The (Im)Possibility of Healing in Toni Morrison's Novels

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(Ne)mogućnost ozdravljenja u romanima Toni Morrison

Diplomski rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jasna Poljak Rehlicki

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Abstract:

This paper uses Frankl's logotherapy for the analysis of Toni Morrison's novels and their protagonists in *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, *Beloved*, and *A Mercy*. The different traumatic events make Morrison's novels suitable for logotherapeutic reading and analysis. Morrison's way of presenting slavery and identity issues are in accordance to Frankl's presentation of oppressed prisoners in concentration camps and introducing the ultimate meaning in the most difficult situations. The first part of the paper focuses on the definition of literature of trauma based on the intertextual contacts between Frankl's and Morrison's writing. The second part presents Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning* and logotherapy as the source for the analysis. The third part examines literary subjects based on Frankl's experience in the camp, through shock, relative apathy, and the psychology of the prisoners after trauma. The fourth part of the paper presents the possibility of finding meaning in life and the pathways to meaning taken by the protagonists. The paper concludes with Frankl's tragic optimism, observing literary subjects in the light of the tragic triad; pain, guilt, and death, and how and if they managed to find the ultimate meaning and purpose in life by turning their suffering into achievement, changing themselves, and taking responsible actions.

Keywords: Toni Morrison, Viktor Frankl, logotherapy, trauma, slavery, the meaning of life.

Introduction

People might have different notions of life, death, and religion, but the one thing that they all share is pain. Writing itself can be a pathway to healing and it can also be a means to tell a story worth telling, to express the profound experience of life, and to send a valuable message to the reader. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning* (2006), which is the main theoretical background for this paper, Viktor Frankl quotes Nietzsche in order to emphasize the importance of meaning in life: "He who has a *Why* to live can bear almost any *How*" (Frankl 76). Surprisingly, these are the words of a nihilist, the one who followed the project of unknowability of the Truth of life. Frankl's book and his logotherapy can change people's lives, regardless of who they are and what they do. His teaching is not related only to surviving, but it focuses on the way how to lead a full and meaningful life despite all difficulties and challenges one faces. Its beginnings are rooted in Frankl's own experience. As an expert in two disciplines, neurology and psychiatry, Frankl was aware of the extent to which man is subject to biological, psychological, and sociological conditions. As a survivor of four concentration camps and Holocaust, he was more than familiar with the human power and willingness to survive and overcome trauma. In his book, Frankl details both experiences that shape his basic philosophy with the conviction that life has meaning under all circumstances (Marshall 6). After three years in Nazi concentration camps and the loss of his family (Lantz 94), he returned to Vienna in 1945 and started developing logotherapy that became a useful tool in the search for meaning.

The principles of logotherapy can also be useful for literary interpretations. In his article "Logotherapy and the Empirical Research for Literature," Joaquin Trujillo claims that literature is a meaning-discovery-interpreting process which creatively discloses the meaning of being human and deepens our understanding of human reality by publicly revealing who we are, who we have been, and who we can become (1). In that way, while reading certain life stories, whether autobiographical or fictional, one might recognize the struggle to maintain oneself while facing the challenges and suffering in life. Despite their racial, historical, and socio-economic differences, Frankl's experience and Morrison's protagonists in *The Bluest Eye* (1999), *Song of Solomon* (2006), *Beloved* (2016), and *A Mercy* (2009) share several common features: extreme life situations, pain, trauma, identity issues, and healing. Both Frankl's autobiography and Morrison's novels express difficult life events, injustice, oppression, and

crimes over innocent people and attempt to teach the reader how to find the strength and survive. Following that, this paper will use Frankl's logotherapy for the analysis of Morrison's novels and their literary subjects: Pecola (*The Bluest Eye),* Milkman (*Song of Solomon),* Sethe (*Beloved*), and Florens (*A Mercy*). The first part contextualizes Frankl's and Morrison's writing within the so-called literature of trauma. The second part of the paper focuses on the explication of Frankl's work and his logotherapeutic approach. The third part analyzes Morrison's novels and their principal characters according to the three phases of trauma through which they will be diagnosed. The last part of the paper provides an analysis of the (im)possibility of healing for Pecola, Milkman, Sethe and Florens, while contrasting them with Frankl's own traumatic experience.

In her seminal study *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* (1996), Kali Tal contends that the literature of trauma is written from the need to retell the story of the traumatic experience to make it real both to the victim and to the community (21). That is why Mckenzie states how over the span of the years, Morrison has not only continued to take great care in the construction of each novel, but she has also commented on the importance of the reader in the construction of meaning (221). Both Frankl and Morrison succeeded in such a way of presenting. Frankl ends his book with two thoughts: "Since Auschwitz we know what man is capable of. And since Hiroshima we know what is at stake" (154). Observing life in a general sense leads one to the look into the consequences of trauma on the depths of the human soul and the possibility to find the ultimate meaning. Tal in her study quotes the thoughts of Alice Miller which present the ultimate aim of this paper, as well as the ultimate reason for the research of trauma in literature: "The fact that a situation is ubiquitous does not absolve us from examining it. On the contrary, we must examine it for the very reason that it is or can be the fate of each and every one of us" (1). In other words, one has a duty to recognize, acknowledge, study, and accept other people's struggles not only to act against the oppressors, but also not to become one.

1. Literature of Trauma: Frankl and Toni Morrison's Novels

For Anne Whitehead, by the very nature of its creativity, innovation, literary devices and techniques, fiction is able to represent what "cannot be represented by conventional historical, cultural and autobiographical narratives" (83). In other words, literature can show us the ultimate meaning of life in its variety of presentation. This paper focuses on the analysis of literature of trauma which connects Viktor Frankl's and Toni Morrison's writings. Florian Bast relies on Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma as an event which is not experienced, but simply registered since it overwhelms the person to whom it happens. Among the typical reactions to this phenomenon is a repetition compulsion, an urge to continually return to the traumatic event. That event, while not available to consciousness is bound to impose itself again in changed forms on the consciousness of the victim (1070). The mentioned reactions are also present in Morrison's novels, which will be analyzed through Frankl's three phases of trauma.

Furthermore, Tal explains that the literature of trauma is defined by the identity of its author and holds as its center the reconstruction and recuperation of the traumatic experience. It overlaps with marginal literature, with feminist authors, African-American, and queer writers (17). The mentioned subgenres, especially the problem of slavery and the position of women overwhelms Morrison's writing. Whitehead defines trauma fiction as texts that interact with trauma theory through the exploration of new modes of referentiality, which work by means of figuration and indirection and by the generation of an ethical reading practice (84). Morrison has always stressed the moral dimensions of her novels, focusing, as Frankl did, on survival: "I'm interested in survival – who survives and who does not, and why – and I would like to chart a course that suggests where the dangers are and where the safety might be" (qtd. in Eichelberger 61). Her novels encourage us to reconsider our own values of life, similar to Frankl's insights about his experience in concentration camps: "No man should judge unless he asks himself in absolute honesty whether in a similar situation he might not have done the same" (Frankl 48).

Moreover, Whitehead explains that "one if not the only way to heal a trauma is giving testimony, which requires a highly collaborative relationship between speaker and listener" (7). In addition, Tal expresses how one of the strongest themes in the literature of trauma itself is the urge to bear witness (120). Frankl offered his testimony which influenced our (mid-20th century European) society, the same way as Morrison's stories discuss black identity in 19th

century America – bearing the stigma of the "other." Their explicit presentation of traumatic events leaves a strong impact on the reader and encourages orientation towards the most important logotherapeutic postulate, the search for the meaning. Morrison observes that her vocation as an African American, a woman, and a writer in the late twentieth century is to "rip that veil drawn over proceedings too terrible to relate in nineteenth-century slave narratives" (qtd. in Peterson 62). In relation to that, Frankl's experience in concentration camps is not concerned with the sufferings of the mighty, but with the sacrifices, crucifixions, and deaths of the great army of unknown victims (Frankl 3).

In addition, Peterson emphasizes how for Morrison, a keen sense of history is crucial for her characters and for their readers, not to be burdened by the past, but to tell a story of the past which could revitalize the present moment (51). In that way Morrison's fiction presents characters who struggle to escape the white construction of their black identity (Schreiber 6). In the light of both Frankl's writings and Morrison's novels we could agree with Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber who claims how the core identity of the slave, shaped and defined by white slaveholders, lacks a sense of self outside of the subservant and inferior position. In that sense deprivation of personal identity was necessary to maintain the oppressive system (33). Each of Morrison' mentioned s characters possesses the same kind of deprivation, especially in their childhood. Florens in *A Mercy* discovers the depth of the problem of slavery, when one allows to be influenced by the oppressing system from the outside: "What is your meaning? I am a slave because Sir trades for me. – No. You have become one. How? -Your head is empty and your body is wild. I am adoring you. – And a slave to that too" (139). Moreover, the novel *The Bluest Eye* tells the story of a black girl in 1941 who is all but destroyed by her desire for white beauty, acting in response as many other African American to the oppression of white cultural normativity (Douglas 142).

In order to emphasize the subordinate position of slaves in the society, in *Beloved*, the white slaveholder, Schoolteacher, instructs his nephew to study the black slaves on the ironically named Sweet Home plantation and catalog their "animal" and "human" characteristics (Ochoa 108). The human being, whether a prisoner in concentration camp or a slave in 19th century U.S., was perceived as an inanimate object to the oppressors: "A man counted only because he had a prison number. One literally became a number: dead or alive – that was unimportant; the life of a 'number' was completely irrelevant. . . .We had no documents; everyone was lucky to own his body, which, after all, was still breathing" (Frankl 53). Furthermore, as slaves rarely had their own names, they had to construct their new identity

once they were free. This happens to Baby Suggs in *Beloved* once her son managed to buy her freedom: "'Mr. Garner,' she said, 'why you all call me Jenny?' 'Cause that what's on your sales ticket, gal. Ain't that your name? What you call yourself?' 'Nothing,' she said. 'I don't call myself nothing'" (*Beloved* 167). Names have essential meanings for all of us, just as Milkman in *Song of Solomon* concludes after discovering the truth about his roots: "When you know your name, you should hang on to it, for unless it is noted down and remembered, it will die when you do" (329). Frankl too was a true slave in that sense: "But I was Number 119, 104, and most of the time I was digging and laying tracks for railway lines" (Frankl 7). Furthermore, the situation on Senhor D'Ortega's plantation in *A Mercy* is similar to a concentration camp. Jacob Vaark, the trader and landowner, is invited to this plantation since Senhor could not pay what he owned. "In Jacob Vaark's view, these were lawless laws encouraging cruelty in exchange for common cause, if not common virtue" (*A Mercy* 8-9). Jacob notices the scars and the wounds on slaves' skin:

