



University of Havana

School of Foreign Languages

DIPLOMA PAPER

**Racial imaginary in *The Help*. The
intersection of race and gender: Aibileen
as valuating subject**

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June 2017

To the outstanding women in my family

Specially, to Cristina María Rosell Forcades, for guiding me and protecting me all the time

To my mother Regina de la Caridad Agramonte Rosell, for being my star, my inspiration

To my godparents Jeanpi and Marie, for their everlasting love and support.

To my supervisor Ida María Ayala, for all the time dedicated to me and my paper,

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Abstract

Written by Kathryn Stockett, *The Help* is a controversial American novel dealing with the lives of African-American maids working for white households in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960's.

In its first chapter, this diploma paper provides the theory regarding Critical Discourse Analysis and valuation. The second chapter includes an overview of U.S. racial relations, the sociocultural context influencing the writing and reception of the novel, and the theory regarding the racial imaginary. The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of utterances said by Aibileen as an illocutive agent to characterize her as a valuating subject.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis, feminism, racial imaginary, modal semantic categories

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Introduction

Reading has always been one of my passions. I have a library with all the books I have received from my godparents, who fostered that habit in me. Therefore, when in 2011 they gave me a selection of new books, I was exhilarated. *The Help* was the last book I started reading from that collection, and I did not know back then that this process would take almost six years. My fascination grew from one page to the next. I felt the need to research about the unknown world uncovered before me. Hence, that has been my goal since the preparatory course until 5th year at the School of Foreign Languages.

Set in Jackson, Mississippi, *The Help* is a novel, which portrays the lives of African-American maids. Kathryn Stockett presents the story of three women, who join efforts despite their differences to denounce the injustices faced by black maids in that hostile environment. The plot, the characters, the use of the African-American Vernacular English as well as the historical setting, the convulsive 1960's, make this novel unforgettable.

Since the main characters are African-American women, in 3rd year I felt inclined to research on African-American history and literature, and feminism. At the School of Foreign Languages, recent studies related to African-American Literature have focused on the presence of feminism in the discourse of black female characters, for instance: term papers such as *African-American women in search for their identity in Alice Walker's Poetry*, by Hoang (2000), and *An approach to discourse analysis in the story "Nineteen Fifty Five" by Alice Walker*, written by Alpizar, Pérez, and Soler (2005), who carried out an analysis focused on the valuative speech acts of the feminine valuating subject as illocutive agent narrator. Also in their term papers *Black Women through Alice Walker's Poetry* (2007), *Phenomenal Women: The Voice of African-American Poets* (2008), and their diploma paper *African American Women through the Voice of Maya Angelou* (2009), Garriga and Hechevarría have analyzed the discourse of black female valuating subjects in order to identify elements of the black feminist ideology. Finally, the doctoral thesis by

professor Ayala (2004) has also characterized the black female valuating subjects in Alice Walker's short stories. These constitute antecedents of this topic.

Other antecedents of the research I had carried out in the previous years were the following term papers and diploma paper by Wong: *A Stylistic Analysis of the Novel The Help* (2013), in which the author determines the stylistic devices that helped to establish the author's style; *Women Raise Their Voices: A Literary Analysis of the Novel The Help* (2014), in which the author establishes the way in which women raise their voices in the historical context of the South discourse of the United States; and *Breaking the Status Quo in the Novel The Help* (2015), in which the author determines how the treatment of racial identity of the characters presents the rupture of the established beliefs of racial difference of White superiority and Black inferiority in the context of the Civil Rights Movement.

A direct antecedent of this diploma paper was the term paper written in 3rd year aiming at determining how one of the illocutive agents' discourse reflects the change of ideology of Southern African-American women in the Civil Rights 1960s. The results of the research were presented in 2015 in the 9th International Conference of Linguistics as well as in the 2015 GELI Symposium. The 4th-year term paper went deeper into the modal dimension of discourse, specifically certitude and expressiveness as modal semantic categories. The objective was determining how the categories of expressiveness and certainty were revealed in Minny's discourse as an illocutive agent in the novel *The Help*.

The Group Sociocultural Studies, and especially, the Group of Semantic Studies Leandro Caballero at the School of Foreign Languages of the University of Havana served as a source of inspiration and encouragement.

Premise

The intersection of gender and race as well as the subject of the enunciation's racial imaginary have an influence on Aibileen's discourse as valuating subject.

Objective

The aim of this paper is to characterize Aibileen's discourse as valuating subject by means of the dimensional analysis.

Research questions

- How has history shaped the relations among white people and African-American people in the United States, especially among women?
- What is the historical context of the setting of the novel and how has it influenced the discourse of the character?
- How did the sociocultural and political context influence the writing and reception of the novel?
- What theoretical grounds are necessary to undertake the analysis?
- How has the racial imaginary influence the valuating subject's discourse?
- What categories of semantic analysis are most revealed in the illocutive agent's discourse?
- How do these categories reveal the characteristics of the illocutive agent's discourse?

Tasks

For this research process, the following tasks will be carried out:

- Critical bibliographical research in sources related to the author and the setting of the novel

- Examining the historical context to set the novel in its concrete historical context
- Analyzing critically the theoretical background related to the macrosemantic categories.
- Selecting the corpus to carry out the dimensional analysis
- Selecting the samples to be presented in the paper

In order to fulfill the tasks and to achieve the aim of this research paper, the following methods will be used:

- Literature review (to compile the necessary bibliography related to the book and the author)
- Historical-logical analysis (to understand the social processes that influenced the sociocultural context of the novel)
- Literary analysis (to analyze how the author uses all the resources she has to create her artistic work)
- Dimensional analysis (to study the dimensional content of the valutive meaning of the utterances and its constituents, the speech acts)
- Critical Discourse analysis (to analyze the discourse of the character as an ideological practice which constructs meanings and reconstructs social practices)
- Induction-deduction (to arrive at partial conclusions during the process of research).
- Analysis and synthesis (to examine the data, and summarize the relevant aspects for the presentation of the paper)

Structure

This term paper consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, recommendations and annexes. The first chapter deals with critical discourse

and valuation with two epigraphs devoted to literary discourse and modal semantic categories respectively. The second chapter is devoted to the sociocultural context in the novel and how this has influenced the writing and reception of the book. There are three epigraphs related to the author, a historical review on racial relations in the United States, and the racial imaginary. The last chapter includes the analysis of Aibileen as illocutive agent. In addition, conclusions, bibliography and annexes are presented.

Contribution

This term paper will contribute to the Group of Semantic Studies and Discourse Analysis, specifically in the literary discourse analysis from a feminist perspective. In addition, this paper could provide more information about the historical context of African Americans, especially women. Therefore, this work will also support the subjects of History and Literature, with the intention that this novel be included in the syllabus. The inclusion of the study regarding the racial imaginary can also contribute to the Group of Sociocultural Studies.

1- Critical Discourse Analysis and Valuation

Within the functions of language, the noetic and the semiotic play a paramount role. The former is in charge of the formation and formulation of thoughts, whereas the latter deals with the communication of ideas. These functions led the way for the development of diverse forms of social thought, customs, and traditions. The knowledge, ideas, and experiences rooted in language are expressed in discourse.

In literature, discourse is referred to as actual practices of talking and writing (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Nevertheless, linguists have not reached an agreement on the use of the term discourse (Casal, 2010). From the linguistic viewpoint, discourse is usually identified as a form of language use. Acosta (in Reyes, 2014) has defined it as “a communication process” in a specific context. However, other linguists such as Grzbeta have stated that the term is concerned only with the reproduction of meaning (Reyes, 2014).

Discourse has also been defined as a form of social practice. It is both the result of the interaction between the social groups, and the expression of the complex societal structures (Phillips&Hardy, 2002). Pêcheux (in Wodak, 2001, p.23) stated that discourse is "the place where language and ideology meet". Foucault (1970) argued that discourse is a system of thoughts composed of attitudes, courses of action, practices, and beliefs that systematically constructs the subjects, and the worlds of which they speak.

Defining discourse is a difficult task due to its involvement with complex phenomena, which constitute by themselves independent disciplines, such as language, communication, culture, and interaction. Discourse involves the linguistic interaction between the people emitting and understanding texts, where they reproduce their ideologies. Therefore, the concept given by Dr. Ida M. Ayala will be followed in this diploma paper:

“Discourse is considered as a form of social practice. Discourse is the use of the language in relation to political, social, and

cultural formations; it is the process of the use of language in which the social order is reflected, giving it form, as well as conforming the interaction of the individual with society” (Ayala, 2004, p.19).

This definition comprises the three main dimensions of discourse identified by Van Dijk: language use, communication of beliefs, and interaction in social situations. This definition also makes reference to the social order, in which three dimensions can be distinguished: knowledge, social relations, and social identity. The social aspect of discourse makes of the study of Pragmatics a requirement to understand how communication conditions influence the use of the language in use.

Pragmatics addresses the relation of signs to their users and interpreters, the study of linguistics (assertions, requests, and promises) and the context in which they are performed. In addition, it is the systemic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on the use of the language.

Austin (in Salgado, 2009) developed the Speech act theory in which he states that a speech act is produced when something is said with the intentionality of uttering, predicting, or informing about something; and its meaning is what is done in the speech act by means of the expression. Searle (in Salgado, 2009) went deeper in this theory when he presented the need of relating the social context to the functions of the signs or expressions. He affirmed that speech included at least three types of acts: locutionary (announcing things that have a certain sense of reference), illocutionary (with a certain force expressing the speaker’s intentions), and perlocutionary (having an effect or not on the hearer by the speaker). These theories led the way to further studies viewing language use as action, in which the decisive factor is the speaker’s intention, although the propositional content of the act and the expected effect that the act may produce in the listener are equally important.

In this diploma paper, when dealing with discourse, we make an analysis that goes beyond the sentence level, focusing on how propositions are related to each other in the discourse and in the global structure of the text. When studying the

microstructure and macrostructure of discourse, we analyze it as a process, taking into consideration the conditions of its production, the speaker and the context. It is also paramount to make reference to how our world perceptions are represented through language.

Since discourse is part of complex social events, the use of an interdisciplinary science is needed: Discourse Analysis (Curbeira in Casal, 2010). Discourse analysis tries to explain the relationship that exists among the dimensions previously mentioned. It is concerned with the "interrelationships between language and society" (Stubbs in Casal, 2010). Therefore, discourse analysis goes beyond the analysis of the syntax of the language. It "focuses attention on the processes whereby the social world is constructed and maintained" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.11). Then, discourse analysis is "the analysis of ideological dimensions of language use" (Pêcheux in Wodak, 2001, p.23). The goal of discourse analysts consists in disclosing the sense of discourse by means of the exhaustive analysis of "the semantically explicit and implicit ideas in the sequence of utterances" (Reyes, 2014, p.17).

In the 90's, thorough research and studies started calling for the inclusion of a critical dimension with its own academic style in discourse analysis. Social problems, such as inequality and power abuse, became the center of attention and topic for discussion. These currents of thought among linguists became the foundations of a new approach to the study of discourse: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Characterized by its interdisciplinarity, Critical Discourse Analysis views the language as a form of social practice. It aims at showing clear connections between social structures, discourse practices, and social practices. CDA explores the relation between discursive practices and wider sociocultural structures. It investigates critically social inequality as it is expressed and legitimized by language use (Fairclough in Wodak, 2001).

