved T’Challa’s life from a snake bite while he was training with Zuri, readers see the importance of the woman. Hence, without Shuri, there would not be the Black Panther T’Challa. This image develops more the portrayal of female characters in Shuri series. When Zuri says: “You just saved the next king of Wakanda. Be proud.”, Shuri thinks like; “Zuri didn’t even say ‘Good shot’.” Men are always the first yet Shuri starts to destroy this inherited image. bell hooks states that as; “In patriarchal culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines. When race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then black males endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity” (2004: X). Patriarchy does not depend on being black and male. Shuri thinks; “It was always about my brother first. He was the right gender, plus he was the oldest.” and she points out the sameness of the problem of patriarchy that she faces and comes from the black male. Since she is writing about being of the right gender and age, she mentions the power elements in society and culture. The predetermined values are set in this part yet gender and age are not the values that can be chosen. “Knowledge is power” (Shuri, 2019: #2) and it becomes the meta. In contrast with the focus of being the right gender and age, the next thing represented is a council that is full of women. All of the women diverse with different lives and history so that the council itself praises the diversity of thought. One of the women talks as; “Historically, when Wakanda was in trouble, the women would meet... in secret. Over the years, this tradition has fallen to the wayside”. The council of the woman is called the Elephant’s Trunk, and when Queen Ramonda, mother of Shuri gathers the group together to decide who will be the next Black Panther in her son’s absence. The women of Wakanda believe that a Black Panther is needed as chief of the nation, and they call a secret meeting. T’Challa’s absence is also hidden from the country. The Elephant’s Tunk decides to

keep this a secret and asks Shuri to be the new Black Panther. She does not answer so readers have to wait until the next issue to learn.

Also, Shuri's relationship with Queen Ramonda, mother, is represented physically but not emotionally. Shuri's loneliness and growing up with her brother's shadow is very well portrayed because her only emotional intimacy is the one with a hacker she texts and has never seen before. The sense of loneliness is shown throughout the issue. Shuri is different in many ways and this is portrayed in the first issue. Readers witness to her story, not the Black Panther T'Challa's. Besides her being queen and saving the world, her visit to Djalila and naming as 'ancient future', her personality and contrariness are established. Throughout the storyline in the first issue of *Shuri*, the focus is on the female figures via putting them in the spotlight. The paradigm shift happens not only in *Shuri* but also in the other female characters. The male gender is not dominant, decision-maker, ruler, owner, or foregrounded in the first issue. Elderly women and Shuri gather together to decide on the future of Wakanda (Okorafor, 2019: np). The comic book *Shuri* is essential and one of a kind due to the deconstruction of the approach of male hegemony. The narrators are female and the storyline follows the female characters' experiences. This comic book is an essential instance of posthuman elements because of its embracement and praising technological developments and advancements besides portraying the right to decide, define, and talk for women. Together with the critical posthuman point of views, the rise of female superheroes and above all the boost of black female superheroes make this comic book valuable.

#### 4.5.1.2. #2, The Baobab Tree



Figure 6. #2, *The Baobab Tree*

The rejection by Shuri is given to the women council in the very first panel of the issue. Shuri does not want to be the Black Panther again because she died while becoming it for the last time. Since she portrays an independent and intelligent character, she talks to the council of women fearlessly. When she explains her thought to the sisterhood in the Baobab Tree;

Mother, sisters of the Elephant's Trunk... I've been the panther before and... it wasn't a good fit. I died wearing that suit, died trying to live up to that legacy. / Wakanda wanted my brother. If I take up his mantle again, I'll just end up walking in his shadow for... for however long he's gone. / Let this tradition end and begin a new one. One where Wakanda stands on its own, without needing symbols or a protector. / Let's stand up and show the world who we are.