> One even had the facial brand required by local law when a slave assaulted a white man a second time. The woman's eyes looked shockproof, gazing beyond place and time as though they were not actually there. The men looked at the ground. Except every now and then, when possible, when they thought they were not being evaluated, Jacob could see their quick glances, sideways, wary but, most of all, judging the men who judged them. *(A Mercy* 20)

Having no names and no identity, they were traded to others like objects: "They wrote new papers. Agreeing that the girl was worth twenty pieces of eight, considering the number of years ahead of her and reducing the balance by three hogsheads of tobacco or fifteen English pounds, the latter preferred" (25). Moreover, both in Frankl's experience and Morrison's novels, prisoners and slaves were treated like animals: "Can't you hurry up, you pigs?' Soon we had resumed the previous day's positions in the ditch. The frozen ground cracked under the point of the pickaxes, and sparks flew. The men were silent, their brains numb" (Frankl 38). Sethe in *Beloved* and Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* experienced the same treatment. Those in the position of power act the same, be they guards or masters:

> They seemed to have taken all of their smoothly cultivated ignorance, their exquisitely learned self-hatred, their elaborately designed hopelessness and sucked it all up into a fiery cone of scorn that had burned for ages in the hollows

> of their minds – cooled – and spilled over lips of outrage, consuming whatever was in its path. (*The Bluest* 63)

Frankl was the witness of the same procedure: "The most painful part of beatings is the insult which they imply. . . . A few minutes previously the same guard who struck me had told us deprecatingly that we 'pigs' lacked the spirit of comradeship" (Frankl 225). Frankl also offers explicit examples: "Then he began: 'You, pig, I have been watching you the whole time! I'll teach you to work, yet! Wait till you dig dirt with your teeth – you'll die like an animal!'" (25) In that way, Frankl's testimony represents a mission, expressing the hope for changing the order of things and preventing similar traumas in the future. His storytelling is very explicit, it provokes the readers to change their views as he explains his "emotions" in the camp: "The meager pleasures of camp life provided a kind of negative happiness – 'freedom from suffering' as Schopenhauer put it – and even that in a relative way only. Real positive pleasures, even small ones, were very few" (47). As one traumatized victim in Tal's study reports: "If my survival is to be meaningful at all to me, it must be because it gave me the strength to fight, the will to survive and the empathy to reach out to other women" (Tal 121). Morrison's and Frankl's writing and testimony should accomplish the same meaningful change for the reader.

Moreover, the position of women and abuse in Morrison's novels are also important issues of trauma literature. Tal mentions how rape often goes unreported. Rape victims know that the legal system does not work in their favor and they fear social, psychological, and personal consequences of prosecuting the rapist. Moreover, sexually abused children often lack the independence and power to speak out and fear that nobody will believe them. Incest is rarely reported and prosecution is rarely effective so incestuous relationships usually end when the victim grows up and runs away from the abuser. Some abused children never manage to escape since the study showed how 38% of incest survivors had attempted to kill themselves. In that way it is unknown how many children and young adults have committed suicide to escape sexual abuse (19-20). The example of this problem is visible in Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*: "The order and apparent logic of the primer gives way to chaos, total disorder, and a loss of meaning that foreshadow Pecola Breedlove's descent into madness after she endures incest, rape, pregnancy, and the illusion that blue eyes will make her beautiful" (McKenzie 222). The women in *Song of Solomon* are also in subordinate position because they are constantly abandoned by their loved ones. Cowart emphasizes how Milkman's ancestor Solomon left his wife Ryna and his children and flew away to Africa, without thinking about the suffering he had caused. Milkman does the same: "While he dreamt of flying, Hagar was dying" (*Song* 332).

He has to free himself from his selfishness for which women around him, like Hagar, First Corinthians and Pilate, had to pay too often (94). Milkman's mother, Ruth admits her position in male society: "Because the fact is that I am a small woman. I don't mean little; I mean small, and I'm small because I was pressed small" (*Song* 124). Hagar, woman who loved Milkman, Pilate's granddaughter, was feeling unworthy of life without him: "Nothing could pull her mind away from the mouth Milkman was not kissing, the feet that were not running toward him, the eye that no longer beheld him, the hands that were not touching him" (*Song* 127). In *A Mercy*, Florens' mother did not know who her daughter's father was, since men came at night and took three black women and raped them: "To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below" (*A Mercy* 161). That is why Sethe was lucky to have one father of all of her children: "Sethe had the amazing luck of six whole years of marriage to that 'somebody' son who had fathered every one of her children" (*Beloved* 28).

Morrison explores the limits of official histories and the limits of memory: "Some things are unspoken because reigning ideologies do not consider them worthy of notice. Other things are unspeakable because they are too traumatic to be remembered" (qtd. in Peterson 52). Her novel *Beloved* also does not avoid describing the brutalities of slavery, such as raping African women, the torturing of slaves who refuse to become subservient (Sethe's mother, Sixo), the beatings that leave permanent indelible marks on a person, like the "tree" on Sethe's back, or the "neck jewelry" Paul D is forced to wear. The dehumanizing "bit" was placed in the mouths of disobedient slaves, as some of the unspeakable realities from the nineteenth-century which could have been willfully forgotten. Keeping all the trauma in mind, Sethe's "rough motherlove" is might not so monstrous as it might seem from the outside (61). Peterson underlines Morrison's emphasis on reading between the lines, on reading silence, absence, and words together, and the use of mythic sources to conceive of the past as dynamic and not fixed, since myth allows the development of a historical consciousness that is not only factual and objective, bur constructive and fictional (52-55). That is why Sethe's house can be haunted and Beloved's spirit can become flesh. Milkman's ancestor Solomon was able to fly and Pecola was able to talk to an imaginary friend so that we could finally hear her voice after the trauma.

The next issue that is common to literature of trauma is the importance of the community. The traumatic events leave people feeling abandoned and abandonment is a prominent theme in Morrison's writing (Schreiber 8). Each of Morrison's protagonist is, in one way or another, without their family, each has to find inner strength in order to survive and truly

live. The protective function of the nuclear family is lost under slavery; families are separated and renamed, all of which "derails a stable sense of selfhood" (33-34). The same happens in concentration camps. Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber explains her approach to trauma in Morrison's novels: "I examine how a concept of *home,* retrieved through memory, creates and preserves a sense of self for marginalized and oppressed characters. I conclude that a concept of home is crucial to combating the levels of trauma that Morrison reveals in her novels" (2). In other words, home is the mental support for the subjectivity which should be gained through the difficult task of recovery from trauma (2). Morrison's novels reveal the importance of community and collective action for African Americans. Thinking of the community and not just self-advancement is the lesson which connects her writing to Frank's logotherapy. In the "Foreword" of *The Bluest Eye,* Morrison expresses her view on pain:

> It may even be that some of us know what it is like to be actually hated – hated for the things we have no control over and cannot change. When this happens, it is some consolation to know that the dislike or hatred is unjustified-that you don't deserve it. And if you have the emotional strength and/or the support of our family and friends, the damage is reduced or erased. We think of it as the stress (minor or disabling) that is part of life as a human. (*The Bluest* vii)

Another common thread between Frankl and Morrison's texts is that they all relied on their loved ones to help them find meaning and recover. Frankl communicated with his *beloved* wife, for whom he did not know if she was alive or dead: "The guard passed by, insulting me, and once again I communed with my beloved. More and more I felt that she was present, that she was with me; I had the feeling that I was able to touch her, able to stretch out my hand and grasp hers" (Frankl 41). Sethe is haunted by Beloved, her deceased daughter, whom she killed in fear of the slaveholder, but also strengthened by love of Paul D and her daughter Denver. Florens from *A Mercy* finds strength to live bravely because of her beloved one, despite his rejection, and Milkman from *Song of Solomon* discovers his own redemption in accepting love and forgiveness, and letting go of his selfishness. In a nutshell, love is crucial for all protagonists since it gives them the strength to overcome personal and generational traumas.

Moreover, Frankl and Morrison ask similar questions: "There is really nothing more to say - except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how" (*The Bluest* 4). More importantly, Frankl, while quoting Nietzsche, provides answers to the question Why,

and sees them in the individual who has the freedom to choose and be responsible while making the decision. For Frankl the question Why is directed to person's inner strengths to choose why to live and not so much in finding out why bad things happened. In that way his question Why and Morrison's How are in accordance with their search for meaning and not giving up on future in the future. Both authors agree on the following conclusions:

> And there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which determined whether or not you would become the plaything of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity to become molded into the form of the typical inmate. (Frankl 66)

2. On Frankl's Book *Man's Search for Meaning* and Logotherapy

In the "Foreword" of Frankl's 2006 edition of *Man's Search for Meaning,* Harold S. Kushner explained how this book is about survival:

> Like so many German and East European Jews who thought themselves secure in the 1930s, Frankl was cast into the Nazi network of concentration and extermination camps. Miraculously, he survived, in the biblical phrase "a brand plucked from the fire." But his account in this book is less about his travails, what he suffered and lost, than it is about the sources of his strength to survive. (Frankl ix)

In spite of the fact that the term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was not used in 1946 when the first version of *Man's Search for Meaning* was published in Vienna, it is clear that the book contributed to the treatment of clients with PTSD (Lantz 93-94). Kushner explains that Frankl survived because of hope in the future (seeing his wife and lecturing after the war) and that more people died in the camps because they had lost all hope and not because of malnutrition and exhaustion. Frankl's primary concern is less with the question why most people died. Rather he focused on the question why anyone at all managed to survive (Frankl ix).

Logotherapy as the name for Frankl's theory is presented with the Greek origin of the word: *logos* denotes "meaning" and it focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man's search for such a meaning. That is why he continues explaining the importance of *meaning*: "According to logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why I speak of a *will to meaning* in contrast to the pleasure principle (*the will to pleasure*) on which Freudian psychoanalysis is centered, as well as in contrast to *the will to power* on which Adlerian psychology, using the term *striving for superiority* is focused" (Frankl 98-99). Logotherapy, in comparison with psychoanalysis, is a method less retrospective and less introspective. It focuses on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future, since logotherapy is a meaning-centered psychotherapy (98). In their study, Southwick et al claim that unlike the pessimism of other European existentialists because of his experiences, Frankl's understanding of a man is decidedly hopeful. The logotherapy

focuses on personal strengths and places responsibility for change on the patient. It puts an emphasis on the human spirit and the notion that self-transcendence represents the height of human potential (162).