This term paper will work with Van Dijk's definition of Critical Discourse Analysis: "a type of analytical discourse research which primarily studies the way in which power

abuse, dominance, and inequality are exerted, reproduced, and occasionally challenged by text and talk in a social and political context"(1999, p.23). ¹

Critical discourse analysts view language as a means of dominance and social force that legitimate relations of organized power (Habermas in Wodak & Meyer, 2008). While doing critical discourse analysis, they assume a social or political stance with the aim of challenging a "position or domination through a critic analysis of the opposed discourse" (Casal, 2010).

Since CDA examines the reproduction and maintenance of power and dominance within specific sociopolitical and historical contexts, it is necessary to define these terms.

According to Wodak and Meyer (2008) there are at least three approaches to power. The first approach defended by Blau and Emerson (in Wodak & Meyer, 2008) states that power is inherent in social exchange in each interaction. The social psychologists French and Raven (in Wodak & Meyer, 2008) have defined power as a result of specific resources of individual actors. Finally, the last approach followed by Foucault and Guiddens (in Wodak & Meyer, 2008) considers power as a characteristic or element, which are systemic and constitutive of society. Foucault (1977) theorized that discourse was related to power as it operated by rules of exclusion, and that it was a means through which power relations produce speaking subjects.

Vidal (in Ayala, 2004) has defined power as the capability to change the behavior or attitude of people in a favorable way to one's own interests. Fowler (in Ayala, 2004) includes within this definition the idea of the control of the behavior and material lives of others not only by people, but also by institutions. Van Dijk (1993) agrees with the idea that power involves control, which limits the freedom of action of others, and influences their minds by means of persuasion or manipulation. For this research, the Vidal's definition will be employed:

¹ Translated by the author (A. T.)

The ability of a person(s) to produce in “another” a determined behavior or attitude that correspond to the certain expectations that person exercising such power has: the effective stimulation of an interference in the auto-determining will and attitude of the subject-object such action falls upon (in Salgado, 2009).

Social power is the relation of control between powerless and powerful groups or institutions. Privileged groups, which have access to socially valued resources, such as knowledge, wealth, and status, will be able to dominate the minds of the less powerful groups. Hence, the concept of dominance is closely related to social power. It is the term that makes reference to illegitimate and unacceptable forms of power (power abuse). Dominance can be reproduced by subtle everyday forms of oral and written discourse that appear natural and acceptable. When the dominated accept dominance, and their actions favor the powerful "out of their own free will" (Van Dijk, 1993), we arrive at the concept of hegemony. "Dominant ideologies appear as 'neutral', holding on the assumptions that stay largely unchallenged" (Wodak & Meyer, 2008).

Organizations that strive for power will try to influence the ideology of a society to become closer to what they want it to be. Therefore, ideology plays an important role in establishing and maintaining power relations and dominance.

Lye (in Hernández, 2011) stated that ideology was a term used to talk about how the structure of cultures enable groups holding power to have total control with the minimum of conflict. In a more specific way, Larrain (in Hernández, 2011) affirmed that ideology was related to how dominant institutions in society “work through values, conceptions of the world, and symbol systems in order to legitimize the current order”.

From the philosophical viewpoint, Marx defined ideology as the body of ideas and political, religious, philosophical, moral, judicial and aesthetic criteria that "explains

the world in every society depending on its way of production, and relate the necessary knowledge for life and the social relation system" (Marx in Marrero, 2011). It determines what we are as members of a group. From the linguistic point of view, Van Dijk (1993) defined ideology as the fundamental sociopolitical cognitions (thoughts, beliefs), which reflect and protects the basic aims, interests, and values of groups. This is the concept that will serve for the purpose of this research.

Ideologies constitute the bedrock of judgment and action. They legitimize the actions of social groups, and organize their attitudes towards relevant social issues. In addition, ideologies can prevent the disclosure and recognition of the truth or the reality. Hence, ideologies serve to legitimate power and inequality (Van Dijk, 1998). Nevertheless, there are positive functions of the ideologies. They empower dominated groups, create solidarity, give support to the opposition, and organize the struggle.

Generally speaking, ideologies serve group members in the management of their whole everyday social life. These group members share opinions about common experiences and conflicts (social representations). Moreover, they feel identified with their group due to their feelings of belonging (social identity).

When social action and interaction are coordinated with the goal of defending group interests and there is a sense of identification with the common goals, all the major conditions are set for the formation of ideological groups. Many ideological groups tend to organize parties or non-governmental organizations, which play an important role in recruiting new members, setting the objectives, and formulating norms and principles (ideologies). Dominant groups will tend to develop an ideology to reproduce their dominance, whereas dominated groups may develop an ideology that serves as the foundations for their practices and discourses of resistance.

1.1 Literary Discourse

Beliefs and opinions are embedded in the discourse of those who emit it. These ideas are the fuel for the communication process, in which speakers and listeners

interact, accepting or refusing what has been stated and receiving a continuous feedback as result of the exchange.

According to the Merriam Webster's, art is the conscious use of skill and creative imagination in the production of aesthetic objects and literature has the excellence of form or expression and conveys ideas of permanent or universal interest. Therefore, by means of the language, literature also forms part of this interaction involving writers, publishers, scholars, teachers, and readers. Literary works are fragments of objective reality shaped by the authors' conception of the world. Writers recreate, analyze, and criticize the sociocultural and historical context they are living, exposing the failures of their society and praising its positive aspects. When readers interact with the literary work, they are reconstructing the piece in their minds and they discover, share, reject or accept the authors' psychological, aesthetic and ethical world. Hence, there is no separation between world and literary discourse since literature not only represents reality but also constitutes part of it. According to Bennett & Royle (2014), literary discourse has the power to destabilize the very notion of the world by producing and reproducing our reality, making our worlds.

Literary discourse has both communicative and poetic functions. Consequently, there is a degree of emotiveness in literary discourse. Literary discourse is modal and authors as subjects of enunciation employ characters as illocutive agents, which will express valuations, appreciations and hierarchizations about objects of the world in conformity to the place and the historical and socio-cultural context in which a given social event takes place.

The literary piece analyzed in this paper is a novel entitled *The Help* (2009) by Kathryn Stockett. There are several definitions of novel as literary type. Most of these definitions agree on the fact that novels are fictional prose narratives of some length. Nonetheless, that is not always the case. Therefore, this paper follows the definition of ***The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms***:

“Nearly always an extended fictional prose narrative, although some novels are very short, some are nonfictional, some have been written in verse, and

some do not even tell a story. Such exceptions help to indicate that the novel as a literary genre is itself exceptional: it disregards the constraints that govern other literary forms, and acknowledges no obligatory structure, style, or subject-matter". (2001, p. 173).

Therefore, the novel as a literary genre is flexible, which is the reason why its manifestations are so diverse. *The Help* as literary work has the characteristics of a historical and sentimental novel.

Historical themes have served as inspiration of novelists. Assisted by imaginative conjecture, writers have tried to interpret ancient events in human and particular terms and to transform documentary information into immediate sensuous and emotional experience. Since the appearance of [Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*](#) (1814), regarded as the first historical novel, this type of fiction has remained popular.

Historical novels attempt to portray the ambiance and convey the manners, and social conditions of a precedent period with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact. Nevertheless, sometimes this fidelity can be only apparent. Historical novels not only may deal with actual historical personages, but also with a mixture of fictional and historical characters. The central characters are subject to divided loyalties within a larger historic conflict of which readers know the outcome. This literary type tries to depict a broader view of a past society in which great events are reflected by their impact on the private lives of fictional individuals. Some works considered masterpieces of this genre are Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Stendhal's *Charterhouse of Parma*.

On the other hand, the term sentimental, in its mid-18th-century usage, signified refined or elevated feeling. Nowadays, according to the Webster's, it means a delicate sensibility especially as expressed in a work of art, emotional idealism, and a romantic or nostalgic feeling verging on sentimentality. Taking these definitions into consideration, sentimental novels exploit the reader's capacity for tenderness, compassion, sympathy to a disproportionate measure by presenting an unrealistic view of its subject.

18th-century sentimental novels exalted feeling above reason and raised the analysis of emotion to a fine art. Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) were sentimental novels that exhibited a fervent attachment between the sexes that rose above the purely physical. Maintaining a certain dignity in spite of a tendency to excessive emotional posturing, this trend of the sentimental love novel was one of the elements of the Romantic movement.

In the Victorian era the term sentimental became synonymous of self-indulgence in superficial emotions occurred as a result of the influence of sanctimony, religiosity, and a large commercial demand for bourgeois fiction. Sentimental novels of the 19th and 20th centuries were characterized by emotionalism and an intentionally lachrymal appeal. An example of such novels is Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843). Although Dickens cannot really be termed a sentimental novelist, he provokes tearful responses of both sorrow and relief from one situation of death. Another example of a sentimental novel in the 20th century is Segal's *Love Story* (1970), which was a success during the Atomic Age.

Sentimental novels are characterized by the presence of protagonists which exhibit ideal reactions to hardships and create for themselves and ideal domestic community. Sentimental novels not only portray the world as it is but also provide the space to imagine the world as it should be. In order to do so, some authors employ stereotypic characters who give ideal responses to suffering and unjust situations drawn from real life experiences. This type of sentimental novel gives a theory of power, an explanation of why there is injustice and the means to recognize it and remedy it (Hart, 2004). Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) is a great example of this type of sentimental novel sharing common elements with *The Help*.

Literature is the bond with great civilized, humane and ethical ideas, playing a paramount role in the process of learning about other people's lived experience. As artistic works resulting from the power of human imagination, novels demand a thorough analysis by sensitive readers able of fully understanding and properly appreciating them.

1.2 Modal Semantic Categories

Modality and subjectivity have been analyzed and interpreted in specialized literature. Both were subject to analysis by Professor Caballero (1989, 1996, 2002) and his approach to these concepts has led the way for the work of his followers in this field to date. Caballero approaches modality as a category linked to the act of saying, whose subjective and objective aspects are organized and differentiated into modal semantic categories. He recommends studying sense in discourse and linguistic system components as modal elements since they are based on the psychological attitudes of the producers of signs and messages. Consequently, modality is regarded as something that goes beyond the concept of mood as grammatical category. Modality differs from mood in that it underlies the sense expressed in discourse and results from the subjects' attitude towards what is said (Salgado, 2009).

Caballero (in Salgado, 2009) derived significant considerations from the way modality was discussed in the consulted literature. He stated that truth and falseness were referential values that did not stand for psychological attitudes or stances in themselves but resulted from attitudes that were indeed psychological, such as sincerity-insincerity, loyalty-disloyalty. This distinction allows separating what is external to the linguistic sign from the pragmatic content which has been fixed on it due to the recurrence of that pragmatic content in the use that subjects make of signs in the process of communication. In addition, he pointed out that modal semantic values were different from those that had been traditionally established by logical description. This happens because the sense fixed on the units can be understood as modal since it may hide truth or disclose it, just as it may communicate the decision or lack of it to face truth, the level of affectivity, interest, expressiveness and valuation (Salgado, 2009).

Due to its pragmatic and semantic structures, modality is considered a functional semantic category and is subordinated to the hypercategory of dictum. Then, modality as defined by Galbán (in Salgado, 2009) is:

the component of an utterance or any expression which manifests the presence of a recognized type of subjective position of the subject to what is said in discourse and of the listener to what he/she interprets, and in this case the reference to reality is realized only through the dictum.

Furthermore, modality indicates the subject's subjective position towards what is said in discourse, which has to do with the semiotic aspect and the linguistic means selected in the formulation process of the utterance (Ayala, 2004, p.35)².