Okorafor's thoughts of leaving the old superheroes and creating new ones are reflected. While Shuri questions her position and says that she does not desire to live under the shadow of her brother, she actually questions the male authority. Her advice about leaving the old traditions and creating new ones is related to shuttering the power images as well. Yet, Ramonda's aggression to Shuri's thought is foregrounded as she compares her to T'Challa. Shuri rejects to become the Black Panther and decides to try to find her brother and this disappoints Queen Ramonda. Next, she talks to T'Challa's wife Storm, and to be able to reach Storm, she turns herself into a flock of blackbirds. The relationship between Shuri's bodily image and the animal image is valuable to exemplify how each of the elements, human and animal body, exist together. Later on, the power is described as knowledge. The powerful one is not the one with gender or age but with knowledge. It is the age of knowledge, science and technology. Since T'Challa and Manifold are still missing and Shuri states that: "The only way we're going to find Manifold and my brother is through solid science". Meanwhile, when Queen Ramonda leaves the other without knowing where she is and disappears, Shuri and Storm go to Town With No Name where they meet Ikoko, who is T'Challa's ex-girlfriend, a scientist of the spiritual. During the story, Okorafor leaves some spaces in the storyline to be filled by reading other series. For example, when Shuri says; "I don't see why mute zoners need to be so secretive\*.", the explanation for asterixis is given in the same panel with a different bubble in which it is written; "Find out why in the *Black Panther: Long Live the King* collection." This is an example of being intertextual and metanarrative of postmodern fiction.

The limits of technology are mentioned by Storm which is realistic. To be able to make the story continue, like a *deus ex machina*, spiritual abilities are shown. Shuri sets up a plan and gets in contact with the Grootboom, the second-largest baobab tree on the continent and with her astral form tries to find her brother. Ikoko sends Shuri's astral mind into space and there comes Groot from the Guardians of the Galaxy. She becomes the Groot, goes into the tree and the new sidekick is added to the storyline so that #3 continues. The hook that is accroached from the end of the #2 to the #3 is a tradition in comic book series. The continuity and to provide continuance, Okorafor uses this opportunity to add new characters to the story. The characters are sidekicks in *Shuri* however, they are also created in solo-series. In #2, besides existential questioning such as technology or spirituality, Shuri's approach against technology is seen. "The expressions throughout this issue are phenomenal, especially during the confrontation between Queen and Princess, with Ramonda's disappointment and Shuri's surprise, embarrassment and betrayal are clear." The contradistinction that appears in the first two issues are given detailed yet the rest of the issues rather focus on the actions and about the continuity of the story.

#### 4.5.2. SHURI, ISSUE #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10



Figure 7. #3, *Groot Boom*

In the third issue, Shuri's becoming the Groot, a tree, depicts the woman and nature relation which ecofeminism points out. While becoming astrally the Groot, Shuri talks to the Rocket, other members of the *Guardians of the Galaxy*, she faces different problems than hers and decides to have a look. First, she gets busy with an

engine problem and with her knowledge, they get rid of the problem. After that, in the next adventure Shuri is taken apart from searching T'Challa and Manifold but she faces a space bug, Space-Lubber. Meanwhile, Ikoko and Storm see that Shuri's body looks like wood. Ikoko says; "Whatever is happening to their spirits must be affecting their bodies too". The assemblage that is created by Shuri and Groot is a mesh of human and nonhuman. When Groot talks back to Shuri; "I am Groot. You are Shuri. We're all connected at the root.", the relation of both of them that creates a mesh is underlined. Shuri repeats a couple of times; "I am Shuri" while she is in the Groot like a reminder to herself about her identity. With Rocket and Groot she fights the Space-Lubber. The giant space grasshopper follows her to the Earth.



Figure 8. #4, *Timbuktu*

Shuri returns from her space adventure with Rocket and Groot and new problems await her. First of all, the grasshopper attacks Timbuktu in time of a concert full of civils. Secondly, she loses her connection to the powers of the ancestors. She loses her ability to anamorphism. Her ancestral guides try to warn her about the seriousness of the problems before vanishing but Shuri focuses on the current problems. Shuri's challenge with her mother continues because Queen Ramonda declares to Egungun, a Pan-African Alliance that T'Challa had worked with before his disappearance, that Shuri would take up the mantle of the Black Panther regardless of her rejection. Shuri does not prefer to get involved in politics but her mother states that Wakanda would be vulnerable without the defender of the

nation, the Black Panther. After all, Shuri accepts the fact that she is the new Black Panther again. She tries to battle against the grasshopper but it disappears in seconds with leaving black holes behind it. To discard the black hole that consumes the Earth, Shuri called Stark, who is known for his genius and as Ironman, for help and to double-check her math and solve the problem of black holes that Lubber creates while following Shuri. Thus, a new sidekick, Tony Stark who is Ironman, appears in the story.