Frankl explains how logotherapy is neither teaching nor preaching. In order to put it figuratively, the role played by a logotherapist is that of an eye specialist, rather than the role of a painter. The painter conveys to us a picture of the world as he sees it, while ophthalmologist tries to enable us to see the world as it really is. In that way, the logotherapist widens and broadens the visual field of the patient so that the whole spectrum of potential meaning becomes conscious and visible to him (Frankl 110). For Frankl the treatment includes an awareness experience in which the therapist utilizes both action and reflection activities in order to help the patient to find, discover, actualize and get in touch with their own meanings and meaning-potentials which have been covered, repressed, or pushed into the existential-meaning unconscious which can occur on individual, family, group, network and cultural levels of organization. Frankl's logotherapy and existential analysis give attention to helping patients to bring covered meanings and meaning potentials into conscious awareness (Lantz 95). He also mentions cultural hibernation in camps, with two exceptions to this: politics and religion. Politics were talked everywhere and while some men lost all hope, there were some incorrigible optimists who were the most irritating companions. On the other hand, the religious interest of the prisoners was the most sincere imaginable. The depth of religious belief often surprised and moved a new arrival. Frankl emphasized impressive improvised prayers or services after having returned from distant work site, tired hungry, frozen and in their ragged clothing (Frankl 34).

Morrison's protagonists possess the same depth when faced with their own traumatic experiences. Their thoughts about being human and being loved encourage readers to look for their own meanings of life. Milkman was able to conclude: "Perhaps that's what all human relationships boiled down to: Would you save my life? or would you take it? 'Everybody wants a black man's life'" (*Song* 331). Sethe was so lost in her pain, because she knew she lost the most precious thing she had, her own children and could not forgive herself: "The best thing she was, was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing – the part of her that was clean" (*Beloved* 296). On the other hand, Baby Suggs encouraged her people to love themselves, although they might never have been loved: "More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize" (*Beloved* 104).

Logotherapy views the human person as a totality whose potential for meaning is to be found and accomplished within the world filled with pain, guilt, and death. Frankl developed logotherapy to address “existential vacuum," or “existential frustration," defined as meaningfulness characteristic of contemporary life which he associates with existential and collective neurosis (Trujillo 3-4). The existential vacuum can be described as a private and personal form of nihilism, while nihilism is defined as the contention that being has no meaning. For Frankl it is dangerous to believe in the theory that man is the product of biological, psychological and sociological conditions since it produces neurotic belief that the man is the pawn and victim of outer influences or inner circumstances. This neurotic fatalism is fostered by psychotherapy which denies that man is free. Frankl elaborates that our freedom is restricted, but that it is not freedom from conditions, but it is freedom to take a stand toward the conditions (Frankl 129-130). In order to prevail one’s fears, Frankl introduced the technique called "paradoxical intention," which invites a patient to intend precisely that which he/she fears. In that way fear is replaced by paradoxical wish which is a useful tool in treating obsessive-compulsive and phobic conditions, especially in cases with underlying anticipatory anxiety (Frankl 124-127). The same technique is employed when Milkman was brave enough to wait to see if his friend Guitar would or would not kill him: "‘You want my life?’ Milkman was not shouting now. ‘You need it? Here.’ Without wiping away the tears, taking a deep breath, or even bending his knees – he leaped" (*Song* 337). In logotherapeutic sense, this scene offers the readers the idea that inner awareness of the meaning of life enables one to accept all that life gives and takes away from us.

In his book, Frankl quotes Edith Weisskopf-Joelson who claims that the current mental-hygiene philosophy stresses the idea that the people ought to be happy, that unhappiness is a symptom of maladjustment. In that way the burden of unavoidable unhappiness is increased by unhappiness about being unhappy (qtd. in Frankl 114). He also presents her thoughts on how logotherapy deals with this issue: "[It] may help counteract certain unhealthy trends in the present-day culture of the United States, where the incurable sufferer is given very little opportunity to be proud of his suffering and to consider it ennobling rather than degrading so that he is not only unhappy, but also ashamed of being unhappy" (qtd. in Frankl 114). In that way, people would become aware of the importance of their meaning in this world, as Morrison, at the beginning of *Beloved* brings Biblical passage: "The people who were not mine I will call ‘My People’. The nation that I did not love I will call ‘My Beloved’" (Good News Bible, Rom. 9.25). In that way Frankl’s most enduring insight relates to the forces beyond people’s control

which can take away everything we possess, except for the one thing, our freedom to choose how to respond to the situation: "You cannot control what happens to you in life, but you can always control what you will feel and do about what happens to you" (Frankl x). We could attribute the Biblical passage from the *Song of Songs*, about the strongest force to meaning in our lives, which is greatly emphasized both in Frankl's testimony and in Morrison's texts: "Love is as powerful as death; passion is as strong as death itself. It bursts into flame and burns like a raging fire" (Song. 8.6-7). Love in that sense equals the meaning of life. If we truly have it, traumas cannot make us less human, less responsible, and respectful of ourselves and others.

2. 1. The Three Pillars of Logotherapy

In her study *The Prism of Meaning*, Maria Marshal explains that logotherapy rests on three fundamental assumptions: (1) "Meaning of Life"; (2) "Freedom of Will"*;* and (3) "Will to Meaning." Each of these fundamental principles correspond to particular (1) philosophical; (2) anthropological; and (3) psychotherapeutic concepts that are embedded in logotherapy (Marshall 8). More importantly, all three pillars are essential for achieving the meaning of life in its fullness.

First, "meaning of life" as Marshall states, may not be always available to our human perception since we are finite beings, but exactly this finiteness presents a challenge for us, which can be overcome with an unconditional expectation of meaning in life. Our intuition is a foreknowledge that our existence is wanted in this world (9). No matter what happens, the strength of the notion that we truly matter in this world can help people overcome their travails: "In logotherapy, to be a human being, means to be free to consciously decide what stand to take towards the events in our lives" (10). Moreover, to be free and conscious means to be responsible for our own life, and for the lives of others. We are addressed by life and expected by life and we answer to it with the existential decisions we make: "In life, there is a meaningful answer – one and only one meaningful answer, for each unique situation that we find ourselves in – which we have to discover" (11). The belief in life's meaningfulness is applied in treatments of preventing suicides, supporting life under all circumstances and in treating patients compassionately, and with dignity (11-13). In that sense, both Morrison's and Frankl's message to their readers would be to first become aware of their own dignity in order to respect and value every other person. In the light of this, Schreiber concludes that Morrison's fiction

characters struggle for self-definition free of racial encumbrances and that they rely on psychic and physical aspects of "home" to survive their racial trauma (1).

The second basic assumption of logotherapy is the "freedom of will": "Human freedom is not freedom from conditions, but freedom to take a stand and to face whatever conditions might confront him" (Marshall 15). Marshall furthermore elaborates that we are equipped with "freedom of will" to explore and direct our actions, even if it means acting in the belief of something greater than us. While in our bodies and minds we are determined or influenced by physical and psychological mechanisms, there is a uniquely human dimension which allows us to reach beyond ourselves in the search for meaning – the noetic dimension, or Frankl's Dimension of Spirit. The word "spirit" refers to the specifically human dimension present in all persons, regardless of their religious orientations, or even atheistic bent. Spirit is the essence of the person and for each one it is an entirely new creation, not inherited from one's parents or encoded in the genes. While body and mind refer to what we have, spirit refers to who we essentially and existentially are. Frankl described how there were individuals in the concentration camps who managed to suppress their apathy and their irritability, and who walked about in the camp among the comrades, sharing a good word, and a last piece of bread, here and there, which was clearly an example of self-sacrifice (Marshall 14-18). Freedom of will could also be connected to the already mentioned problem of slave identity when they were under the influence of white ideologies and aesthetics, and therefore allowed for the self-destruction from the inside. Schreiber quotes Morrison's idea on how to eliminate racism from American culture by converting a racist house into a race-specific yet nonracist home. In such a society, individual and communal racial identities could exist without psychological burdens of hatred, scapegoating and feeling of otherness (1).

Finally, Marshall states that the "will to meaning" is explained as the motivation concept through which every human being is inspired to strive and yearn for meaning. The knowledge and acceptance that our life is finite compels people to act and to find what is meaningful. With *Homo Sapiens* who sees and thinks only in terms of success and failure, Frankl introduces the *Homo Patiens* – the suffering human being, as other dimension which is vertically aligned with the axis of success or failure thinking:

> The Axis has to do with the meaningfulness of an effort. At the one end of the Axis, we find 'meaning,' and at the other, 'despair': For the *Homo Patiens*, the suffering human being, 'failure' becomes tolerable if it is met with meaning.

> Even if his or her efforts were not followed by success, but the effort was the pursuit of a meaningful task, that person will be saved from existential despair. On the other hand, even the most successful person's life will feel empty and futile without a sense of meaning and purpose. (Marshall 22-23)

These two axes are known as "Frankl's Cross" in which we find four areas: success coupled with meaning; success which feels empty and leads to despair; failure coupled with meaning and; failure with no sense of meaning which leads to despair (Marshall 23). In Frankl's thought the "will to meaning" is the primary motivation for most human behaviors. He claims how the motivational dynamics, or the "will to meaning," is found in all civilizations under all conditions of human lives. His belief that all human beings have the ability of will to find and actualize unique meanings and its potentials, Frankl is opposed to the determinism of different psychodynamic practices since he believes that human beings can rise above the impacts of environment, physical problems and limitations, the instincts, and the influence of the past through the ability he calls "the defiant power of the human spirit" (Lantz 95). In that way, all of the mentioned Morrison's protagonists have the same primary motivation to life, "will to meaning", which could lead them to meaning if they manage to rise above the traumatic environment. As mentioned, Frankl's Cross has two pathways to meaningfulness: through success and meaning and failure coupled with meaning. All of Morrison's protagonists clearly find themselves in the area of failure due to traumatic events which could turn into emptiness and despair if they don't discover the meaning of life. Only one of the characters, Milkman, could be connected to the area of success and meaning, since he is wealthy, situated, loved, but empty. In his despair over traumatic situations and awareness that his life lacks of purpose, he is forever changed and renewed.

Frankl concludes that happiness cannot be directly pursued, but it must ensue as the consequence of having experienced or accomplished something meaningful, or having met with a courageous attitude (Marshall 23). Trujilo states that people do not achieve meaningfulness by pursuing self-actualization or self-fulfillment, but let it happen by insisting on self-transcendence which could be called self-detachment: "Self-transcendence signifies the lived commitment to meanings whose significance aim away from the self and are grounded in being conscious and responsible" (4). Frankl emphasizes how freedom is only half of the story and half of the truth. Freedom is the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is responisbleness. Freedom is in danger of degenerating into arbitrariness unless it is lived with responsibleness (Frankl 132).