The Group of Semantic Studies at the School of Foreign Languages Leandro Caballero has been carrying out deep research on modality, focusing mainly on the following modal categories: Interest, Affectivity, Loyalty, Certainty, Expressiveness, and Valuation.

Leandro Caballero's works paved the way for the study of Modal Semantic Categories (MSC) at the School of Foreign Languages of the University of Havana. From Caballero's point of view, meaning encompasses modal contents, interactional contents, and referential contents, which are related to the four different dimensions³ the MSC are viewed in: modal, illocutive, referential, constructive-grammatical (Salgado, 2009).

The modal content is related to the enunciating subjects' opinion towards their discourse in process (modal dimension). The interactional content deals with illocutionary, perlocutionary and of intentional discourse strategies (illocutionary dimension). The referential content refers to the objectification of the acts of thinking due to their orientation towards certain referents, whether they are real or imaginary, in the noetic process and during enunciation (referential dimension). Constructive-

² (A. T.)

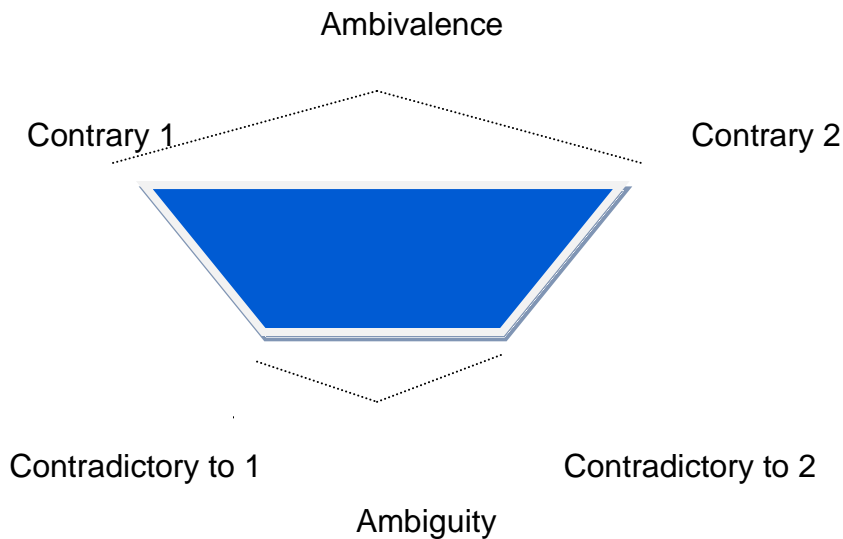
³ Dimension: each of the fundamental semantic magnitudes of the content of lexical units. These magnitudes are defined according to types, classes, attributes, and traits inherent to meaning. (Curbeira, 2003)

grammatical resources (constructive-grammatical dimension) make possible the realization of modal, interactional, and referential contents (Caballero in Salgado, 2009).

The modal dimension is related to the noetic process and involves the psychological attitudes assumed in the connection with whatever is conveyed in the discourse. The linguistic means permit to express such attitudes, which become objective in the act of communication. On the other hand, the illocutionary dimension reflects the features appearing in the interactional and intentional contents of speech acts. Additionally, the referential dimension encompasses all features of referents, real or imaginary, which are taken into consideration by the agents of discourse. These features comprise the constitutive, relational, dominion-bound, and taxonomical ones. Finally, the constructive-grammatical dimension combines the semantic features considered with the syntactic and morphological rules that are needed to make up utterances.

In addition to the preceding aspects of meaning related to semantic modalities, Caballero (in Salgado, 2009) also created a methodology for their analysis. Essential for his description of valuation as one of the macrocategories, this methodology included the set of generalizing notions acting as basic contraries, whose function was to show the variety of oppositions that move around each category. This revealed the existence of contradictory notions along with basic contraries. Both contrary and contradictory notions result in a precise set of relations that account for such axiological values as positive ↔ negative between contraries. **Ambivalence** results from the equipoise between the contraries, and the neuter value of **ambiguity** results from the equipoise between contradictory notions.

These notions and axiological values are represented by the semiotic quadrangle in combination with the contrary-notions parallelogram proposed by Galbán Pozo (2003). These values facilitate the analysis of the conceptual relations corresponding to the macrocategories. Hence, they need to be understood as semantic values which are common to a variety of linguistic units and expressions.



Category of Interest.

This category expresses “*the subjective attitude assumed about what is said, highlighting how the objects or phenomena of reality are capable of directing or not the focus of attention and intentness on the object or how they represent a stimulus to bring about a conscious act*”. (Galbán in Salgado, 2009).

In this category two perspectives have been identified. One is the volitional perspective based on the opposition of contraries interest ↔ obligation, and the other one is based on the opposition of contraries interest ↔ disinterest. Both sets of contrary and contradictory values take into account a semiotic range comprising a distinct series of units and expressions which denote an extensive variety of possible subjective attitudes and their corresponding axiological values on the scale.

Category of Affectivity.

Affectivity has been defined by Galbán (in Salgado, 2009) as “*the modal semantic category that expresses the subjective attitude towards what is said on the basis of the emotions that the objects and phenomena of reality arise in the subjects*”. This category is gradual by nature. Reflecting three different degrees of tension or intensity, three different pairs of contraries have been distinguished: like ↔ dislike

(lower tension), affect ↔ disaffect (mid-tension), and love ↔ hatred (higher tension). In addition, it is also possible to find cases of extended and transcended affectivity.

Category of Loyalty.

According to Galbán (in Salgado, 2009), loyalty is the modal semantic category that “conveys the subjective attitude assumed about what is said from one of the three perspectives: the discursive, which highlights the correspondence discourse – feelings, the ethical-intentional, which highlights such aspects of discourse, and the cognitive-intellectual, which focuses on cognitive aspects”.

This category is related to the constitutive feature of behaviour as part of the referential content of meaning. Loyalty corresponds to the values expressed by such pairs of contraries as sincerity ↔ insincerity, good intentions ↔ ill intentions, ingenuousness ↔ cunning.

Category of Expressiveness.

Expressiveness shows the level of emotiveness that is present while making reference to an object of reality. It is the category that expresses the subjective attitude towards the content of discourse, emphasizing on the speaker’s emotional state “from a two-fold perspective; namely, that of the mode of expression characterized by such contraries as *gush* ↔ *containment*, and that of emotional tone conveyed, which reflects the opposition of such contraries as *satisfaction* ↔ *dissatisfaction*” (Galbán Pozo in Ayala, 2004).

Caballero (in Salgado, 2009) presented this category in two semiotic parallelograms. The first one shows the values of *gush* and *containment*, and the other one presents the values of *laugh* and *crying*. On the other hand, Galbán Pozo (2003) analyzed primarily the opposition of the contraries *gush* ↔ *containment* within the perspective related to the mode of expression. Then, the contraries *laugh* ↔ *crying* were substituted for *satisfaction* ↔ *dissatisfaction*.

Caballero (in Salgado, 2009) as well as Galbán Pozo (2003) assert that this category lacks illocutive agents, which means there is no communicative intention related to expressiveness, and the psychological attitude is intimately bound to the valuating subject's emotions. However, recent studies carried out by Sánchez Galbán (2013, 2014) have proven the existence of an illocutive dimension for expressiveness in German and Spanish speech acts, which leads the way for further studies related to the presence of a communicative intention in English speech acts.

Category of Certainty.

Certainty is a category of paramount importance in discourse due to its influence in human beings' actions. This category is also present in non-verbal communication. It can be reflected in a person's look, way of walking, and gestures. However, discourse is the place in which the grade of certainty can be measured, for instance, from the cognitive perspective, at the moment of answering questions, asserting something, doing certain actions. From the volitional perspective, the grade of certainty is analyzed taking into account the way we show we are determined or not when taking a decision. In this regard, human beings look for data, proofs, and signs to support their choice even though in some situations they might also resort to their intuition.

Therefore, this category expresses the subjective attitude undertaken about the content of the discourse based on *"the pragmatic value of certainty, which, from a cognitive perspective, is equated with sound, clear and evident knowledge of things; and from the volitional perspective, with the strength that must mark volitional actions of the subject"* (Galbán Pozo in Cepero Baños, 2015).

When analyzing the speech acts of the subjects, their psychological or ethical-psychological position will be taken into account. The modal values of the discursive-cognitive perspective are going to be represented by the contraries certain ↔ uncertain, which are going to be manifested in different degrees: from a high level of certainty in the positive aspect (*certain, irrefutable, unquestionable, convincing, tangible*) to an ambiguous level manifested by adjectives, adverbs, and phrases

such as *suspicious, supposedly, allegedly*, and later to the level of doubt (*doubtful, perhaps, maybe, uncertain*). The corresponding contradictory ones are not certain ↔ not uncertain when the discursive-cognitive perspective is highlighted.

Decision making is a key factor in life. Volition plays an important role in decision making along with a series of socio-cultural elements, and objective and pragmatic conditions. Taking this into account, from the volitional perspective, there are contrary notions of decision, decided ↔ undecided, which may cover a wide range of attitudes of the valuating subjects as for example definite ↔ indefinite, or doubtful ↔ convinced. There are no contradictory values.

It is possible to talk about an illocutive agent of certainty, in speech acts of inquiry, in the search of certainty facing uncertainty and ignorance.

Category of Valuation.

Valuation as a modal semantic category expresses “*the intentional and subjective attitude assumed in relation to what is communicate, on the basis of the social norms which consider the pragmatic value of objects and phenomena that can be ascertained on a scale of axiological and parametric values*” (Galbán Pozo, 2003). This category presupposes the presence of an illocutionary valuating agent who passes value judgements of different sorts, realized in valutive speech acts. Caballero (in Salgado, 2009) defines this valuating subject as “*the issuer of discourse who conveys a communicative intention that reveals his/her subjective attitude with respect to the object intentionally considered, so as to attribute to or acknowledge in it a givers value from a socially-set scale*” (Caballero in Salgado, 2009).