Figure 9. #5, *The End of the Earth*

#5 of the series focuses on the intelligence of Shuri since she tries to solve the problem of the black hole with Ironman. On the third page of the issue, there occurs a metanarrative where the writer Okorafor interferes in the text. She explains that she searched for the possibility of transmitting data through light bulbs in a bubble. Shuri's scientific solutions are praised by Ironman which shows her brilliance. Sidekicks change and now, besides the giant grasshopper, another enemy appears who is Moses Magnum, a terrorist with seismic powers. At the end of the issue, the world is saved by Shuri and Ironman. Shuri is on the news; "For the first time, Wakandan princess Shuri holds a press conference in Timbuktu, Mali". During the press conference, Shuri is asked whether to accept the Black Panther mantle. Her indecision is portrayed clearly in her speech however, on the last page of #5, she appears as the Black Panther when she accepts the mantle at last.



Figure 10. #6, *A Friend in Need, Part I*

Unlike the previous writer is Vita Ayala in #6 and #7, and for the rest, Romero and Bellaire appear as recap artist where Paul Davidson and Rachel Stott illustrated the rest of the series. Issues #6, #7, #8, #9 and #10 are brought together and create Vol. 2. One page recap is seen at the very beginning of Vol. 2. The recap is not seen on the first page of every issue but volumes are rather proper to give a highlight from the previous happenings in the story.

Now, Shuri accepts the mantle of the Black Panther but not completely. She builds her version of the panther suit. She changes the traditions, the Black Panther suit for example, as a woman and predetermined values are shattered. As a sidekick in this issue, Spider-Man appears but this Spider-Man is half African-American, half Latino, Miles Morales. She tries to help Spider-Man to save people in New York where the creature that Shuri brought back with her from the black hole is in a bank and tries to destroy the city. Shuri praises her knowledge of technology while talking to Spider-Man. When she realizes the signal does not belong to the space lubber, she wants to go back to Wakanda. Her mother Ramonda stops her via talking visual through devices. Queen Ramonda takes the responsibilities in Wakanda, meanwhile, Shuri can stay in New York and help Spider-Man to protect the city. The powerful image of both women is underlined because they are the ones who are in control when chaos appears. There is not a male figure who appears in the storyline to save the city or calm down the chaos. Also, both Spider-Man Miles Morales and Shuri

talk about how Spider-Man lives under the shadow of Peter Parker and Shuri under the shadow of her brother T'Challa.



Figure 11. #7, *A Friend in Need, Part II*

This issue of *Shuri* presents a rather vital reality. Shuri's authority is also underlined while trying to solve the problems that occur in the storyline in this issue. She becomes the decision-maker. This time the struggle is not related to power or authority but is about survival in reality. The realm of capitalism and how it affects the psyche are presented. The smart kid with a family who has financial conflicts comes across as a villain and becomes the villain himself. The team saves the day and the smart kid, but actual societal problems that are in daily lives are portrayed carefully. How mercy and societal pressures may affect one's life is represented. Also, the superhero collaboration is a good way to show the powerful sides and weakness in characters via contrasting and comparing their characteristic features because it is rather difficult to see them when they are the only ones who are acting in the story. The specialities of the characters are represented in balance and none of the characteristic are undermined. The capacity to make mistakes and the reactions to daily-life problems of superheroes are underlined.





Figure 12. #8, *24/7 Vibranium*

The issue starts with Shuri's going back to Wakanda and meeting with her mother, Queen Ramonda, where they discuss Shuri's acceptance of the Black Panther mantle. The council of women gets together in the Baobab Tree and talks about the necessity of a new Black Panther with agreements and disagreements. At the end of the *Shuri*, she turns into a blackbird by using her ability of anamorphism. Her existence in a place and the other one depends on her relationship with the bird in which they exist together. Without the blackbird, Shuri cannot change the place where she is. Later on, the ceremony happens that announces Shuri as the Black Panther. In this issue, all of the characters are female. Actions are taken by women characters which are rare; however, praising women is not surprising in *Shuri* comic books. Through the end of the issue, Shuri questions herself and she thinks she might have caused some of the problems that they face. She is considered a hero yet she shows weakness and talks about them openly.