Morrison's protagonists and their traumatic stories therefore represent the consequences of degenerated freedom, the lack of responsibility. The problem of slavery and racism is a clear example of such degeneration. In relation to that, Morrison ends her novel *The Bluest Eye* with the image of Pecola who never experienced the true and meaningful love, and which therefore could lead her to healing. The only "love" she got was her father's, degenerated by freedom:

> Love is never any better than the lover. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly, but the love of a free man is never safe. There is no gift for the beloved. The lover alone possesses his gift of love. The loved one is shorn, neutralized, frozen in the glare of the lover's inward eye. (*The Bluest* 204)

2.2. Literature and Logotherapy

In his research on logotherapy and literature, Joachim Trujilo contends that the defining elements of logotherapy are an efficient empirical method in the study of literature. The logotherapy offers the researcher an epistemologically appropriate and empirically corroborated method to deconstruct the meanings and values a literary work embodies. Logotherapy's goal is to free the saying power of the word and let it speak its ownmost significance: that is, to confront the essential meaning (Trujillo 5). While applying logotherapy on Hemingway's and Kafka's novels, Trujilo concludes that logotherapeutic readings distinguish texts as literary thought experiments, hypothetical thought-possibilities in the art and practice of human living. The human person, being defined by the need to find and fulfill authentic meaning, presents the relationship between the self and transcendence, the correlating trajectories between the meaning a person lives and their capacity to yield meaningfulness (5).

This paper analyzes four of Toni Morrison's novels, all filled with traumatic experiences of slavery, unprotected women and children, endangered families, terrible tragedies and feelings of guilt. The readers enter the African American world and encounter personalities trapped in what Marshall calls the "existential vacuum, existential frustration, feelings of futility and noogenic neurosis (despondency, despair, depression) " (35-39) who are in danger not to

discover its fullest meaning of life. According to Raynaud, language can enlighten the path in such instances:

> Coming of age is the necessary transposition of an impossible progress, the creation of a self for an African American subject against the threats of schizophrenia and annihilation. Language serves as the most potent weapon in such an endeavor against the violence of being forever stunted, impeded, erased. (119)

According to Frankl, the purpose of logotherapy is to relate to the patients' world through existential analysis and to accompany the patient in the search for meaningful responses. He introduces the key concepts of existential dynamics: "self-distancing" (being able to reach ourselves to find meaning); "self-transcendence" (ability to reach beyond the present realities of the self towards what "ought to be"); "noo-dynamics" (the tension that holds us steadily oriented toward the meaning of our existence to be fulfilled); "existential distress" (feelings of futility); "existential frustration" (the consequence of the lack of recognition of the importance of the "will to meaning"*);* "existential vacuum" (the consequence of a long-standing frustration of the "will to meaning," characterized by a sense of lack of meaning and purpose) and "noogenic neurosis" (originates in the present from the spirit and is brought on by value collisions, conflicts of conscience, or by not finding an ultimate meaning) (qtd. in Marshall 35-39). All of Morrison's protagonists are in "existential vacuum" or "existential frustration," due to different traumatic events and are in need to become "self-distanced" in order to accept the truth about their lives and move towards "self-transcendence." Some of them, like Pecola, or Florens, remain in "noogenic neurosis," but some of them, like Sethe and Milkman, are filled with hope to fulfill the meaning of their existence. To the characters, love and support is the only way to find their true self oriented towards the future.

Logotherapy as a technique can be applied to Morrison's characters in many ways. One way is in observing conditions that are frequently traced in neurotic individuals, namely anticipator anxiety. This fear produces precisely that of which the patient is afraid to occur. Morrison's novels put readers in such a state, since we are constantly anticipating the next traumatic event, and since all literary subjects are trying to escape either trauma or their guilt. *Song of Solomon* clearly showcases this kind of anticipator anxiety. Cowart states how Milkman represents a black middle class that must encounter the denied or sublimated rage embodied in his friend, Guitar. If the rage is not faced and if it becomes repressed, it will be expressed in

various pathologies of consciousness, perhaps even take over and dictate one's behavior that will result in complete self-destruction (97). Moreover, Florens in *A Mercy* constantly anticipates the explanation why her mother sent her away: "Since the mother's words evict the daughter from her presence, the mother's message is not just baffling, it is traumatizing" (Wyatt 130). The reader discovers mother's story at the end, but Florens never does.

Frankl also introduces excessive intention, or hyper-intention as forced intention to make impossible what one forcibly wishes. It can be observed in the cases of sexual neurosis. Frankl defines pleasure as a side-effect of love, it is destroyed to the degree in which it is made a goal in itself. Together with hyper-intention, Frankl introduces excessive attention, or hyper-reflection, which can also become pathogenic and lead to sickness. He provided the example of a woman who was frigid since in her childhood she had been sexually abused by her father (Frankl 122-123). *The Bluest Eye* presents a similar situation as the narrator gradually reveals the roots of Pecola's schizophrenia. According to Raynaud, it is actually the self-hatred that destroys poor African American identities and communities (114-115). Pecola believes that she is ugly and unworthy, and being raped by her father only makes her more convinced she could never be beautiful or worthy.

Although *Beloved* "strikingly demonstrates that historical reconstruction is always already compromised, that any attempt to recover African American history will inevitably be haunted and never recovered, like the cut that severs Beloved's neck that indicates there are losses that cannot be transcended" (Peterson 63), Frankl states that it is possible to practice the art of living despite the omnipresent suffering (Frankl 44). According to Peterson, Sethe's story does not bring only the victimizing of blacks under slavery, but also the tremendous acts of resistance and courage under utter dehumanization (61) and it is precisely Frankl's idea that a man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, the independence of mind, even under terrible psychic and physical stress (Frankl 65). He concludes his testimony as a freed man: "The crowning experience of all, for the homecoming man, is the wonderful feeling that, after all he has suffered, there is nothing he need fear any more – except his God" (93). This conclusion will lead the analysis of trauma and meaning for Pecola, Milkman, Sethe and Florens and question whether their pathway to meaning will set them free from their fears, repressed rage, and pain in order to heal.

3. Three Phases of Trauma and Toni Morrison's Novels

Furst states that the previous research on trauma and Morrison's novels have indicated that recovery from trauma depends on two things: the self-esteem and a sense of belonging to a group and of well-being in it (qtd. in Schreiber 9). Furthermore, Morrison's novels depict how home, family, and community can moderate trauma and self-esteem (9). In Pecola's and Florens' case one sees the failure of such moderation, while Milkan and Sethe show the elevating power of community and family history for the individual. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl defines the three phases of inmate's mental reactions to camp life: the period following his admission; the period when he is well entrenched in camp routine; and the period following his release (Frankl 8). These three phases of prisoner's trauma are applied to Morrison's characters and question their self-esteem and sense of belonging in order to be healed.

3.1. The Shock

The first phase of the traumatic experience is the shock. As trained psychiatrist, Frankl explains that there is a condition known as delusion of reprieve in which the condemned men, immediately before their execution get the illusion they might be saved at the last minute. When their illusions disperse, most of them are overcome by grim sense of humor, since they know they have nothing to lose except their "ridiculously naked lives." This strange humor is coupled with the cold curiosity that detaches the mind from its surroundings. People cultivated this state of objectivity as a means of protection, since all of them were anxious to know what would happen next and what would be the consequence. In addition, prisoners rarely feared death in the first phase of shock (10-18). Frankl claims that an abnormal reaction to some abnormal situation is actually quite a normal behavior agreeing with Dostoevski's statement that the man is a being who can get used to anything, not knowing how (17-18). Also, suicidal thoughts were quite common, but Frankl decided "on [his] first evening in camp that [he] would not 'run into the wire'. This was a phrase used in camp to describe the most popular method of suicide – touching the electrically charged barbed-wire fence" (18).

In Morrison's novels, the parents failed to protect their children. The Breedlove's traumatize their daughter Pecola by not loving her as they should, in addition to being hateful

and violent to one another. Her mother's love was directed only to the white children: "The familiar violence rose in me. Her calling Mrs. Breedlove Poly, when even Pecola called her mother Mrs. Breedlove, seemed reason enough to scratch her" (*The Bluest* 106). Pecola's father, Cholly, had difficult past that left him morally deformed and bitter: "Abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for a crap game by his father, there was nothing more to lose. He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they alone interested him" (158). He too was unable to connect with his children. Although readers can find Breedlove's behavior completely unacceptable and disturbing, Eichelberger highlights that Morrison's aim was to show how Pecolas's family has adjusted to the racist ideology. Keeping that in mind, the situations which depict Pecola's wish for blue eyes, how her mother abandoned her own children because of the white child of her employer, the situation is shocking in a completely new way (65). As Frankl said that an abnormal response to some abnormal situation is actually normal (Frankl 22), Eichelberger contends: "In every character she presents, Morrison consistently emphasizes that these beliefs must be learned because they are unnatural and illogical" (63).

Moreover, Milkman's parents, Macom Dead and Ruth live in mutual bitterness and violence as well, which their children, Magdalena, First Corinthians and Milkman had to witness for years. Magdalena resents her brother for his selfishness and passivity: "I didn't go to college because of him. Because I was afraid of what he might do to Mama" (*Song* 215-16) and Milkman only later learns that "he had to fight off castor oil and knittin needles and being blasted with hot steam and I don't know what all" (140) since the abusive father wanted his wife to end the pregnancy.

Both Sethe and Florens had mothers whom they remember through traumatic flashbacks. Florens' mother never manages to tell her what she wants: "A minha mae lens at the door holding her little boy's hand, my shoes in her pocket. As always she is trying to tell me something. I tell her to go … (*A Mercy* 135), and Sethe's only remembers her mother wearing the slave iron bit: "She'd had the bit so many times she smiled. When she wasn't smiling she smiled, and I never saw her own smile" (240). In *Beloved* love and death are interchangeable – Sethe loved her children so much that she tried to kill and Denver "spent all of [her] outside self-loving Ma'am so she wouldn't kill [her], loving her even when she braided [her] head at night" (245).

Both Pecola and Milkman have traumatic childhood because of their parents and both seem to be in state of shock. Pecola is raped by her father and bullied by other children. Her mother neglects her and a fake preacher fools her into believing that she was given the bluest

eyes. According to Raynaud, she is the victim of the tragic self-alienation (114-15). She is portrayed as an object that can be moved around by others: "Mama had told us two days earlier that a ‘case’ was coming - a girl who had no place to go . . . Outdoors, we knew, was the real terror of life. ... There is a difference between being put 'out' and being put 'outdoors.' If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go. The distinction was subtle but final" (14-15). Pecola was also described as the victim of bullying in school: "A group of boys was circling and holding at bay a victim, Pecola Breedlove. … They had extemporized a verse made up of two insults about matters over which the victim had no control: the color of her skin and speculations on the sleeping habits of an adult" (*The Bluest* 63).