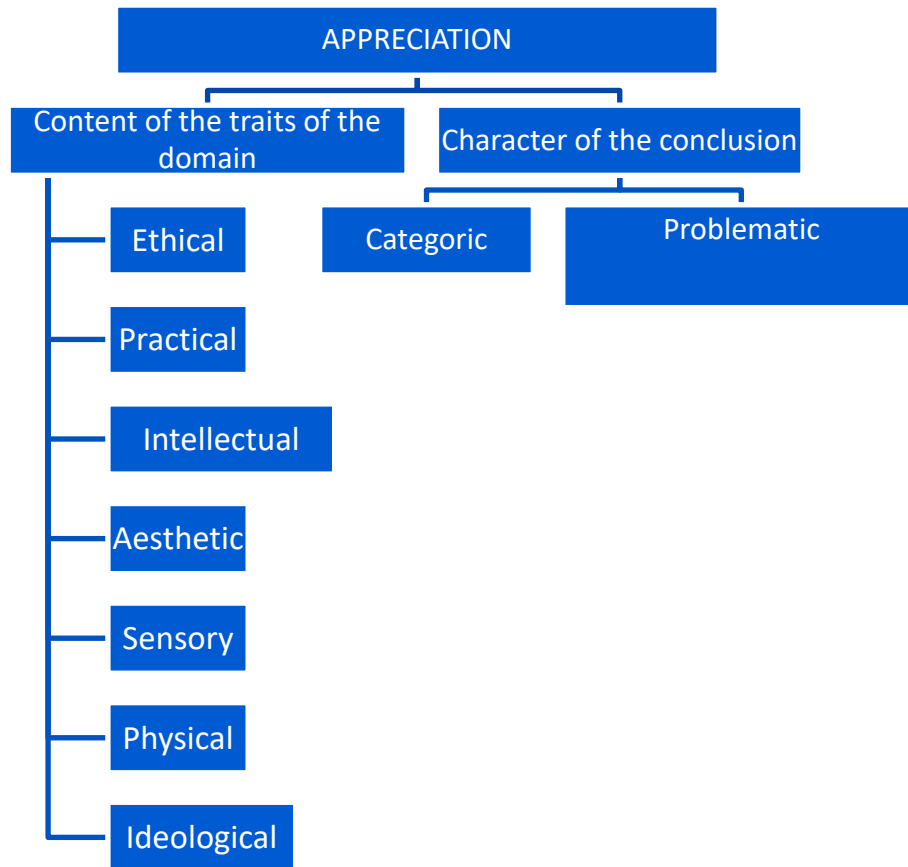
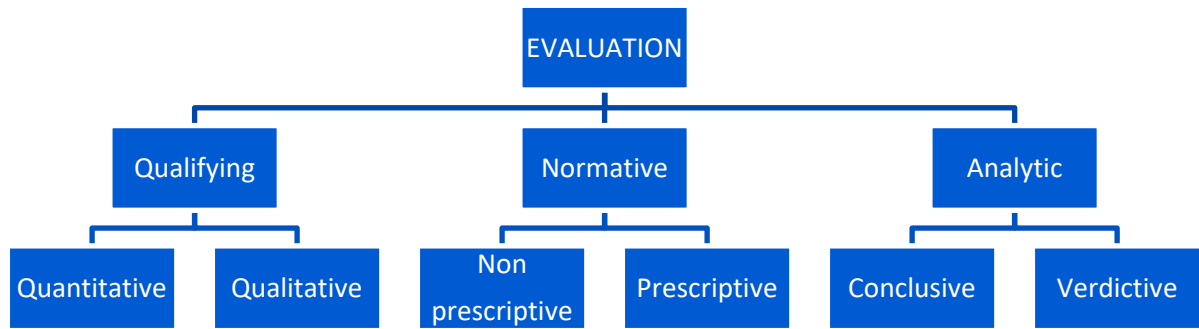
Caballero also presents his classification of valutive speech acts following Austin's theory of speech acts. This classification is as follows:

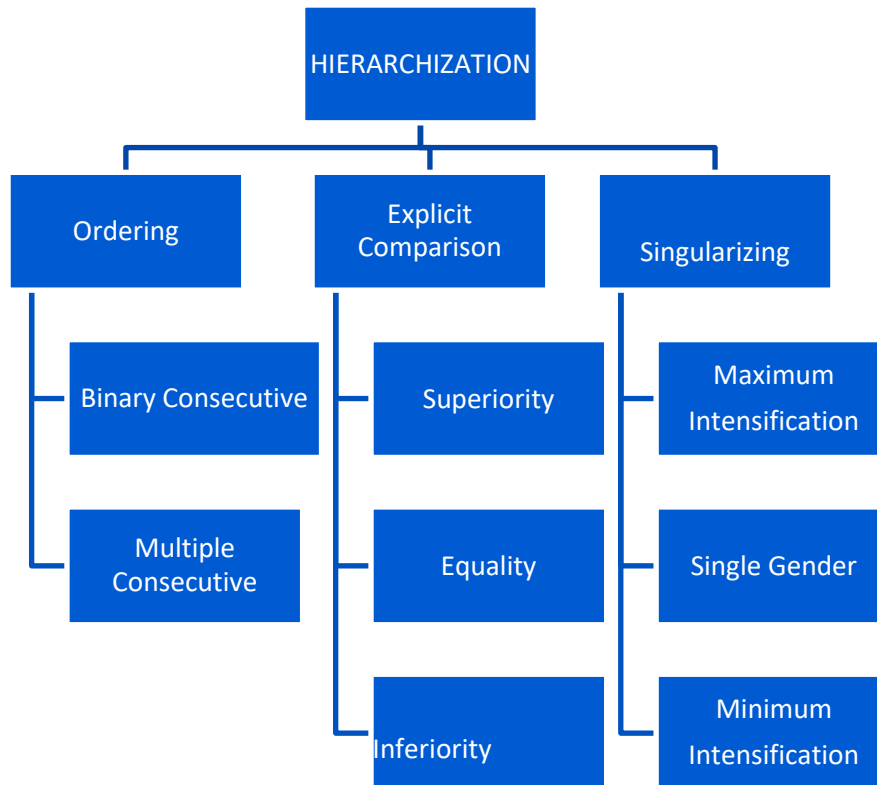
❖ **Evaluative:** those which convey a communicative intention marked by the definitive, constrained and transcendental character of the valuation of the object intentionally submitted to it, so that said valuation is bound to a socially pre-established and linguistically structured scale in which the valuated object is assigned a certain value that involves certain consequences for it. In line with this, the evaluating subject's status is socially acknowledged in order to account for the transcendence of his/her act.

❖ **Appreciative:** those which express a communicative intention marked by the open and socially indefiniteness of the valuation as regards the object intentionally considered; thus, appreciations are based on a diffuse, socialized norms and do not call for a definite status on the part of the valuating subject, nor do they imply any definitive consequences for the object of the valuation.

❖ **Hierarchizing:** those which express a communicative intention marked by hierarchical order assigned to the object, intentionally considered, with respect to others, taken as references on the basis of a socially-established and linguistically-structured scale that is characterized by its relative values.

In valuation, the illocutionary content of meaning reflects the way in which the object of valuation is intentionally considered. The illocutionary content of valuative meaning can be reflected in units of discourse (speech acts) or in systemic-discursive units (lexemes, lexico-semantic variants, and locutions). Caballero (in Salgado, 2009) distinguishes three valuative hypocategories in the illocutionary dimension where sub-categories expressing types of valuation are found:





The hypocategory of evaluative valuation can be divided into qualifying evaluative valuation, simple normative evaluative valuation and analytic evaluative valuation (Caballero in Salgado, 2009). According to Correoso (2003), evaluative valuation can be defined as a hypocategory of the illocutionary dimension of discourse which is characterized by its institutional content and its transcendence, and supported by standards previously established, accepted, and adopted by a social community. It is characterized by a series of modal and illocutionary pragmatic features that, in conjunction with the institutional traits previously adopted by society, differentiate it from the rest of the hypo-categories. These features are the institutional content, the definite and authoritarian character of the valuation, and transcendence.

Nevertheless, a clear borderline between evaluations and the hypocategories of appreciation and hierarchization has not been identified. Evaluation and appreciation are frequently confused, particularly in some utterances which include the valuating subject. Although a valuating subject with status of evaluator can be found in both categories, there are some features that mark the limits between them. The evaluative

valuation is characterized by the position of authority of the valuating subject (with evaluator status) and by the currency and power of the social rules.

It is possible to differentiate the modal semantic macrocategories thanks to a series of features which allow telling them apart, although sometimes this task can be really challenging. The study of the macrocategories from the modal perspective facilitates the identification of the modal attributes that characterize the subjects who bring modal contents into their utterances. It discloses their subjective attitudes with respect to an object of linguistic expression.

To sum up, these categories are useful for the analysis of systemic lexical units and discourse units. Since the subject's and the listener's intentionality and socialized subjectivity are fully manifested in the communicative act or in the verbal interaction, these categories are more explicit in discourse. In the case of literary discourse, authors as the subjects of enunciation will have illocutionary agents to express their world views through their literary works with the intention of guaranteeing the veracity of their situational and socio-cultural contexts.

2- Sociocultural context in *The Help*: 21st century white female author and 1960s African- American female protagonists

2.1- Stockett and her time

Born and raised in the same setting of her novel, the town of Jackson in the state of Mississippi, Kathryn Stockett graduated from the University of Alabama with a degree in English and creative writing. *The Help* was her debut novel, which took her five years to complete. After being rejected by 60 literary agents, her book remained 100 weeks at the top of the New York Times Best Seller list. *The Help* has been published in 42 languages and millions of copies have been sold since its release. Therefore, it is paramount to understand the context in which the novel was written and later published.

Despite writers had entered into a new millennium, the past was a more stimulating source of inspiration and imagination than the present and future. Since writers were willing to look back, history remained a paramount concern in literature at the beginning of the 21st century. In addition, there was an affinity for earlier literary styles and techniques in the early years of the 2000s. Therefore, these tendencies may have influenced Stockett's writing.

The socio-historical context in which the novel was released may have contributed to the controversial success following its publication in 2009. In the United States, the first decade of the 21st century was characterized by the continuation of disputes regarding what it meant to be American and the rights to full citizenship. Some of these debates arose from religious conservatism and its influence on American culture and society in order to stop the increasing number of multiethnic Americans with a non-European ancestry.

During the first eight years of the millennium, wars and the economic downtown resulting from Bush's administration led to voter's discouragement and pessimism. This situation had an impact on the presidential campaign in 2008. Obama ran a race-neutral campaign advocating for unity and optimism, which led to his victory in

the elections. According to Richomme (2012), Obama's message for hope meant the hope for a less "racialized" future.

His triumph was interpreted as redemption, the end of a racist period in the United States. As a historic and unprecedented moment, many scholars and commentators interpreted this victory as the beginning of a post-racial era in the United States, in which "race inequalities had been reduced to the point that they might no longer be such spurious issue" (Richomme, 2012). Nevertheless, Obama's inauguration did not translate into the end of the discriminatory practices. Several shootings to black citizens by the police leading to the campaign "Black Lives Matter" and recently, Trump's campaign and election prove that racial tensions only heightened throughout Obama's terms. The lack of a new dialogue on race relations during his mandate only reinforced and spread the sentiment of post-racial achievement, which conservatives used to hamper the advancement of race-conscious public policies. Analysts such as Carson (2013) maintain that post-racialism is a mythology that discourages any action if racial disparities are found to exist by claiming that such action would be reverse discrimination. Therefore, the assumption of an unproven reality, the achievement of colorlessness in the United States, hindered the development of any discussion on race (Carson, 2013).

The post-racial stance versus the call for the acknowledgement and respect for diversity may have had an influence on mainstream media and the portrayal of racial relations in literature and the big screen. Therefore, this context of political and racial affairs may have had an impact on the writing and reception of *The Help*. Nevertheless, this historical and sentimental novel not only deals with racial relations but also with gender relations since the main characters are two black women and a white one. Since this research focuses on the black female characters, it is essential to analyze the evolution of racial relations and the impact on gender in the American history. This paper will cover the development of this topic until the Civil Rights period, which is an essential element in the setting of the novel.

2.2- Historical review of racial relations in the United States. Impact on African-American women.

English settlers created a detailed edifice of force labor on the basis of emerging categories of race and reproduction. Laws and legislative acts as well as plantation inventories and tales of travelers contributed to the association of blackness with brute labor. The process by which Africans became “blacks” who became “slaves” was initiated on the European side by means of a series of encounters made manifest in literary descriptions, expanded later in the quotidian dimensions of slave ownership and settlement. The imagination of settlers and future colonists alike was fueled by publications that represented a key component of the ideological arsenal brought by European settlers to bear against African laborers. Intellectuals constructed extensive notions of civility, nationhood, citizenship, and masculinity on the foundation of the combination of nature and culture through the entanglements of skin color, complexion features, and hair texture (Morgan, 2004).