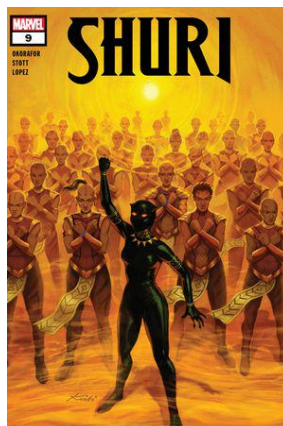


Figure 13. #9, *Godhead*

This issue starts with Shuri's acceptance of her fault in which she realizes, besides being a hero, she is a human being and has limitations in behaviours and/or thoughts. The story goes through panels and there are reminders about the occasions that appear beforehand. For example when ancestors talk to Shuri and say; "Remember when he hacked all those radios and watches in Mali?\*" an asterisk appears. The explanation for that asterisk is given in the same panel as; "\*Back in issue #5!" so that if the reader has difficulties to remember what happened before, thanks to these reminders, she can go back and read that mentioned issue. These interruptions, reminders, and interferences are examples of postmodern fictions. Meanwhile, more examples that are related to Shuri's genius appear in the story when she gives a nanotech pill to Storm to get rid of some hallucinations for their next adventure. The problem occurs when Muti, Shuri's hacker friend hacks an alien's brain and defends himself; "Brains are just organic computers. And I have a special... affinity for tech." The organic and inorganic compounds are related and the posthuman approach on this is exemplified. Shuri's being Black Panther is accepted by her one more time at the end of the issue.



Figure 14. #10, *Living Memory*

The last issue of the Shuri comic books series focuses more on action and adventure rather than focusing on the image of Shuri. This is the issue where Shuri understands the attack of the grasshopper because she can get into the grasshopper's memories in which she sees how the planet where the grasshopper lived was destroyed and it had to leave that world. She says; "I think I get it now, little lubber.

You came from a world full of natural music, didn't you? Then your home was destroyed." Here, she mentions the image of destruction and how the exterior causes affect the lives of the beings. At last, she saves Wakanda and a celebration happens in Djalila. A traditional type of drumming praises the greatness of Bast. The issue ends with how the adventure starts; in the market place. The images of civils and daily life are portrayed. Shuri names one of her inventions as "Sauron" and praise to *Lord of the Rings* is also given which is an example of intertextuality in postmodern fiction.

The issue has a letter from Okorafor at the end. She states that "for now", this is the end of Shuri's story. She says; "Shuri is gutsy, ambitious, and drawn to the sciences by a curious, interrogative nature. She's struggling to balance familial obligation and a need for independence" (2019: Vol. 2). Okorafor also mentions the narration, she states that not only she mentions Shuri as the princess, the engineer, the leader, the girl, but also introduces Wakanda. She also mentions Shuri's being strong, beautiful, and African in which the details are examples of the deconstruction of the female superheroes in the comic book industry.

Shuri presents a mono-myth pattern during the whole story. In general, when the Wakandan community is threatened and Shuri is needed, even though she does not accept of being a hero, at last she becomes the hero without thinking of herself. The rejection of being the hero at first shows the questioning part of the human mind and reason. Through superheroism, Shuri wins the victory; however, she needs some help from her friends. The necessary of multi- besides only is the significant thing that postmodernism tries to draw attention. The harmony in society that is restored is represented in the last issue, the last scene with an image of the market place. The market place is where everything starts, it is the opening scene of the first issue and at the end, the same market place is shown. The circle of the storyline is completed. The rest is unremained and for Shuri, the possibility of the continuity of the story is obscure.

The issues that are #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, and #10 mostly focus on the action unlike the first two issues that feminist outstanding is represented. As a science fiction comic book, Okorafor gives the reader more than they expect from a

superhero comic book but this is more seen in the first two issues, the rest is about building the story and to conclude it. The storyline falls a victim to the demands of the fans since it is a popular culture element. When people started to reach the writers, artists via internet and social media, the interaction with the stories began. On one hand, the first and second issues point out the deconstructing of patriarchal norms with the support of female characters besides having a female black superhero as a protagonist, on the other hand, this radical approach is not encountered in the rest of the issues. Still, Okorafor has achieved something noteworthy in comic book industry in popular culture. The storyline of *Shuri* besides its focus on action point out the necessity of the voice of the so-called *Others* in literary, social and cultural arena. Whenever the minority groups appear in popular culture through literature, the rising voice of them becomes clear in societies, cultures, and politics.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the flow that starts with modernism and continues through posthuman theories is examined in the light of deconstruction in poststructuralism and feminist literary criticism with the science fictional comic book. The comic book from the 21st century era is analysed and this work is chosen in accordance with the postmodern fiction, feminist and posthuman theories, however, the main focus is on deconstruction that poststructuralism leads the way and coexists together with feminism and posthumanism respectively. Since the female superhero is considered as posthuman, in the thesis how patriarchy is dealt with mentioned. The shuttering down the binary oppositions that patriarchy predetermined is the main goal in this thesis. The change in the comic book industry and the reasons are also examined. The comic book in this thesis generally demonstrates the destructive effects of patriarchal practices. As it is stated in the previous chapters, the comic book *Shuri* is efficient to discuss the postmodern fiction features together with the feminist and posthuman ideals. Comics are modern day folklore and in general because they are the reflection of society and where humans are at as a culture. The comic book industry tries to aspire to be a better person and "...comics narrate a metaphoric route out of and illustrate the power to fight and maneuver within the world's problems" (Whaley, 2016: XI).