Milkman too grew up in an abusive home where he was forced to protect his mother from beating. However, what traumatized him are the family histories that his parents tell him. His father insinuated that his wife was having an ongoing relationship with her father: "In the bed. That’s where she was when I opened the door. Laying next to him. Naked as a yard dog, kissing him. Him dead and white and puffy and skinny, and she had his fingers in her mouth" (*Song* 73). Milkman knew his mother loved him unconditionally, but after hearing this story he decides to take his father’s advice and despise her, but his father’s path of life would inevitably make Milkman even more materialistic, selfish, and bitter, which was everything his father already had become. Afterwards, Milkman's mother confesses her side of the story and his world changes: "I know he never told you that he killed my father and that he tried to kill you. Because both of you took my attention away from him. …I wouldn’t have been able to save you except for Pilate. Pilate was the one who brought you here in the first place. . . .Until your father threw her out" (124-126). Moreover, after hitting his father, Milkman was able to start considering his own actions, without accusing others: "Quickly he left the room realizing there was no one to thank him – or abuse him. His action was his alone. It would change nothing between his parents. It would change nothing inside them" (*Song* 68). This was shocking for someone who never dared to live fully.

Sethe’s life too is a long series of shocks once schoolteacher comes to Sweet Home. First, Schoolteacher's research concentrated on proving that slaves are nothing more than animals: "Schoolteacher’d wrap that string all over my head, ‘cross my nose, around my behind. Number my teeth. " (226). Later on the nephews took her milk and lynched her to the inch of her death while she was pregnant: "Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still" (20). However, the true trauma happened in Ohio

when schoolteacher came back for Sethe and her children: "And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them" (192). Stamp Paid recalls "how she [Sethe] flew, snatching up her children like a hawk on the wing; how her face beaked, how her hands worked like claws, how she collected them every which way …" (185). When the schoolteacher came, he was shocked with the view: "By the time she faced him, looked him dead in the eye, she had something in her arms that stopped him in his tracks" (193). Sethe only managed to kill her crawling already baby, while others recovered. Her shock was even visible in her eyes: "But the worst ones [eyes] were those of the nigger woman who looked like she didn't have any. Since the whites in them had disappeared and since they were as black as her skin, she looked blind" (177). After the murder, she could not let go of deceased daughter: "But neither Stamp Paid nor Baby Suggs could make her put her crawling-already? girl down. Out of the shed, back in the house, she held on" (198). They took her to the jail, while still being in the state of shock: "Outside a throng, now, of black faces stopped murmuring. Holding the living child, Sethe walked past them in their silence and hers" (179). Sethe was in jail with her nursing baby, while her sons were at home, terrified by the events. In her phase of shock Sethe could only choose between alternatives: to allow her still unnamed child to be returned to slavery or to offer them safety in death. That is why Sethe's world is falling apart: "How if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her" (237). Later on her two boys abandoned her: "Now all I see is their backs walking down the railroad tracks. Away from me. Always away from me" (226).

Humiliation is all around Florens in *A Mercy* which Jacob observes and comments on: "Whatever it was, he couldn't stay there surrounded by a passel of slaves whose silence made him imagine an avalanche seen from a great distance. No sound, just the knowledge of a roar he could not hear" (*A Mercy* 20). Florens grows up in that kind of environment until she is chosen by her own mother to be sold to another slaveholder. In that regard, Florens' mother is similar to Sethe because she also wanted to put her child in a "safe" place. There is a choice to pick any slave Jacob wanted, and he chose a woman standing in the doorway with two children. Her mother defended herself offering her own daughter as a substitute for herself. At that time, Florens was a little girl, hiding behind her mother, walking in a pair of too big woman's shoes. Her mother's words will torment Florence forever:

> Her voice was barely above a whisper but there was no mistaking its urgency. ‘Please, Senhor. Not me. Take her. Take my daughter’. Jacob looked up at her, away from the child’s feet, his mouth still open with laughter, and was struck by the terror in her exes. His laugh creaking to a close, he shook his head, thinking, God help me if this is not the most wretched business. (*A Mercy* 24)

Once more is Florens shocked, and that is by her loved one, the blacksmith, who chooses the abandoned boy Malaik instead of her. Being afraid the little boy will take her place in blacksmith’s life, Florens physically hurts the boy, provoking blacksmith’s anger: "I don’t hear your horse only your shout and know I am lost because your shout is not my name. Not me. Him. Malaik you shout" (139). She was beaten by him whom she gave her heart: "The back of your hand strikes my face. I fall and curl up on the floor" (138).

3.2. The Relative Apathy

According to Frankl, the prisoner who had passed into the second stage of psychological reactions did not turn his eyes from punishments anymore. The feelings were blunted and he watched unmoved. He could not feel disgust, horror or pity: "The sufferers, the dying and the dead became such common-place sights to him after a few weeks of camp life that they could not move him any more" (22). Frankl explains that the symptoms arising during this second stage were apathy, that is, the blunting of the emotions and the feeling that one could not care anymore. These symptoms made man insensitive to daily and hourly beatings and in that way the prisoner surrounded himself with a very necessary protective shell (23).

For Frankl, apathy as the main symptom of the second phase was a necessary mechanism of self-defense. All efforts and all emotions were centered on one task, to preserve one’s own life and that of the other friend. That state which demanded constant necessity of concentration on the task of staying alive forced the prisoner’s inner life down to the primitive level: "Several of my colleagues in camp who were trained in psychoanalysis often spoke of a ‘regression’ in the camp inmate – a retreat to a more primitive form of mental life. His wishes and desires became obvious in his dreams" (28). Undernourishment was the cause of the general preoccupation with food so that could explain the fact that the sexual urge was generally absent in camps (32). In spite of all enforced physical and mental primitiveness of life in camps, it was

possible to deepen spiritual life. Sensitive people who were used to a rich intellectual life might have suffered much pain due to their delicate constitution, but the damage to their inner selves was less. They were able to retreat from the terrible surroundings of the outside world to the inner richness and spiritual freedom. This is the only explanation of the apparent paradox how some prisoners who were of a less hardy make-up survived camp life better than those of a robust nature (36).

Frankl offers a testimony of his phase of relative apathy: "While my cold hands clasped a bowl of hot soup from which I sipped greedily, I happened to look out the window. The corpse which had just been removed stared in at me with glazed eyes. Two hours before I had spoken to that man. Now I continued sipping my soup" (23). He states that if his lack of emotion had not surprised him from the professional standpoint, he would not remember that incident later on, since, there was very feeling involved in it (23). Frankl explains how emotions disappeared: "With the majority of the prisoners, the primitive life and the effort of having to concentrate on just saving one's skin led to a total disregard of anything not serving that purpose, and explained the prisoners' complete lack of sentiment" (33). For Sethe, the apathy was the only mechanism to stay alive next to the roaring ghost of her murdered daughter.

In Morrison's novels, apathy follows each trauma. Pecola's father, Cholly Breedlove put his family outdoors, by burning their house. While he was in prison, Mrs. Breedlove stayed with the woman she worked for; the boy, Sammy, was with some other family; and Pecola stayed with Claudia's and Freda's family. She was in the state of shock, but throughout the entire text her apathy is very clear: "She just appeared with a white woman and sat down" (*The Bluest* 16). On the other hand, another description proves how she was still able to accept love and kindness. The narrator explains: "When we discovered that she clearly did not want to dominate us, we liked her. She laughed when I clowned for her, and smiled and accepted gracefully the food gifts my sister gave her" (17). Everything around Pecola was rough. Her home was in the same building with the women of suspicious moral: "With Pecola they were as free as they were with each other. Marie concocted stories for her because she was a child, but the stories were breezy and rough" (55). After being bullied in school, Pecola is described as speechless person: "She seemed to fold into herself, like a pleated wing. Her pain antagonized me. I wanted to open her up, crisp her edges, ram a stick down that hunched and curving spine, force her to stand erect and spit the misery out on the streets. But she held it in where it could lap up into her eyes" (71-72). In this novel Morrison describes both the psychological violence of white norms of beauty and cultural citizenship and black resistance to that violence (Douglas

151). Her shock led her to an illusion that the blue eyes will help her and her curiosity was very cold while visiting Soaphead Church. She allowed to be annihilated since nobody ever encouraged her to respect herself. He deceived her, but he felt truly sorry for her, as we can see it from his letter to God: "I gave her the blue, blue, two blue eyes. Cobalt blue. A streak of it right out of your own blue heaven. No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And she will live happily ever after" (*The Bluest* 180).

Milkman on the other hand is filled with cold curiosity. By looking himself in the mirror, he knew how unfulfilled he was: "He was, as usual, unimpressed with what he saw. He had a fine enough face. Eyes women complimented him on, a firm jaw line, splendid teeth. Taken apart, it all looked all right. Even better than all right. But it lacked coherence, a coming together of the features into a total self" (*Song* 69). He had closed himself to emotions and did not care for others: "Sleeping with Hagar had made him generous. Or so he thought. Wide-spirited. Or so he imagined. Wide-spirited and generous enough to defend his mother, whom he almost never thought about, and to deck his father, whom he both feared and loved" (69). Milkman's way of behaving hurt other people, such as Hagar, who loved him: "Everybody who knew him knew about Hagar, but she was considered his private honey pot, not a real or legitimate girl friend – not someone he might marry" (91). He left her with a thank-you note which made her crazy so she decided to kill him. But she could not do it, although she persecuted him for many months. In his state, while she found him to kill him with a butcher knife, he decided not to react at all: "Either I am to live in this world on my terms or I will die out of it. If I am to live in it, then I want her dead" (179). She did not manage to kill him because her spirit was full of love for Milkman, as Florens' love remained faithful even after being rejected. That is why Hagar still admired Milkman: "Oh, she thought, when she saw his face, I had forgotten how beautiful he is" (130). Milkman was responsible for her state and the shock he awoke in her was overwhelming: "If you keep your hands just that way, he said, and then bring them down straight, straight and fast, you can drive that knife right smack in your cunt. Why don't you do that? Then all your problems will be over. He patted her cheek and turned away from her wide, dark, pleading, hollow eyes" (130). He could not admit to his friend Guitar what he did to Hagar, although he realized the depth of his offence: "Take it any way you want. But that girl's hurt – and the hurt came from you" (152). Guitar in a way was a gift for Milkman, a friend who in the beginning encouraged him to change: "Maybe Guitar was right – partly. His life was pointless, aimless, and it was true that he didn't concern himself an awful lot about other people. There was nothing he wanted bad enough to risk anything for, inconvenience himself for" (107).