Whiteness conferred political status, legal protection and gave social standing and overarching sense of superiority. Racial ideology was conceptualized and emerged with considerable force and urgency in the regions with slaves (Brown & Webb, 2007). Since appearance became a trope for morality and civility, gender played an important role, establishing the connections between bodies and the Atlantic economic system (Morgan, 2004). Stable categories of whiteness and blackness were developed by a gendered racial discourse in early modern English literature and material culture, which ensured that colonists would arrive with a set of predispositions and assumptions about civilization, race, femininity, and sexuality. Black women became the evidence for cultural inferiority which was eventually encoded as racial difference. Their bodies and behavior, described as monstrous and “unwomanly” respectively, were related to barbarism and called to mind the distance between Europe and Africa on which the development of racial slavery depended (Morgan, 2004).

African women's lives changed drastically in the Americas. Although they continued to perform agricultural labor and to bring children into the world, they did so in special circumstances that would radically alter their conception of the cultural meaning of their history and future. Slave owners violently changed the terms and conditions under which women performed these tasks. In addition to the physical toll of fieldwork, reproduction immediately took on an aggressive significance in their lives. Enslavement tied childbirth and reproductive potential of women's bodies to the cultivation of staple crops and the extraction of wealth from New World's colonies (Morgan, 2004). The rape of black women, the inattention to their pregnancy, and the sale of their children became simultaneous manifestations of racism and sexism (White, 1999).

African women lived and worked alongside enslaved men, they resisted and accommodated in ways that were inflected by gendered conventions of mothering and femininity and resituated the meaning of motherhood, resistance, and political authority (Morgan, 2004).

Slavery had an impact on African-American women's employment history, migration, self-image, and on their involvement in the 19th and 20th movements for political and civil rights. This history has provided African-American women with a greater sense of themselves, but it has not liberated them from the task of proving their womanhood (White, 1999).

History also shaped the relation between white and black women. White women were referred to as mistresses because black women were slaves. White women were pure whereas black women were lustful beasts. American white women were expected to be passive because they were female. Nevertheless, black women had to be submissive because they were black and slaves. Since black women were really powerless, white women had real power over enslaved women. Due to sexism and racism, which kept them apart and made a difference in their sex roles, black and white women had little in common. Slave masters controlled both black and white women; however, the latter wielded power over the former (White, 1999).

These relations became more complex during the Jim Crow period, especially in the South. Jim Crow strategically and politically strengthened the power of white patriarchy by bringing white men together in defense of their racial superiority despite their class differences. This law not only restricted the physical spaces shared by blacks and whites, but also regulated the former group's behavior towards the latter. African Americans had to abide by a racial etiquette system that reinforced their subordination whereas white people avoided doing any action that could imply social equality between the races. According to Brown and Webb (2007), the racial identity of African Americans established the way whites treated them, regardless of their gender or status.

A great emphasis was placed on the need of white men to protect against the alleged danger that African Americans posed to society. One of the pretexts for exerting their power against African Americans was the protection of white women from black rapists. This way white men asserted their masculinity and superiority, reinforcing hierarchical power relationships with the foundations on both gender and race. By exploiting the fears of the black rapist, white men ensured their women remained confined to a subordinate and stereotypically fragile status. Lynching and other means of punishment inflicted the horror of violence and loss on the African American community, affecting especially black women who had to take on more responsibilities in the household since their fathers, husbands, and brothers had been slaughtered.

As a result of Jim Crow oppression, a fatalistic sense of hopelessness was common among African Americans. In addition, the lack of consensus within the community as to the means for resistance and struggle created division among its members. Nevertheless, the same segregation promoted the creation of institutions and social networks that would serve as the basis of African American endurance. Churches were spaces for cultural expression and the sharing of concerns and information. Many African-American women became activists within their churches participating in campaigns and raising financial support, which developed their administrative and social networking skills during the Civil Rights era.

Mainstream representations often validate popular constructions of the Civil Rights Movement as the primary Southern phenomenon that took place from the mid 1950s through the late 1960s. In this view the Civil Rights is an episode in a progressive vision of the American history, which fosters reader's complacency and self-satisfaction (Smith, 2014). However, this movement did not end racist beliefs and practices in the United States despite it covered the entire nation and attained paramount goals.

Through court litigation, federal lobbying, nonviolent direct action in Southern communities, grass-roots activism, and the aid of American masses, the Civil Rights Movement defeated the monstrous nature of Jim Crow, placing equality in US political agenda. It had among its goals the following: the application of the Fourteenth Amendment equal protection clause and Fifteenth Amendment voting rights for African Americans in the South, citizen empowerment by means of community-based participation, and personal expression through the embrace of the African-American culture (Morgan, 2000). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were significant results. Middle class black Americans began having more access to the rewards of US political and economic systems. Nevertheless, racial discrimination only evolved to a subtler form of racism intertwining racial with class inequality.

During the Civil Rights period African-American women carried out an internal struggle against racial and gender discrimination. They had an awful situation of unemployment, poverty, and prejudiced treatment like their male counterparts. Like white women, black women experienced occupational segregation and inequality in men's and women's pay scales, even for equal work. Black women were also forced to perform their traditional gender role as wives and mothers.

In the 1960s, because of their intersectional position, black women were ignored by the Feminist and the Civil Rights Movements. Even though black women had given an indispensable support to the Civil Rights Movement, it primarily concentrated on the oppression of black men. Many black women faced severe sexism and struggled

against the misogynist tendencies of Black Nationalism. They were pushed into the background, despite their commitment to the African-American cause.

The second wave of feminism focused only on the problems faced by white women, and devoted little attention to black women's class issues. The so-called "universal women's experiences" disregarded the difficult position of black women due to race and class differences with white women. Furthermore, African-American women could not participate on conference panels. They did not have the proper representation in the Women's Studies Departments. There were no studies devoted to the role of African-American women in history (Wong, 2014). As a result, the feminist gains of this period were built around the lifestyles and options of highly educated upper-middle class white women.

Since African-American women did not fit into the Civil Rights and Feminist movements, they had no choice but creating a movement of their own. They had to find the way to sensitize black men to gender issues while sensitizing white women to racial issues. Black women's exclusion from feminist and antiracist discourses in 1960s movements for racial and gender equality led to the emergence of the Black Feminist Movement, which entails an active commitment to struggle against the simultaneous oppressions African-American women face.

However, black feminism is not a static ideology born in the 1960s but a diverse thought among African Americans with a feminist consciousness dating back to the 1800s. The premises which characterize this ideology state that black women experience a special kind of oppression due to their dual racial and gender identity. As a result, their intersectional position has meant that their troubles, worries, and needs are different from those of both white women and black men; hence, black women must struggle for gender equality and black liberation. Since the black female experience has provided them with a unique view from the world, this fight includes other forms of discrimination that affect humanity as well (Guy-Sheftall, 2000).

The movement had several challenges that continue to this day. First, it was aiming at proving to other black women that feminism included African-American women too. Also, it demanded the equal distribution of power among white and black women, and the affirmation of diversity. The black feminist thought acknowledges the experiences and cultural heritage of African-American women, is against any kind of domination, and advocates for the liberty and self-determination of all people. It has as a distinguishing feature the insistence that both "the consciousness of the individual and the social transformation of political and economic institutions constitute essential ingredients for social change" (Hill Collins, 1990).

Among the black feminist intellectuals, Alice Walker stands out because of her introduction of the concept "womanism", which encompasses the range of ideology and praxis of black women's feminism (King, 2002). According to Walker (in King, 2002), a womanist "acknowledges the particularistic experiences and cultural heritage of black women, resists systems of domination, and insists on the liberty and self-determination of all people".

Feminist black women have criticized how the African-American culture and many of its patriarchal customs oppress women, especially, the emotional and physical abuse that they may experienced from their fathers and husbands. Nevertheless, black feminists also have a parallel desire, as members of an oppressed group, to affirm the relevance of the same culture and traditions. Therefore, within the group of black feminists, there is a collective identity based on their perception of sharing a common heritage with the black community as a particular racial group (race identity).

According to Hill Collins (1990), the systemic level of social institutions, the community level of the cultural context created by race, gender, and class, and last but not least, the personal biography (concrete experiences) level are sites of domination and potential sites of resistance. There are three recurrent themes in black feminist thought: the attention to the interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppressions, the awareness of the cultural heritage and the affirmation of self-

definitions and self-valuations, which have enabled generations of black women to resist this discrimination.

When explaining the importance of self-definitions and self-valuations as keys for empowerment, Hill Collins highlighted Murray's assertion that systems of oppression get their power from the submission of their victims, "who have accepted the dominant image of themselves and are paralyzed by a sense of helplessness" (Murray in Hill Collins, 2000, p.99). Hill Collins (2000) points out that African-American women as observers of the oppression they were suffering developed a double consciousness. They familiarized with the oppressor's language and behavior, while concealing a well-defined stance from the gaze of dominant groups. Behind the apparent submissive personality and behavioral conformity, there were acts of resistance. Black women, especially those working as domestic servants, had a hidden identity designed to empower them by repelling their employers' psychological attacks on their dignity. They rejected the dominant ideology by refusing the employers' definition of them as inferior. In order to resist, African-American women had to maintain independent self-definitions, essential element of their consciousness. Explored by black women intellectuals, this private and hidden space enables women to deal with and overcome the limits of "intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality" (Hill Collins, 2000).

When analyzing black female consciousness in the early 1900s, Williams (in Hill Collins, 2000, p.98) defined African-American women as irrepressible, women able of doing unexpected acts of resistance, not as victims but survivors: "She is insulted, but she holds up her head, she is scorned, but she proudly demands respect". Therefore, African-American women's practices and ideas break with the hegemonic view of black women, the belief that they are completely objectified as the other⁴ and they willingly participate in their own oppression by assuming controlling images such as mummies, matriarchs, welfare mothers, or sexually denigrated women.

⁴ Expression used to make reference to (a) member(s) of a racial or ethnic group different from your own.

Through self-definitions and self-valuations black women create safe spaces that empower them and help them resist the dominant ideology (Hill Collins, 2000).

The evolution of black feminism in the United States illustrates that neither race nor gender alone can explain the complexity of the African-American female experience. Therefore, the portrayal of an interpretation of such experience in a novel written by a white author like Kathryn Stockett's results in an interesting debate on whether a white female writer is entitled or has the resources to write about non-white female characters.

2.3- Racial imaginary and *The Help*

The African-American experience has been a topic of interest in U.S. literature. Mainly analyzed and portrayed in works pertaining to the African-American literature, the black experience has also attracted American writers with no African descent. The subject of writing about race, the ability (or right) of some authors to write the other, has created controversies among scholars, writers and audiences. This has led to the critique of famous novels having black protagonists created by white authors, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and recently, *The Help*.

In exploring the complexities regarding this matter, the term racial imaginary was introduced, meaning the way culture imagines the narrative opportunities, the feelings and situations, the subjects and use of stylistic devices, the forms and voices, available both to characters of different races and their authors. The racial imaginary changes through time since artists interact with it, challenging it and altering its availabilities. Questions of race not only influence the content (narrative, images or stereotypes) but also the form (the grammar and word choice) (Loffreda & Rankine, 2015). Hence, the racial imaginary bears a weight regarding literary discourse.