The origins of the dichotomies are not set in the modern thinking systems, they already existed long before Descartes created binary oppositions but the Enlightenment became the era that these controversies are rooted in. When human and reason became the privileged in a social and cultural level, politics, science, and technology were affected by the thought system that put humanity at the centre and made it the owner. The centrality of the human being became a huge impact on religious doctrines and the authority of the church in Western society. When humanity became privileged with its reason, mind, and the capacities of faculty, owning 'the Other' was inevitable. Human became the only defier of the authority of religion. The describers, white, male, bourgeoisie class, decided to value some notions and devalued 'the Other'. The stronger in the society that was patriarchy became the norm and notion definer. They divided the categories into two and labeled them as good/bad, light/dark, human/nature, man/woman, etc. respectively.

Since women were different than the power holder in the society, they became the outsider. Power-holders named the values as they were familiar and similar or foreigner. The arbitrariness of the definitions were not examined until the rise of the feminist movement and accordingly poststructuralism.

The dichotomies and systematization appeared in structuralism that had an impact on language and literature. When Saussure defined the language as a system, he was serving to modern thought that created binaries. According to him, language existed out there beyond everything and everyone. With this, he aimed to reach an objectivity and a final truth. The one and ultimate truth erased the individuality from the scene. Meanwhile, the social and cultural life, besides politics, economics, science and technology were changing rapidly and the arguments on postmodernism and discussions about it started to appear. Creating the codes and systems in language were not helpful to determine social and cultural phenomena. The discussions were about the changing society and the inadequacy of the thought systems. The multivocality and individuality started to rise with May '68 Riots in France in which students and scholars were fighting against the commodification of information and knowledge.

Naming postmodernism as it did not happen during the riots were happening. Scholars, who did not define themselves as postmodernist, started to theorize the social and cultural changes and the commodification of information and knowledge on a journal, *Tel Quel*, during the second half of the twentieth century. Scholars such as Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault focused on the changing society and rising individualism. With the studies and generating the ideas, scholarly works helped postmodernism gain a voice. When Kristeva and Barthes started to discuss the inefficiency of structuralism, the thought of multi- and individual started to be produced more. Before, the centrality and authority of human being over other beings shattered with when Galileo's discoveries pointed out that the Earth was not at the centre of the Solar system, Darwin's theory of evolution which made a connection between the organic beings, and when Freud's studies on psychoanalyses where he stated that humans were not responsible of their actions but the subconscious. All these three incidents stole

humanity's thunder but not enough to redefine the notions in social and cultural levels. Patriarchy continued to exist and create more dichotomies.

The discussion on the structuralism that had restricted caused a new way of thinking. This new way of thinking was praising the individuality and diversity in the societies. The coding structural system was overthrown by studying on the arbitrariness of the thought system that created oppositons. Poststructuralism, which was shaped with the studies, discussions, and works of postmodern thinkers and philosophers, cleared the way for the new thinking system. This system found a way for itself in the rising feminist movement because since then women were described by men with patriarchal definitions and they started to fight against the male hegemony that had been causing misinterpretation of 'the Other' for decades. Women started to point out to the origins of the problem of inequality which was patriarchy and the privileged ones that ruled over the societies and cultures. Meanwhile, various versions of feminism appeared because while it was praising the multivocality and variety, each movement under the term feminist attached importance to different matters.