After committing murder of her crawling already daughter, Sethe was in apathy, accepting the ghost in her home: "But for eighteen years she had lived in a house full of touches from the other side" (*Beloved* 116). Sethe had only twenty-eight days of free life, spending that time with her four children after which followed "eighteen years of disapproval and a solitary life" (204). Denver explains it as her grandmother, Baby Suggs taught her to: "She said the ghost was after Ma'am and her too for not doing anything to stop it. But it would never hurt me. I just had to watch out for it because it was a greedy ghost and needed a lot of love, which is only natural, considering" (247). That is why nobody ever visited their home and Sethe was not afraid of that: "Then there was no one, for they would not visit her while the baby ghost filled the house, and she returned their disapproval with the potent pride of the mistreated" (112).

In the state of relative apathy, Florens cannot cry and she is struggling to avoid thoughts of trauma and thinks of her beloved one: "I never cry. Even when the woman steals my cloak and shoes and I am freeing on the boat no tears come. These thoughts are sad in me, so I make me think of you instead" (*A Mercy* 67). On her way to find the blacksmith, she asks for shelter and a woman asks about her parents. Florens explains: "I say I do not know him and my mother is dead. Her face softens and she nods, saying, orphan, step in" (105). There is no much emotion in her voice since she repressed the thought of her mother. On her way to the blacksmith, Florens was caught by the local authority, religious people, who examined if she was a demon or human. They took her Mistress' letters which explained she was in her property and in a hurry in order to save her life. Florens is doing an introspection, observing her own psychological and emotional state:

> I am a thing apart. With the letter I belong and am lawful. Without it I am a weak calf abandon by the herd, a turtle without shell, a minion with no telltale signs but a darkness I am born with, outside, yes, but inside as well and the inside dark is small, feathered and toothy. Is that what my mother knows? Why she chooses me to live without? Not the outside dark we share, a minha mae and me, but the inside one we don't. Is this dying mine alone? Is the clawing feathery thing the only life in me? You will tell me. (*A Mercy* 113)

The memories of Lina and blacksmith keep Florens going: "I wonder she says will he take you with him? I'm not wondering this. Not then, not ever. I know you cannot steal me nor wedding me. Neither one is lawful. … Thinking these things keeps me walking and not lying down on the ground and allowing myself to sleep. I am greatly tired and long for water" (*A Mercy* 103).

She makes memories alive. Following Frankl's example, she is always talking with her loved one in her mind, experiencing in that way his comfort. Although his presence is not real in these moments, she becomes powerful enough to finish her dangerous journey and go beyond her physical abilities. After being deserted by her loved one, after another trauma, she is still making him close to her by writing to him on the floor, pretending her will read all of her explanations one day.

3.3. The Psychology of the Prisoners after Trauma

The state of inner suspense was followed by complete relaxation, but the prisoners did not go mad with joy. At first they experienced "depersonalization," since for the liberated prisoners everything appeared to be unlikely, even dreamlike. Over the years they have been deceived by their dreams and it was hard to believe that their dream of freedom finally came true (Frankl 87-88). Frankl also emphasizes the importance of the spiritual care for the liberated prisoners. He claims that the people with natures of a more primitive kind were not able to escape the influences of the brutality they were surrounded with in camp life. Being free, they thought they could use their freedom ruthlessly. The only difference was that they were no longer oppressed, but became the oppressors. Apart from the moral deformity, as the consequence of the sudden release of mental pressure, Frankl mentions two other fundamental experiences which threatened to damage the character of the liberated person: bitterness and disillusionment when he returned to his former life (89-91).

Upon their return home, the prisoners became bitter: "When, on his return, a man found that in many places he was met only with a shrug of the shoulders and with hackneyed phrases, he tended to become bitter and to ask himself why he had gone through all that he had" (91). The experience of disillusionment was different in discovering that after years of reaching absolute limits of all possible suffering that the suffering has no limits and that a man can suffer still even more intensively. Often the very source of the attempts to find mental strength in camp to look forward to something in the future was gone. Lots of people after the liberation found out that nobody was waiting for them and that the person whose memory alone had given them the courage in camp no longer existed. This experience is very difficult to overcome since after the camp they were not prepared for unhappiness. (92) A similar psychological state after the trauma happens to Sethe when house finally becomes silent and Beloved is gone:

> There is a loneliness that can be rocked. Arms crossed, knees drawn up; holding, holding on, this motion, unlike a ship's, smooths and contains the rocker. It's an inside kind – wrapped tight like skin. Then there is a loneliness that roams. No rocking can hold it down. It is alive, on its own. A dry and spreading thing that makes the sound of one's own feet going seem to come from a far-off place. (*Beloved* 323)

Pecola's loneliness was wrapped tight like skin, she was silent, like inanimate object. Beloved's loneliness was full of roaming and conjoined to Sethe's suffering and her own loneliness. In the "Foreword" of *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison explained her interest of reflecting when experiencing trauma. She chose far more tragic and disabling consequences of accepting rejection as legitimate. Some victims of powerful self-loathing turned to be dangerous, violent, reproducing the enemy's behavior, humiliating others. Others allowed their identity melt, while most others managed to grow beyond it. "But there are some who collapse, silently, anonymously, with no voice to express or acknowledge it. They are invisible. The death of self-esteem can occur quickly, easily in children, before their ego has 'legs,' so to speak" (viii). This is precisely what happened to Pecola.

Frank explains how he became human being again:

> At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or of the world-I had but one sentence in mind – always the same: "I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space." How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence memory can no longer recall. But I know that on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being. (Frankl 89)

In the chapter *Summer*, readers learn about Pecola's pregnancy and the consequences of trauma. She lost the connection to this world and the damage was total: "She, however, stepped over into madness, a madness which protected her from us simply because it bored us in the end" (*The Bluest* 204). The readers observe the dialogue between an imaginary friend who acts like a therapist and Pecola who speaks out about her trauma: "*Then why didn't you tell Mrs. Breedlove?* I did tell her! *I don't mean about the first time. I mean about the second time, when you were sleeping on the couch*. I wasn't sleeping! I was reading! *You don't have to shout*. You don't understand anything, do you? She didn't even believe me when I told her" (198). It is too difficult for Pecola to talk about it, she is bitter and truly alone, since there is no communication

between her and mother, and her brother deserted them, while Cholly escaped and later on died. In the end, Pecola's child also died and her life continues in silence and loneliness.

On the other hand, Milkman needed to escape his family's impact: "He just wanted to beat a path away from his parents' past, which was also their present and which was threatening to become his present as well" (*Song* 180). His father's bitterness influenced him, but his mother's story led him to a disillusionment about his family. His father told him that Pilate had taken gold from a cave a long time ago so Milkman went to a look for it. He did not know that that journey would change his life. What is more, Milkman had a couple of people who could make him see what kind of a man he truly is. After Pilate and Guitar, his sister Magdalena as well explained to him what she really thought about him: "Our girlhood was spent like a found nickel on you. . . And to this day, you have never asked one of us if we were tired, or sad, or wanted a cup of coffee. You've never picked up anything heavier than your own feet, or solved a problem harder than fourth-grade arithmetic" (215). Magdalena continued the story about her position in their home, with which he never bothered before: "You are exactly like him. Exactly. I didn't go to college because of him. Because I was afraid of what he might do to Mama. You think because you hit him once that we all believe you were protecting her" (215-216). After his sister's speech, Milkman went to a gold search by himself and finally felt ashamed of his deeds. While meeting his own people in the South and discovering his family's history, he discovered his own blindness. He was ashamed for hating his parents, his sisters and for stealing from Pilate. He also understood what he had done to Hagar: "His mind turned to Hagar and how he had treated her at the end. Why did he never sit her down and talk to her? Honestly. . . He had used her – her love, her craziness – and most of all he had used her skulking, bitter vengeance" (301). Discovering who his ancestors were, he finally found his pathway to his own meaning: "His eyes were shining. He was as eager and happy as he had ever been in his life" (304).

To Sethe, the future was a matter of keeping the past at bay: "The 'better life' she believed she and Denver were living was simply not that other one" (51). Sethe once escaped from Sweet Home and decided not to ever escape from anything else: "Before and since, all her effort was directed not on avoiding pain but on getting through it as quickly as possible" (46). Sethe could not forget the faces of others after she had killed her daughter, but when the spirit became flesh, she thought she was forgiven: "I can forget how Baby Suggs' heart collapsed. . . And how she told me that Howard and Buglar were all right but wouldn't let go each other's hands. --- Neither Howard nor Buglar would let me near them, not even to touch their hair"

(216). She hoped living with Beloved would help her forget, but the agony only became stronger. When Sethe met Beloved, it becomes apparent how devastated Sethe had been: "When I put that headstone up I wanted to lay in there with you, put your head on my shoulder and keep you warm, and I would have if Buglar and Howard and Denver didn't need me, because my mind was homeless then" (241). If it had not been for Paul D, Sethe's disillusionment would have killed her when Beloved leaves forever: "Her eyes, fixed on the window, are so expressionless he is not sure she will know who he is" (319). It becomes too difficult for Sethe to forgive herself, to stand up and fight for life all alone again: "I'm tired, Paul D. So tired. I have to rest a while" (320).

In *A Mercy*, Scully admits that he would pick Florens if he had ever been interested in rape, which is related to her personality traits:

> It was easy to spot that combination of defenselessness, eagerness to please and, most of all, a willingness to blame herself for the meanness of others. Clearly, from the look of her now, that was no longer true. The instant he saw her marching down the road – whether ghost or soldier – he knew she had become untouchable. . . Thus her change from 'have me always' to 'don't touch me ever' seemed to him as predictable as it was marked. (*A Mercy* 151)

After returning to the plantation, Florens had to face all of her disillusionments. She was not loved as she loved. She was not ready for unhappiness after she left to find the blacksmith and now had to face the life without him: "When they saw her stomping down the road two days after the smithy had visited Mistress' sickbed and gone, they were slow to recognize her as a living person. First because she was so blood-spattered and bedraggled and, second, because she passed right by them" (*A Mercy* 144). His conclusions tell us more about the brokenness of Florens' character. To Scully's mind, she was damaged forever. One could claim that Florens had obsessive-compulsive thoughts, a neurotic fear of being abandoned, the state in which she fought the ideas which haunted her, like the rejection by her mother and the man she loved. In her dreams she was constantly visited by her mother and in reality she was trying to escape from her face.

4. Logotherapy and Meaning in Morrison's Novels

4.1. Meaning Orientation

According to Frankl, "the will to meaning," that is, the man's search for meaning, is the primary motivation in life and not a secondary rationalization of instinctual drives. The meaning is unique, specific in the fact that it must be fulfilled by the person alone because only then it achieves a significance which will satisfy person's own will to meaning. Although Frankl mentions some authors who claim that meanings and values are nothing but defense mechanisms, reaction formations, he believes that he would not be willing to live or die for them. He states: "Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him - mentally and spiritually. He may retain his human dignity even in a concentration camp. Dostoevski said once, 'There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings'" (Frankl 66).