Taking into consideration social constructionism, discourse contributes to the construction of certain views of the world, of people, and in consequence, ourselves

(Paltridge, 2015). Discourse and context have an effect upon social identities and relations. When writers struggle to select the exact words, they are also dealing with the assumptions and values that have been attached to those expressions, phrases, or terms in the course of the history of being used. Therefore, writers produce texts permeated with values and ideologies, which tend to be hidden rather than overtly stated and are reflections of the social realities and processes they defy or contribute to maintaining.

That is the reason why authors consider a challenge to write about race without expressing their own prejudices and biases. Scholars that study the racial imaginary find difficult to discuss race separate from racial discrimination. As a result, the way the representation of the other is affected by the author's racial identity or lack of it has become a widely discussed topic in academic forums.

The African-American literature, born from the black community's unprivileged position and lack of representation, has served as a tool of resistance by denouncing the discriminatory system while providing African Americans with emotional support and reflecting their daily struggles and accomplishments. African-American authors have had the difficult task of creating an artistic work intended to please a wider audience but committed with social, political, and economic causes pertaining the black community. Therefore, African-American literature has been erroneously classified as protest literature concerning "black issues". However, this same categorization has led to the assertion that black authors are the only ones with the right and competence to write about the African-American experience.

White authors from their privileged position have also written about the African-American experience. Many of them have decided to do so in order to condemn the injustices suffered by black Americans and support their causes, such as the abolitionist and the Civil Rights. Nevertheless, their own advantaged situation created by hundreds of years of oppression based on dominant ideologies might have hampered their portrayal of African Americans. According to Llewellyn (2015), writing through their own internalized racism is an obstacle white authors have to

overcome since it might lead to the creation of flat characters or their unwanted excessive victimization, which are later widely criticized by the African-American audience.

Llewellyn (2015) also points out that some white writers who are afraid of the audience's reaction prefer silence rather than making reference to race whereas others overtly proclaim their comfort addressing the topic. By means of the use of self-conscious jokes, and assuming there is a distance between the racial discrimination portrayed, the anticipated audience's beliefs and their own, some of these artists poke fun of the obvious racism of past times or current gauche racists (Llewellyn, 2015). By placing race and racism in the past, these authors do not critically address these issues. Instead of challenging the status quo, they turn racial oppression into a comedy that stimulates an uncritical complacency in the audience, which reinforces the idea that in the American society those days of racial domination are over. This tendency supports the belief that the United States has developed into a post-racial society.

Conversely, other writers employ racist sentiment or imagery as a means to shock the audience. Even though their works are defended for being honest and brave in addressing the topic, they are criticized for heavily contributing to the continuance of the racist ideology. Some of these authors involuntarily perpetuate racist stereotypes and points of view when using them in their works. According to Llewellyn (2015) this might be the result of the authors' lack of thorough examination of the principles and images being presented in their work. Nonetheless, she asserts that some writers are thoughtful in addressing race and some achieve a nuanced understanding of race and racism. Their literary works encourage novel ways of thinking about race and innovative endeavors to create a new consciousness and make of the audience better human beings.

Despite of the shortcomings and controversies, writing about race has a paramount importance because it shows different perspectives about racism that might not be evident for members of the audience. In addition, recurrent and accurate disclosure

of the machinations of power reduces their effectiveness in becoming normalized and reinforced. The fact that white authors feel encouraged to write about race could help raise readers' awareness about this issue and stimulate a thorough analysis and debate of the text written.

Having the Civil Rights era as historical context and a white author writing the voice of black female characters, *The Help* generated considerable controversy upon its release in 2009. The main characters are a young white woman (Skeeter), and two African-American maids (Aibileen and Minny) working for white households during the early 1960s in Mississippi, one of the most segregationist states in the United States of America. The novel remained on the New York Times Bestseller List for approximately two years (Smith, 2014) and received praise and criticism by audiences and reviewers.

Inspired on her own life experience in Mississippi, Stockett created this novel as a late retribution to her maid. The author's final thoughts at the end of the novel, "Too little, too late" (Kathryn Stockett, in her own words), evidence what Llewellyn (2015) stated regarding white author's fear when writing about race: "I was scared...that I was crossing a terrible line, writing in the voice of a black person. I was afraid I would fail to describe a relationship that was so intensely influential in my life, so loving, so grossly stereotyped in American history and literature (Stockett, 2009, p.529)."

This novel can be classified mainly as historical with some sentimental features. However, in spite of the author's obstacles in writing black characters resulting in problems with the portrayal of their identity, according to Greve (2016), Stockett's work presents some common elements in African-American novels such as *The Color Purple*.

Sisterhood and female bonding are paramount characteristics present in *The Help*. Without the close relation created among the three protagonists, the moral of the story would not exist. Despite of their different backgrounds, race and social status, the three women get together to denounce the injustices suffered by black maids in

the creation of a book. They face together the danger coming with their actions, the retaliations from a white elite and a black patriarchy. Thanks to their mutual support they are able to overcome their insecurities and grow in the course of the novel. It is necessary to highlight that whereas in African-American novels this womanist relation occurs among black women only, Stockett proposes this practice between black and white women. In a way, *The Help* encourages a real rapprochement between black and white feminist.

Nonetheless, the novel has been accused of focusing on the sacrifice and transformation of the white protagonist, which reproduces the racial hierarchy and belittles the story of the disenfranchised. The book encourages white readers to identify with the white character whose redemption becomes their own whereas the black audience feels misrepresented (Smith, 2014). The author of this diploma paper agrees on the reasoning that focusing on the white protagonist's deeds and sacrifices dims the black character's achievements and struggles. This could probably lead to both complacent and displeased responses depending on the members of the audience's ideology and position regarding power relations. According to Bennett and Royle (2014) there are communities of readers, and individuals will read in accordance with the conventions of their interpretive community. Their response will be determined by the conventions of reading into which they have been educated within a particular socio-historical context. Therefore, the accuracy of this critic highly depends on the reader's critical thinking and interpretative community in the current socio-historical context.

Greve (2016) claims that the author failed in giving depth to black female characters. She states that whenever the questions of self-worth and body image are brought up, we only see this from the white protagonist's perspective, and the black characters are only there as victims and not as heroines (Greve, 2016, p.60).

Although it is certain that the white protagonist evolves to the figure of the savior by taking the initiative of denouncing, the two black protagonists grow in the course of the novel from victims to heroines of their communities in the story. It would be unfair

to compare this novel to other sentimental works in which black characters remain at the background of the tale, incapable of fighting and hoping for the appearance of a white hero.

Moreover, the analysis of Minny, one of the black female protagonists, carried out in the previous works by the author of this paper has demonstrated that the character values herself positively and with certainty as a mother, domestic servant and member of the community, and she has developed her own perspective on the matters that concern the African-American struggle (Constantin Agramonte, 2015). These results substantiated the presence of one of the recurrent themes of black feminist thought : the affirmation of self-definitions and self-valuations. Hence, valuations regarding self worth and image are also given by black characters of this novel and contribute to their roundness.

Other criticism is that the novel evoked several clichés present in many popular representations of the sentimental novel with race as the topic. In addition to centering the story on white characters, Smith (2014) identified two tropes more: placing racist behavior in the most ignoble characters and sentimentalizing the white employer/ black employee relationship. Some critics also argued the novel framed racial inequality in the context of the personal relationships rather than the systemic injustice. Additionally, in an open statement from the Association of Black Women Historians, the novel was reprobated for paying little attention to the historical context, providing a reductionist image of racial relations in that period and strengthening racist stereotypes, like the Big Mama or the Mammy, employed to humanize liberal whites (Smith, 2014).

As previously mentioned, *The Help* resulted from the author's previous experience as a child reared by an African-American maid. In that sense the novel is personal, fiction resulting from the author's recollection of such intimate relationship. Therefore, in order to portray the relation between housemaids, the children they had to raise, and their employers, the selection of the domestic space seems valid. Moreover, since the narrative mainly focuses on African-American servants'

experience working in white homes, the novel highlights the ways in which white supremacy could be enacted within this milieu. As a consequence, the characters are not fully involved with the political activism of the time and the novel lacks intensity in that sense. However, the historical period and political events have an impact upon the characters and condition their reactions and future attitudes in the course of the story.

On the other hand, although the black characters are domestic servants, they challenge the stereotype of the Mammy. These black female characters, Minny and Aibileen, kindly handle their task of taking care of children, elders or sick employers. Nevertheless, when they are mistreated by their masters, they do not keep her heads down and each character has a way of showing their defiance to the status quo.

As shown in the previous papers carried out by this author, Minny, mother of five kids and wife of an abusive and alcoholic husband, is an outspoken character. She is never afraid of speaking her mind despite of the negative consequences her attitude might bring. Working all day outside her home, cooking and cleaning for middle-class white families in Jackson, Mississippi, she contradicts the racist prejudice that African Americans were lazy and incompetent. And when she finishes her work, she has to do the household chores at home, and still has time to participate in the church activities and to help her maid friends. She applies her own standards of beauty and thought according to her own life experience. Minny refuses to be treated like an object and reasserts herself continually as a person with views, preferences and a strong voice to make them known.

On the other hand, having worked for almost 40 years as a maid in an oppressive environment, Aibileen is not as outspoken as Minny. Finding support in her prayers and the community church, she is often compared to the character of Uncle Tom because of their similar attitude of finding their strength in religion. Nevertheless, in the case of Aibileen, an unfortunate event, her son's death due to racial discrimination, brings about a behavioral change. Aibileen starts showing

characteristics of an irrepressible woman, which according to Greve (2016) and as stated in the previous epigraph shows a behavioral conformity along with a hidden resistance. It is necessary to thoroughly analyze this character in order to disclose her thoughts of resistance beneath the surface.

3- Critical Discourse Analysis of Aibileen as illocutive agent

3.1- Units of analysis

The discursive activity is a conscious and objective-oriented action. It has an intentional content which is expressed through utterances that are composed by one or several speech acts.

The speech act was defined by Austin (in Salgado, 2009) as the minimum dynamic unit of discourse. Speech acts can be locutionary acts (propositional content of the act), illocutionary acts (intentional content), and perlocutionary acts (effect caused in the receptor).

From a discursive perspective, the utterance has been defined by Curbeira (in Salgado, 2009) as “the unit generally formed by more than one sentence which has a certain internal structure and semantic organization the manifestation of which in discourse is as a communicative unit with full sense”.

For the purpose of this paper, the definition of utterance given by Ayala (in Salgado, 2009) will be taken:

The basic unit of discourse, the result of the noetic/semiotic process of enunciation. It is characterized by an internal structure in which the illocutionary component, the referential component, the modal component and the grammatical component are essential. It can have one or more speech acts, which expresses the existing dialogic and dialectic relation between subject and object.

In this paper, the utterance will serve as the unit of analysis in general, and the speech act as unit of analysis in particular. Different valuative positions can be found in utterances constituted by several speech acts, which enriches the analysis. Each speech act within an utterance will be analyzed in order to establish the valuating subject's characteristic.

3.2- Working methodology

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary discipline which requires the respect of basic principles that have been discussed by Van Dijk (in Ayala, 2004). These norms are indispensable for carrying out a scientific, comprehensive and accurate analysis:

- The use of authentic texts, oral and written, as source of analysis in order to study the language in use.

This paper analyses the novel *The Help*, written by Kathryn Stockett. The author uses African American Vernacular English to portray the speech of African Americans. The language is used as it would be in real situations. The corpus for this research is composed by utterances and speech acts uttered by the illocutive agent according to the author's intention as subject of the enunciation.

- The consideration of context.