Three French feminists, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva, studied on a term, *feminine écriture*, (women's writing) that was deconstructing the determined notions and reconstructing them with a female voice. The concept was defined by Cixous in her work *The Laugh of the Medusa* but together with Kristeva and Irigaray, it expanded to cultural studies and literature. Women wanted to tell their own stories, experiences, problems with their own language so that they would not have helped the patriarchy inadvertently. *Feminine écriture* was all about deconstructing that poststructuralism aimed. With the rising voice of multiplicity, studying on new thinking system was not easy. It was " [...] a time which has become so much more complex, chaotic, and unfathomable, so much more difficult to theorize, so much less sure of the foundations that need 'deconstructing', and which instead, in fact, increasingly deconstruct themselves, faster and faster" (Herbrechter, 2017b: 55). On the one hand, feminist theories were trying to shatter the dichotomies that were created by patriarchy via focusing on psychoanalyses, language and literature on the other hand society was changing, developing and expanding rapidly. With the rise of industrialisation and science, technology has

become the determinant factor in culture and society. People have started to consume more and whenever possible because of the growth in science and technology, information and knowledge has become commodification. Technology has become a part of human lives. While feminist theories were problematising the inequality, especially between woman and man, the progressive technological achievement required new studies that were posthuman. Posthuman theories has considered shattering the dichotomies obligatory so that the arbitrariness of human being would be comprehended clearly. The connection between human and non-human, organic and inorganic beings, nature and culture has been mentioned by posthuman scholars. The richness that posthumanity has brought out together with feminist studies is substantial because it is inclusive unlike patriarchy; “The human would always be looking to a future of the posthuman, where what appears as self-evident, universal, and futural in the present would recognize itself as once more bound with figures, specificities, and logics that are all too human(ist), masculine, heterosexual, Western, Christian, white, imperialist, and ableist” (Colebrook, 2017: 198).

Since science and technology has made an overwhelming impression on societies and cultures, this impression has been mentioned directly via literature and other social and cultural activities. The habits of the consumers and even readers also have changed. People started to prefer science fiction in a technologically advanced society. The scenarios about ‘what if’s have started to expand the imagination of the readers. When these scenarios started to appear on movie screen, the whole industry has become the apparatus of consumerism. Fans started to conduct the industry according to their demands because they have been targeted to be able to sell more. That also affected the understanding in literature. People started to prefer more visuality than words. The combination of words and images in books were not new but since the demand started to increase, the comic book industry burst. People started to create a ‘geek’ culture with popular culture. Postmodern fiction received its share from the burst and it started to be an element of comic books. The connection of the stories, once becoming sidekicks and than the protagonist in another storyline, the intertextuality, metanarrativity, leaving gaps and spaces physically and mentally to the readers, and lately giving voices to the minorities made comic books an efficient element to discuss deconstruction, feminist and posthumanist point of view.



The creation of superheroes were basic and simple at first but the happenings around the world, such as the Great Depression during 30s, WWII during the 40s, the rise of hippie movement during the 60s, and the rise of individuality thanks to poststructuralism and the second wave feminist studies in 70s and 80s were reflected in comic books. Afterwards, the superheroes started to be seen in movie screens. All the mentioned industries were male dominated and the representation of the woman and so-called minority groups were accordingly. However, there are breakouts which are turning into phenomenons. In the 21st century era, as one sees, a new way of representation is possible. The essential thing is not just that comic book is a traditionally male-dominated medium that is now opening up and experiencing a lot of female content creators such as Nnedi Okorafor, and stories that are being told like *Shuri*, but also there is a generational shift that is happening right now.

When Nnedi Okorafor accepted to write a solo comic book series for *Shuri*, that was rather the pioneer in a male dominated industry. There were black female superheroes before but they were not gathered together with science and technology like *Shuri* did. Before,

“Africa and women’s bodies sell in comic books, especially when presented in the narrative trope of Africa as exotic yet dangerous, and African women as sexual enticements for male characters who are also centrally focused on protecting the nation. Although their subject content lightly focuses around these themes, their use nevertheless sheds light upon the larger field and purpose of comic books and comic books studies” (Whaley, 2016: 120).

Okorafor focused on the intelligency on a female character. The knowledge of using technology and science, not sexuality, *Shuri* appears as an ideal superhero of the feminist and posthumanist thinking. With the form of *Shuri*, the narrative is supported with the images and the blanks are rather filled by the readers as it is tradition in reading comic books or graphic novels. “As an art form, a comic book is a volume in which all aspects of the narrative are represented by pictorial and linguistic images encapsulated in a sequence of juxtaposed panels and pages” (Duncan, 2009: 4). The argument is not being a literary work or not but to be able to point out the inherited notions and predetermined values that describe ‘the Other’ rather than patriarchy. To deconstruct the dichotomies, *Shuri* is studied in the light of feminist and posthuman studies. Not only the superhero *Shuri* but also the sidekicks in the comic book challenge against the patriarchal norms.

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## ÖZGEÇMİŞ

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