Exceptionally, Frankl continues, there may be cases in which an individual's concern with values is really a camouflage of hidden inner conflicts. Pseudo values should be unmasked as soon as one confronts with what is authentic and genuine in a man, such as man's desire for meaningful life (100). The proper example for the unmasking his pseudo values of selfishness and material wealth is Milkman who was changed after discovering what is authentic in life, as nurturing family's tradition, taking care for those who love us, and offering unconditional family love. In similar way, Florens had to unmask the lie that the blacksmith loved her the same way she loved him and learn to live with unrequited love. Sethe had to unmask that she had deceived herself and admit that killing her daughter could not save her from pain. Pecola's blue eyes and the belief that they will shield her from the cruelty of people represent her mask. In relation to that, Eichelberger states that Morrison's writing does not try to show how ideology dominates the individual and imprisons him, but presents possibilities that extend the domineering values in one society (68). She puts emphasis on the truth which Morrison's protagonists have to discover and accept in order to live fully.

Frankl states that an active life serves the purpose of giving the opportunity to realize values in creative work, while a passive life of enjoyment gives a man the opportunity to grasp fulfillment in experiencing beauty, art or nature. However, there is also the possibility not to have the opportunity for both creation and enjoyment when a man has one only one option - to

preserve high moral behavior: "If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete" (67).

Each of the analyzed characters suffers immensely. The main problem is to find a way to deal with the suffering, without becoming less humane. That is why Sethe asks how Paul D had not become wild after having bit in his mouth for long time, and he answers: "There's a way to put it there and there's a way to take it out. I know em both and I haven't figured out yet which is worse" (*Beloved* 84). This sentence clearly depicts how difficult is to deal with and overcome suffering and humiliation. Moreover, Milkman was in danger to be killed by Hagar but still he decided to wait for her and see if she would be able to commit the crime. It was Guitar, however, who put Milkman's life into perspective: "Everybody knows you're brave when you want to be" (*Song* 116). When Milkman was put in situation to fight for his life, he discovered how strong he can truly be, and by that made a giant leap towards changing his path and living meaningfully. That is why Pecola, still in her childhood, finds strength to create an imaginary friend to speak out about her traumatic events, in order to continue living in the cruel world of adults, oppressed by the racial system. In similar way, Florens writes so that the story of her love would not be forgotten.

4. 2. Existential Frustration as a Pathway to Meaning

Frankl also explains that man's will to meaning can also be frustrated. He uses the term "existential frustration" to refer to (1) existence itself; (2) the meaning of existence; and (3) the striving to find a concrete meaning in personal existence. Existential frustration can also result in neuroses, or "noogenic neuroses" in logotherapeutic terms, which differs from the traditional psychological neuroses. "Noogenic neuroses" do not emerge from conflicts between drives and instincts, but from real existential problems. Such frustration actually enables people to find a way to a meaningful life (Frankl 100-101).

Pecola's mere existence was endangered since children need their parents' support in order to cherish their inner values and thrive. Florens dealt with the same problem, but later discovered love that helped her to feel human again. This is why she strives to find the concrete meaning in her personal existence: "No holy spirits are my need. No communion or prayer. You

are my protection. Only you. You can be it because you say you are a free man from new Amsterdam and always are that. Not like Will or Scully but like Sir. I don't know the feeling of or what it means, free and not free. But I have a memory" (*A Mercy* 67).

According to Frankl, it is strictly denied that one's search for meaning to his existence is in every case derived from any disease. Existential frustration is in itself neither pathological, nor pathogenic because a man's concern, even his despair, over the worthwhileness of life represents an existential distress, but not a mental disease. Instead of burying patient's existential despair under some tranquilizing drugs, the doctor's task would be to pilot the patient through his existential crises of growth and development. Logotherapy assists the patient to find meaning in his life, to make him aware of the hidden *logos* of his existence (Frankl 102-103). Milkman's existential problem is connected to the question of his own death which indicates the depth of his existential frustration, not illness. The meaning of his life is in question and deep down he knows that selfishness he has lived with cannot provide meaningful future for him:

> Gradually his fear of and eagerness for death returned. Above all he wanted to escape what he knew, escape the implications of what he had been told. And all he knew in the world about the world was what other people had told him. He felt like a garbage pail for the actions and hatreds of other people. He himself did nothing. (*Song* 120)

The feeling of meaninglessness is a product of frustration of the existential needs. In that way logotherapy tries to make the patient aware of what he actually longs for is in the depth of his being (Frankl 103). Morrison's expression "rememory" insists how some narratives of the past can be so powerful that they can productively or dangerously haunt the living. Rememories remain, even when all witnesses are dead, even if the landscape changed (Peterson 66). That is why Sethe is gradually allowing the past to destroy her. Her own meaning of existence is in question for her, since her children were her pathway to meaning. However, she was responsible for the death of one of her children and her other three children feared the same destiny.

4. 3. The Ultimate Meaninglessness and Existential Vacuum

After showing the beneficial impact of meaning orientation, Frankl turns to the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness of his patients' lives: "They lack the awareness of a meaning worth living for. They are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves; they are caught in that situation which I have called the 'existential vacuum'" (Frankl 106).

The existential vacuum manifests itself in a state of boredom. Frankl mentions Schopenhauer's prophesy for mankind which is doomed to vacillate eternally between the two extremes of distress and boredom. The existential vacuum underlines widespread phenomena as depression, aggression and addiction. Moreover, there are various masks and guises under which the existential vacuum appears. The frustrated will to meaning is sometimes compensated with will to power, including its most primitive form, the will to money. Also, the place of frustrated will to meaning is taken by the will to pleasure. When existential frustration eventuates in sexual compensation, sexual libido becomes rampant in existential vacuum (Frankl 106-107). Pecola's father Cholly, and Milkman's father Macom Dead are a true example for will to power.

Pecola was made believe that she was ugly so her longing for blue eyes derived from false consciousness. Her belief is formed in a way that white means beautiful, worthy and thus lovable, while everything different is ugly (Eichelberger 63). On the other hand, Milkman was jaded most of his life: "He was bored. Everybody bored him. The city was boring. The racial problems that consumed Guitar were the most boring of all" (107). Milkman was constantly worried about what he did not deserve, without thinking how others around him felt: "Apparently he thought he deserved only to be loved – from a distance, though – and given what he wanted. And in return he would be … what? Pleasant? Generous? Maybe all he was really saying was: I am not responsible for your pain; share your happiness with me but not your unhappiness" (277). Furthermore, when Beloved came, Sethe's neurosis began: "Sethe pleaded for forgiveness, counting, listing again and again her reasons: that Beloved was more to her than her own life. That she would trade places any day" (*Beloved* 285). After Beloved was gone, she could not free herself from the existential vacuum she was in. The same happened to Florens after being abandoned by the blacksmith, who was the only strong enough to give her support in search for meaning. She was left alone with her loneliness and anger: "I will keep

one sadness. That all this time I cannot know what my mother is telling me. Nor can she know what I am wanting to tell her" (*A Mercy* 159). All of the protagonists had to discover the truth about their inner strengths in order to discover their true longings, but they needed help and support from others in order to discover that.

4. 4. The Three Pathways to Meaning

When relating to the meaning of life, Frankl claims:

> For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general, but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment. . . Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. (Frankl 108-109)

In addition, a uniquely human capacity that we all have, and which is similar to a pre-knowledge, our awareness of the meaning of our lives, is called "intuition". Our intuition is a foreknowledge, that our existence is basically wanted in the word (Marshall 9): "Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. Thus, logotherapy sees in responsibleness the very essence of human existence" (Frankl 109). The essence of existence is formed in the maxim which invites man to imagine first that the present is past and that the past may yet be changed and amended. Such perception confronts man with life's finiteness and the finality of what he makes out of his life and himself. The imperative of logotherapy is: "Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!" (109) Frankl also puts emphasis on the fact that the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world, rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system. The self-actualization is possible to accomplish only as a side-effect of self-transcendence (110-111): "The more one forgets himself - by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love-the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself" (111).

Since the meaning of life always changes, but never ceases to be, it can be discovered in life in three different ways: (1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering.

Frankl did not relate to the first pathway to meaning since it is straightforward. Morrison's protagonists are related to other people's opinions and deeds. Pecola tried to fight for her meaning in the best way she knew so she visited Soaphead Church and asked for the blue eyes. Being oppressed and raped as a child, she had strength only for this. On the other hand, Milkman was able to return his debts. He returned the stolen bones of his grandfather to Pilate and discovered truth about his roots. He liberated his aunt with this knowledge so she could die in peace. He also offered his life to Guitar, if he needed it and was truly sorry for Hagar's death. Sethe fought for her childrens' wellbeing and ran away from Sweet Home. Moreover, when Beloved came in flesh, Sethe was doing everything for her, but with no impact on her deceased daughter's anger. She could not find meaning since the guilt and pain were too great for her to carry it alone. The same is with Florens who ran away from the plantation to live with the blacksmith: "I don't want to be free of you because I am live only with you" (*A Mercy* 68).

The second way of finding a meaning in life is by experiencing something – such as goodness, truth, beauty, nature, culture or by experiencing another human being in his very uniqueness – by loving him. Frankl claims: "Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him" (Frankl 111). While loving, one is able to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person and recognize the potential within. This means that love is not interpreted merely as the result of sexual drives and instincts, nor as a mere side-effect of sex; rather, sex is a way of expressing the experience of that ultimate togetherness named love (111-112). Eichelberger claims that Morrison's character wish for unconditional acceptance of their unique natures and that this recognition is defined as love which occurs only in a personal, affectionate relationship. Her characters' second desire is for creative and productive activity which includes artistic self-expression, the nurturing of others through relationship, with mental and spiritual activity. The possibility for such activities resides within each individual (69). This second desire is in accordance to Frankl's first path to meaning, by creating a work or doing a deed. Morrison's protagonists desperately need love since it is the only force that can direct them towards meaningful life. Milkman's love for Pilate dispels his

selfishness: "Now he knew why he loved her so. Without ever leaving the ground, she could fly. ‘There must be another one like you,’ he whispered to her. ‘There’s got to be at least one more woman like you.’" (*Song* 336). Pecola’s wish for wholeness was expressed in her wish to have blue eyes, in order to become worthy, beautiful, and maybe finally loved and accepted. The suffering around her and in her made her powerful enough to destroy herself. The only path for her was being loved, being beautiful, having blue eyes, which was impossible. Eichelberger claims how Soaphead who pretended to restore wholeness to his customers truly believed Pecola deserved her fulfillment, since her wish was most deserving to come true, when compared to his other customers’ wishes, as money, love, or revenge (*The Bluest* 79). "But Soaphead’s response, the ‘lie’ that her wish for blue eyes has been granted, tells Pecola a truth: that she is lovable" (Eichelberger 79). It is the only love and comfort she got from any person she had ever met.