Discourse analysis ought to be done preferably as a constitutive part of a social, cultural, and global context. The essential elements of context should be analyzed in depth, as well as the influence of those elements in discourse. Communication always occurs as part of a social context where cognitive aspects are found, such aspects marking off the social identity and relations.

In this novel the context is characterized by urban and rural areas located in the south of the United States, specifically in the town of Jackson, Mississippi during the 1960s. The subject of enunciation was born in this region; hence, her personal experience regarding language, way of thinking, institutional structures, and power relations among social groups served for the development of the narrative. In the context of *The Help* these relations are characterized by the power of whites over blacks, who have been discriminated against for centuries because of their skin color, and the patriarchal power of men over women.

- Discourse as practice of social cognition of the members of a given group.

Speakers not only interact as individuals, but also as members of several groups, institutions, and cultures. By means of discourse, they challenge or reinforce certain structures, norms, and wider social institutions. Additionally, they establish relations of hierarchy, based on different categories within the group that they belong to and as part of society as well. The role of mental models and social cognition in the production and understanding of oral or written texts is paramount since the speakers' experiences and socio-cultural representations have a strong influence on their discourse.

The novel has three main characters, Skeeter, Minny, and Aibileen, who guide the readers all along. Minny and Aibileen are the black main characters whose discourses, employed to reaffirm their identity and challenge the status quo, have been taken into consideration for the analysis. Minny's discourse has been analyzed in the previous paper leading to her characterization as illocutive agent and valuating

subject. That paper also showed differences between Minny and Aibileen when analyzing their personalities and their ways of responding to the discriminatory situations. That is the reason why for the purposes of this research, a sample of utterances was selected, in which Aibileen speaks her mind about the social problems affecting her and her community, passing value judgments in her discursive process. Then, Aibileen is the **valuating subject** of this research.

The utterances with valuative content were selected for the characterization of Aibileen as valuating subject. After giving the situational context, these utterances were divided into speech acts for these to be analyzed afterwards by means of the dimensional analysis method. The illocutionary, modal, grammatical and referential dimensions were taken into account, but special attention was given to the modal and illocutionary dimensions since they constitute a dialectic unity in the analysis of the valuating subject's communicative intention.

3.3- Valuating subject

Aibileen Clark is one of the three first person narrators⁵ of the novel, who take turns to describe the given stretch of time from their own perspective. Throughout the novel, the reader is restricted to the perceptions, inner thoughts, memories and feelings of those three characters. There are combinations of rather long stretches of Aibileen's stream of consciousness⁶, dialogues and indirect speech.

Aibileen is a daughter of a maid, granddaughter of a house slave. She has worked in white households since the age of fourteen, when she had to drop out of school in order to help her family out. Throughout her life, she has raised seventeen white children. At present, she is working as a maid in the Leefolt family, and takes care and shows a tender affection for their two-year-old girl, Mae Mobley. Aibileen's personal life has been unfortunate; her husband left her when her child Treelore was

⁵ The first person narrator presents the point of view of only one character's consciousness.

⁶ The continuous flow of sense perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories in the human mind. Literary method of representing such blending of mental processes in fictional characters.

born. Years later, her son dies because no one assisted him right away after an accident. From that moment on, Aibileen's attitude changes. Although she is cautious about involving herself in the writing of the denounce book about domestics in Jackson, she serves as the mediator between Skeeter and the other black maids needed for the project, showing to be a dynamic character.

3.4 - Analysis of Aibileen's utterances

Situational context: Aibileen's 24-year-old son Treelore passed away after an accident at his workplace. Because of the prejudices of the period, her son was not assisted in time. She was really depressed after his death and did not have any will to keep living. Minny took care of her and five months later Aibileen began to feel better and started working again. However, the unfortunate event changed her forever.

1- *"But it weren't too long before I seen something in me had changed. A bitter seed was planted inside a me. And I just didn't feel so accepting anymore."* (p.3)

This utterance is formed by three speech acts. In the surface structure these speech acts are assertive, but in the deep structure we can infer there are implicit valuations. Taking into account the illocutive dimension, these speech acts are appreciative and the domains of the valuation are psychological and emotional. Aibileen is the object of the valuation since she is expressing the way she is feeling after her loss.

In the first speech act the use "but" gives us the idea that there is an opposition to what has been previously said regarding her recovery (that she was feeling better to work). Aibileen is expressing that even though she was physically well, she was not fine emotionally. Therefore, the axiological value of this speech act is negative.

The second speech act clarifies what was happening in Aibileen. The use of the metaphor "a bitter seed" refers to Aibileen's resentment at the circumstances leading to her son's unfair death. "Bitter" is an adjective with a negative sense with meanings

such as “distasteful or distressing to the mind, expressive of severe pain, grief, or regret, or marked by intensity or severity”⁷. Hence, this speech act is also negative.

The third speech act makes reference to the change in Aibileen’s behaviour. Before this tragedy, Aibileen was resigned to the status quo. Now, she is not willing to continue accepting what happens around her. The analysis of the deep structure shows that the expression “so accepting” illustrates the existence of an ambivalent axiological value. “Accepting” the status quo is considered a positive quality by those in power. In order to survive African Americans had to be submissive. Nevertheless, the valuating subject employs the adverb “so” meaning that there is an indicated or suggested extent or degree is does not want to comply anymore. She is stating there is a limit for her, which has a negative value. This change could be dangerous if she starts defying her masters or white institutions; nevertheless, the beginning of this rebellious sentiment also empowers her. Therefore, the analysis of the axiological value demonstrates this speech act is ambivalent.

The subject’s modal attributes for this utterance are related to the modal semantic category of certainty. Taking into consideration the discursive-cognoscitive perspective, in all the speech acts the subject is certain, sure of what is happening to her. When analyzing the volitional perspective, the third speech act shows that the subject is decided and convinced. The subject is also sincere and categorical. The expressiveness is contained.

Situational context: Aibileen is doing the chores at Miss Leefolt’s home while she is talking to her friends Hilly and Skeeter, who are socialites and members of the well-off white community in Jackson. Aibileen has been listening to their conversations for years and knows almost all about these ladies, which enables her to give her opinion about them.

⁷All the definitions are taken from the Merriam Webster’s 11th Collegiate Dictionary

2- *“Only three things them ladies talk about: they kids, they clothes, and they friends. I hear a word Kennedy, I know they ain’t discussing no politic. They talking about what Miss Jackie done wore on the tee-vee.”* (p.7)

This utterance is composed of three speech acts. There are no explicit valuations in this utterance in the surface structure. Nevertheless, in the deep structure it is possible to infer that the subject is giving implicit valuations having as object the white mistresses (Miss Leefolt and her friends).

The first speech act is assertive since the valuating subject is committed to the truth of what she is saying. But there is an implicit appreciation having an intellectual domain. In this speech act, the subject of enunciation uses the valuating subject to criticize the narrowness of the ladies’ topics, since apparently they show no interest for other matters.

In the second speech act, there is a negative expression in the surface structure, but the valuating subject is giving an implicit valuation in the deep structure. This speech act is also appreciative, including both the intellectual and the ideological domains. There is also critique on how shallow these ladies can be. Due to the second speech act, we can infer that these women neither pay attention to political matters nor engage in political debates. Despite the progressive feminist movement taking place in this period, Southern white women maintain the patriarchal belief that women should only care about the family and leave the “serious” topics like economics and politics to men. The third speech acts is appreciative having an intellectual domain. The third speech act is assertive, but the analysis of the deep structure shows the existence of an implicit critic to these ladies’ frivolous lifestyle.

There is probably an implicit comparison between these upper-class Southern white ladies and the African-American women of Aibileen’s community. Aibileen and her friends talk about other topics concerning her lives, the problems in the community, the political situation in the country. This makes sense since African-Americans are disenfranchised, affected by the Jim Crow laws and calling for a governmental

change. African-American women engage in those matters because of their exceptional history and position, which have placed them in leading roles in their community or at least empowered them to give their own opinions.

Although in the entire utterance the valuating subject is stating facts, giving assertions and not saying anything explicitly negative, in the deep structure, we can infer Aibileen expressed her negative appreciations about white mistresses and that the subject of the enunciation is using her to criticize their lack of engagement in the political issues. Therefore, the axiological value in the three speech acts is negative. The valuating subject is categorical, sure, expressive (contained) and sincere.

Situational context: Aibileen is taking the bus as usual to go home from work. She is on the bus with other maids like her, who are talking and laughing. She sees her best friend Minny on the back of the bus and feels really happy to find her there. Aibileen describes how Minny is like.

3- *“Minny could probably lift this bus up if she wanted to. Old lady like me is lucky to have her as a friend.”* (p. 15)

This utterance is composed of two speech acts. In the first speech act the valuating subject employs a hyperbole to describe her friend. This speech act is a positive appreciation that has Minny as object of the valuation. The domain of the valuation is physical. The second speech act is also a positive appreciation in which Aibileen is the object of the valuation. The domain of this appreciation is emotional and in this valuation the subject's attributes are sincere, sure, approving, and loving.

Minny and Aibileen's friendship has proven to be strong throughout the novel. Both have had each other's back in difficult moments, especially Minny was really supportive when Aibileen lost her son. Therefore, Aibileen feels a great gratitude toward Minny. Despite the great age difference, they have created a strong womanist bond which helps them overcome the obstacles in the story.

Situational context: Aibileen is trying to give Mae Mobley a bath, but the little girl escapes and goes to see her mother who is talking on the phone. The baby is trying to get her mother's attention by pulling at the phone cable causing it to fall. Because of it, Miss Leefolt slapped Mae Mobley on the back of her legs and scolded both the girl and Aibileen for interrupting her while she was talking on the phone.

4- *"I'm so mad at Miss Leefolt, I'm biting my tongue. If the fool would just pay her child some attention, this wouldn't happen!"* (p.22)

This utterance is made up of two speech acts. Aibileen as first person narrator is giving her account of unfortunate events and also giving her opinion. In the surface structure the first speech act is assertive, but in the deep structure we can infer an implicit valuation. Taking into account the illocutive dimension, the first speech act is appreciative and the domains of the valuation are the psychological and the emotional. In the surface structure of this speech act, Miss Leefolt could seem to be the object of the valuation since she is the one causing so much anger in Aibileen. Nevertheless, the object of the valuation is Aibileen ("I") since she is expressing how this event made her feel. Aibileen has a composed personality. She never contradicts her masters; nevertheless, she hates injustices and has a great affection for Mae Mobley. This event challenged her patience, and she feels the urge to speak up, but by doing so she could lose her job.

The second speech act is also appreciative. It shows Aibileen's stream of consciousness since she is thinking what she would love to say out loud. The domains of this valuation are emotional, ethical and moral and the object of the valuation is Miss Leefolt. Aibileen criticizes Miss Leefolt because she is not a tender and devoted mother. She blames Aibileen for her daughter's actions, but she does not realize that her behaviour is the one affecting her child.

When analyzing the subject's modal attributes in this utterance, the category of expressiveness stands out. It is true that Aibileen does not express orally this utterance since it is part of her stream of consciousness. Nevertheless, since these are thoughts, they are a psychological expression. In the first speech act, the subject is contained as the expressions "so mad" and "biting my tongue" show, whereas in the second speech act she is gushing. Therefore, the analysis of the deep structure shows that this utterance is ambivalent when analyzing the category of expressiveness. Nevertheless, the axiological value of the utterance is negative.

This utterance evidences the affection the valuating subject has for the girl. The category of affectivity lies under Aibileen's anger and negative appreciation in both speech acts, proving she is also loving and shows disaffection towards the girl's mother. The utterance also illustrates the subject is categorical, sincere, and certain about what she is conveying.