As Cowart explains, Morrison offered something like a complementary genealogical quest in *Song of Solomon*: the search for a black integrity, of completeness. Milkman undertook a quest into his personal history in order to encounter his own precursors - Jake, Sing, Solomon and Ryna. The past that Milkman Dead comes to know liberates him, once he has risen above a dream of easy riches of recovered treasure (*Song* 89). Milkman must renounce his corruption to achieve the wholeness based on self-knowledge and maturity. Although Milkman was not aware of it in the beginning, having Pilate, his father’s sister, in his life helped him to understand what love truly was. Pilate in *Song of Solomon* introduces the necessity of being responsible in life, especially for the lives of other, the lives we take from other people: "He meant that if you take a life, then you own it. You responsible for it. You can’t get rid of nobody by killing them" (208). Milkman stole her bag with human skeleton, thinking it would be gold. While being in the police and discovering the truth, he felt shame: "To knock down an old black lady who had cooked him his first perfect egg, who had shown him the sky, the blue of it, which was like her mother’s ribbons, so that from then on when he looked at it, it had no distance, no remoteness, but was intimate, familiar, like a room that he lived in, a place where he belonged" (210). Milkman was unconditionally loved by Pilate and his mother, whom he never showed any gratitude. While dying, Pilate enriched Milkman’s life with complete meaningfulness, through her unconditional love: "I wish I’d a knowned more people. I would of loved ‘em all. If I’d knowed more, I would a loved more" (336). After discovering the power of love, after discovering how "without ever leaving the ground, she [Pilate] could fly" (336), Milkman was

ready to surrender his own life to his brother and friend, Guitar, who was still lost in the search for gold.

In logotherapy the patient is confronted with and reoriented toward the meaning of his life "and to make him aware of this meaning can contribute much to his ability to overcome his neurosis" (Frankl 98). Sethe could only be liberated with Paul D's love: "Her story was bearable because it was his as well – to tell, to refine and tell again" (*Beloved* 116). The decision not to follow the paths of yesterday made Paul D come back to Sethe, since he realized how important she is to him: "She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order" (321). In *A Mercy*, Florens also needed the kind of support Sethe had in order to be liberated from her wilderness. The existential vacuum she is in can be destroyed with the ultimate meaning of life. She chose the second path, experiencing love, encountering someone whom she can love and who would love her back. Florens needs love and compares her need of love to her Mistress who was ill and also needed the blacksmith: "She wants you here as much as I do… For her it is to save her life. For me it is to have one" (*A Mercy* 35). She brings the words of Lina who warned her not to trust blacksmith who in the end only used her body: "We never shape the world she says. The world shapes us. Sudden and silent the sparrows are gone. I am not understanding Lina. You are my shaper and my world as well. It is done. No need to choose" (49). In that way, only her own love could be a force strong enough to encourage Florens to continue fighting for her life.

Finally, the third way of finding a meaning in life is through suffering. When facing a fate that cannot be changed, to bear witness to the uniquely human potential which transforms a personal tragedy into a triumph, turning own predicament into a human achievement, such as facing incurable disease when we are challenged to change. In some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice (Frankl 112-113). Frankl with his therapy could not change the events of his patients' lives, but he could influence changing their attitude toward the unalterable fate inasmuch to see a meaning in their suffering. He claims: "It is one of the basic tenets of logotherapy that man's main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life. That is why man is even ready to suffer, on the condition, to be sure, that his suffering has a meaning" (113). When a person accepts the challenge to suffer bravely, life has a meaning up to the last moment, and it retains this meaning until the end. But Frankl also states how his presentation of suffering is not a masochistic one: "I only insist that meaning is possible even in spite of suffering – provided, certainly, that the suffering is unavoidable. If it were avoidable, however, the

meaningful thing to do would be to remove its cause, be it psychological, biological or political. To suffer unnecessarily is masochistic rather than heroic" (113). He emphasizes the importance of the richness of inner life which was essential for keeping sanity and meaning of life in front of one's eyes:

> The intensification of inner life helped the prisoner find a refuge from the emptiness, desolation and spiritual poverty of his existence, by letting him escape into the past. … In my mind I took bus rides, unlocked the front door of my apartment, answered my telephone, switched on the electric lights. Our thoughts often centered on such details, and these memories could move one to tears. (Frankl 39)

Frankl would ask patients to take a look on their lives from the deathbed, in order to find meaning of everything, a meaning which even included all of people's sufferings. Life of shorter duration could be richer in joy and love and contain more meaning than a life lasting eighty years. Frankl also raises awareness of the meaning of life to its fullest potential: "Are you sure that the human world is a terminal point in the evolution of the cosmos? Is it not conceivable that there is still another dimension, a world beyond man's world; a world in which the question of an ultimate meaning of human suffering would find an answer?" (Frankl 116-118). In logotherapy, the context of super-meaning is introduced to present the ultimate meaning which surpasses the finite intellectual capacities of man. When a patient is a religious believer, his spiritual resources are of great usage in therapy (117-118). In that way, Frankl describes specific moment of his understanding of the ultimate meaning of his life: "In a last violent protest against the hopelessness of imminent death, I sensed my spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom. I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious 'Yes' in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose" (40).

Pecola's lack of love in this world led her to the ultimate suffering. She urged to become beautiful, but nobody taught her about the inner beauty she had already possessed: "Beauty was not simply something to behold: it was something one could do" (*The Bluest* 205). The racial self-loathing made her fall apart. Furthermore, Milkman was able to discover who he really was on his way to find the missing gold: "So the thoughts came, unobstructed by the other people, by things, even by the sight of himself. There was nothing here to help him – not his money, his car, his father's reputation, his suit or his shoes" (*Song* 277). Being attacked by his best friend led him to consider what life truly was.

Moreover, community is another way of fighting for true identity. The collective enunciation of the blacks is felt in *Beloved*, in the Clearing where Baby Suggs preached. It is felt in the community of slaves at Sweet Home and in the group of singing women in Ohio who prevent Sethe from being devoured by Beloved's needs and committing another murder (Peterson 61). Baby Suggs is the preacher of love, teaching ex-slaves to be responsible and love themselves:

> 'Here,' she said, 'in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face cause the don't love that either. You got to love it, you!' (*Beloved* 103-104)

Her message can be applied to each of the literary subjects in order to find the ultimate meaning of their lives. Love could save Pecola and Florens as it had saved Sethe and Milkman.

Conclusion: Healing and "Tragic Optimism"

Logotherapy represents an unconditionally positive view of life. The book *Man's Search for Meaning* ends with the chapter titled *tragic optimism* which expresses the view that everything can be taken away from a human being, except the last area of freedom - the freedom to choose one's attitude towards the circumstances (Marshall 11). Choosing *the best*, (*optimum* in Latin), optimism in the face of tragedy is the main premise of Frankl's tragic optimism. Human existence can be circumscribed by: (1) pain; (2) guilt; and (3) death. In the face of tragedy, human potential at its best allows for (1) turning suffering into human achievement; (2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change to a better person; and (3) deriving from life's transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action (Frankl 137-138). While Frankl asks how is it possible to say yes to life in spite of all the tragic aspects of life, the lives and experiences of some of Morrison's protagonists (Sethe and Milkman) suggest that it is possible to find the ultimate purpose of life. Although the stories of Pecola and Florens do not end in tragic optimism, the open end of the novels *The Bluest Eye* and *A Mercy* leave the possibility for such a conclusion in the future.

Morrison and Frankl were connected in many ways, through the literature of trauma and search for meaning of life, and their message could be summarized in the last pages from *A Mercy*: "To be given dominion over another is a hard thing; to wrest dominion over another is a wrong thing; to give dominion of yourself to another is a wicked thing" (165). That is why logotherapy emphasizes the responsibility for one's actions in any situation. Frankl addressed the prisoners in San Quentin in a way they felt truly understood: "You are human beings like me, and as such you were free to commit a crime, to become guilty. Now, however, you are responsible for overcoming guilt by rising above it, by growing beyond yourselves, by changing for the better" (Frankl 149). Morrison's protagonists needed somebody to tell them that truth - that they are responsible for their guilt, but that they also have the duty to fight for the ultimate meaning of their lives. Pecola was in pain and was feeling guilty for not being accepted in society, since she was an "ugly" child with unloving parents. Milkman was changed through guilt and was able to admit his selfishness and take responsible actions. Cowart claims that Morrison also showed that Macon Milkman Dead could have achieved fullness of his life only if he had disciplined his appetites and recognized the supremacy of love (93). Moreover, Sethe

was in pain because of her guilt for the death of her daughter and Florens was in pain and guilt for being abandoned by the ones she had loved most - her mother and the blacksmith.

Furthermore, all four novels emphasize the importance of community, home, and love in order to heal from trauma. That is why Sethe is empowered by Paul D who finally managed to find a fixed and secure place in his life with her: "'Sethe,' he says, 'me and you, we got more yesterd ay than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow'" (*Beloved* 322). That is why Florens wrote on the floor in order to stay alive, hoping that words would remind her of her loved one, but also of herself being loved. Although her condition does not change for the better, she is making a conscious decision to lie and persevere: "I am become wilderness but I am also Florens. In full. Unforgiven. Unforgiving" (*A Mercy* 159). That is why Pecola stays with her mother in the same neighborhood, walking silently, and Milkman wishes to find such a woman for himself, as his aunt Pilate was.

To sum up, Frankl points out that in the view of the possibility of finding meaning in suffering, life's meaning is unconditional. This unconditional meaning is paralleled by the unconditional value of each and every person, emphasizing the indelible quality and the dignity of man (151). Milkman in the end states: "Perhaps that's what all human relationships boiled down to: Would you save my life? Or would you take it? 'Everybody wants a black man's life.' Yeah. And black men were not excluded" (*Song* 331). His insights can be applied for all four novels since each novel deals with the issue of racism and its debilitating impact on the black identity. What remains crucial for Morrison's protagonists is to find a way to overcome racial, social, and familiar traumas. Both for Frankl and Morrison's protagonists one has to make a choice in life whether to survive or perish. Pilate's words in *Song of Solomon* nicely summarize this idea: "Some folks want to live forever. Some don't. I believe they decide on it anyway. People die when they want to and if they want to. Don't nobody have to die if they don't want to" *(*140).

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