Situational context: Miss Skeeter is visiting Miss Leefolt and meets Aibileen at the kitchen. Skeeter tries to apologize for what Miss Hilly said about African Americans, that they were diseased and should not use the same bathroom inside of a white person's home. Then, Skeeter asks Aibileen if she would like to change the way things were for black people in Jackson.

5- *"And I can't help myself. I look at her head-on. Cause that's one of the stupidest questions I have ever heard."* (p.12)

This utterance is formed by three speech acts. In the first speech act there is a grammatical negative. Nevertheless, the first speech act as well as the second are assertive. The third speech act is a singularizing hierarchization of maximum intensification. The object of the valuation is Skeeter. The axiological value of this hierarchization is negative. In this utterance, the valuating subject is categorical, sure, disapproving, expressive, gushing, and sincere. Aibileen does not know much about Skeeter and has doubts about her intentions; therefore, she does not trust her and

cannot believe this is a question coming from a white person. Although, she normally avoids having sudden reactions, this question is so shocking that her immediate response expressively shows her disapproval.

6- *"I turn back to my washing, so she don't see me rolling my eyes. 'Oh no, ma'am, everthing's fine.'"* (p.12)

In this utterance composed of two speech acts. The first speech act is assertive. In the second speech act the valuating subject gives a non prescriptive normative evaluation whose object is the situation of African Americans in Jackson, Mississippi. Although the first speech act is assertive, it helps to analyze the subject's modal attributes. The axiological value of this valuation is negative. The subject is ironic, insincere, expressive (contained) and disapproving. When analyzing the category of loyalty and the subject's intentions, it seems that Aibileen is ill-intentioned in the surface structure. But by telling this lie, she is trying to keep her job. She does not trust Skeeter, so she lies. This attitude of concealing the truth from white masters and employers had been for centuries the way African Americans could protect themselves. Therefore, she is well-intentioned. Telling the truth, that is complaining, expressing their dissatisfaction could lead to retaliation from their master's side, who wanted to keep the appearances of a peaceful and just system. Therefore, African Americans created the strategy of "wearing the mask", the ability to feign, to signify, which means saying one thing meaning the opposite. Taking into account this consideration, it could be said that the domain of this valuation is ideological and demonstrates the existence of a double consciousness in the valuating subject.

Situational context: After a long day at work, Aibileen is at home talking to Minny. Minny tells her that in the community everybody thinks Aibileen has magic powers and can talk to God. Then, Aibileen recalls what happened at her employer's house. She remembers when Miss Leefolt decided to build a new bathroom for Aibileen because Hilly convinced her black people were diseased. Aibileen also remembers when Skeeter asked her about changing things in Jackson.

7- *“And Miss Skeeter asking don’t I want to change things like changing Jackson, Mississippi, gone be like changing a light bulb.”* (p.28)

This utterance is formed by one speech act. An analysis of the illocutive dimension shows that this valuation is an explicit hierarchization of equality, which is axiologically negative. The object of this valuation is again the situation of black people in Jackson, Mississippi. Although what is happening in Aibileen’s town is part of nationwide problem, the subject of enunciation only focuses on this specific scenario by means of Aibileen as valuating subject. Aibileen is disapproving, sure, categorical, expressive (contained), and sincere. Her emotional tone is pessimistic. She is convinced that ending the discriminatory practices in Jackson is a practically impossible task since it depends on the ability of people, especially white people to change. Then it could be also said that the domain of this valuation is ideological.

Situational context: Miss Hilly convinced Miss Leefolt that black people were diseased and white people should not share the same bathroom with them. Miss Leefolt decided to hire workmen to build a bathroom for the maid outside her home. During lunchtime one of the workers, who are also African Americans, asks Aibileen for some water. He is really exhausted for laboring all day and wants to go to a bathroom. Given the circumstances that black people cannot use white people’s bathrooms and the one outside is no built yet, Aibileen struggles to give an answer while analyzing the situation.

8- *“He look up and I look at him and for a minute we just be looking. I mean, it’s one of them funny things. Not the ha-ha funny but the funny where you be thinking: Huh. Here we is with two in the house and one being built and they still ain’t no place for this man to do his business.”* (p.23)

This utterance, formed by four speech acts, evidences how discrimination is manifested in the domestic environment. The first speech act is assertive, but there

could be an implicit valuation. Aibileen and the worker are the objects of the valuation, since the subject analyzes the incapacity of both people to find a solution for that simple problem as it is portrayed by the expression “we just be looking”. This expression also makes us infer that both people understand what the real problem is, Jackson’s segregationist environment; nevertheless, it is dangerous to even say how they feel about it, so they communicate by looking at each other. We can infer this is an ambiguous ethical and moral appreciation showing the subject’s uncertainty and indecision.

In the second speech act, the object of the valuation is the situation of segregation in town that prohibits black people to use white people’s bathrooms, showing the uncomfortable and unjust position African Americans have to bear in that society. It is an ethical-moral ambiguous appreciation. The ambiguity of the axiological value is given by the use of the word “funny”. In the surface structure the use of this word may mislead us towards a positive appreciation since “funny” in one of its lexico-semantic variants means “amusing”; but the context rules out that possibility. This word also can mean “peculiar”, which does not provide a clear negative appreciation either.

Having the same object of the valuation, the third speech act is strongly related to the second since it clarifies the axiological position of the subject’s ethical-moral appreciation. The expression “not the ha-ha funny” substantiates the previous analysis that it is not a positive appreciation since discrimination is no laughing matter. The use of the interjection “Huh” evidences the subject’s contained expressiveness showing disappointment and a clearly negative appreciation.

Finally, the fourth speech act is assertive and summarizes Aibileen’s analysis of the problem. We could also infer that in the deep structure there is an implicit valuation by means of which the subject of enunciation uses Aibileen as valuating subject to criticize the political problem of segregation in the United States, but specifically in the Southern States like Mississippi (object of the valuation).

To sum up, in this utterance the subject is giving an implicit negative appreciation about the segregationist life in Jackson. She is contained when showing her

dissatisfaction and disappointment. The most evident subject's modal attribute is her sincerity. She also shows uncertainty regarding the possible solution to this man's problem.

Situational context: Aibileen finally comes up with a solution for the problem previously discussed in utterance 8.

9- "*I spec you gone have to go in the bushes, back a the house', I hear myself say, but I wish it weren't me.*" (p.24)

This utterance is formed by two speech acts. The first speech act is an assertive direct speech act expressing what Aibileen replied to the worker's request. The second speech act forms part of Aibileen's narration and stream of consciousness. The object of the valuation is Aibileen herself. As the valuating subject, she is giving an appreciation of herself taking into account what she did. The domains of this valuation are the psychological, and the ethical-moral. The axiological value of this appreciation is negative. Aibileen's emotional tone shows that she is embarrassed about her attitude and dissatisfied with the only solution she could find. She is expressive (contained). When analyzing the category of loyalty, Aibileen is sincere and well-intentioned, since she does want to help the worker. Nevertheless, she does not want to upset her employer by letting the worker go to the bathrooms inside of the house. This could bring about the loss of both the worker's job and hers.

Situational context: Aibileen is listening to music on the radio. She explains how she imagines her house is full of people having fun while listening to the songs and how she likes to think she is at a club with her husband Clyde, who abandoned her or other woman after squandering all of Aibileen's money. Then, she thinks about her tastes in men and the possibility of finding a partner.

10- "*Time to time, I think I might find myself another man, one from my church. Problem is, much as I love the Lord, churchgoing man never do all that much for me.*"

Kind a man I like ain't the kind that stays around when he done spending all your money." (p. 26)

This utterance is formed by three speech acts. The first speech act is assertive, in the deep structure we can infer there is an implicit valuation. In many African-American communities, the church occupies a strong position since it is an institution that offers them shelter and empowerment. Therefore, African Americans have a good opinion about people who attend church. Since the subject of enunciation uses the word "another", we can infer Aibileen had a previous husband and her experience was not positive as it is later explained. Hence, a man from church could be a better companion. Aibileen shows uncertainty regarding her possibility of finding that man; hence, she is the object of the valuation.

In the second speech act that is also assertive, Aibileen also rules out that possibility. From this speech act, in the deep structure we can infer the valuating subject is giving a negative appreciation. Although in the surface structure might seem the object of the valuation is the idea of a churchgoing devout men, in the deep structure we can infer that in fact the object of the valuation is Aibileen. The domain of this appreciation is emotional.

Finally, the last speech act is also assertive; but it is possible to infer there is an implicit valuation. In the surface structure it seems that the object of the valuation is Aibileen's previous choice of a man. Clyde, the man who spent all her money and later abandoned her with her child, was Aibileen's only love. Nevertheless, the analysis of the deep structure demonstrates that the object of the valuation is Aibileen, who does not believe she is capable of loving someone different. She gives a negative appreciation of herself having as domains the psychological and the emotional.

Since Aibileen is in a certain way criticizing her taste regarding men, there is an emotional tone of disappointment. Although in the first speech act the subject shows uncertainty and indecision about the possibility of finding a good man, she later is

sure about her incapacity to actually love him. As a whole, this utterance shows that the valuating subject is sincere, sure, categorical, expressive (contained) and disapproving.

Situational context: Aibileen is working when Miss Celia calls Miss Leefolt. Aibileen answers and recommends her to hire Minny. She pretends to talk to Miss Leefolt to make Celia believe the recommendation is also coming from her employer.

11- *"I get a cookie and give it to Mae Mobley, feel nothing but delight at the devil in me. I'm lying and I don't even care."* (p.30)

This utterance is formed by two speech acts. The first act is assertive in the surface structure, but in the deep structure we can infer there is an implicit valuation. The object of the valuation is Aibileen and the domains are ethical-moral and the psychological. The use of "delight" representing a high degree of gratification may lead us to believe this appreciation is positive. Nevertheless, the use of the noun "devil", which has a lexico-semantic variant meaning demon or an extremely wicked person, demonstrate there is also a negative value. Therefore, the axiological value of this appreciation is ambivalent.

The last speech act is also assertive, but we could infer there is an implicit valuation in the deep structure. It is an ambivalent ethical-moral appreciation of Aibileen's behavior (object of valuation). The ambivalence of the axiological value is given by the fact that Aibileen is a devout woman who follows Christian precepts. Lying is a sin according to this religion; however, Aibileen's intentions are good. That is why she expresses that she does not care. She wants to help Minny get a job and this lie serves a tool for achieving this purpose. In addition, Minny was fired because of a lie Miss Hilly help spread; hence this Aibileen's action also served as a revenge.

Analyzing this utterance, it is possible to state that there is an emotional tone of satisfaction since Aibileen feels happy by helping her friend find a job. Aibileen is also sincere, sure, expressive (contained) and approving. When analyzing in the category of loyalty the cognitive-intellectual aspect, the valuating subject is cunning. The analysis of the ethical-intentional aspect in this category also presented the existence of ambivalence. The valuating subject is well-intentioned since she is not harming anyone and is trying to find a job for her friend. Nonetheless, the fact that she is committing a sin by lying and that she states that she takes pleasure in doing so, in addition to the use of the word devil to describe herself demonstrate that Aibileen is also ill-intentioned.

Situational context: Aibileen is worried about Minny, who is afraid she is not going to get any job after all the lies Hilly spread. Minny thinks Miss Celia is not going to hire her because of that. Aibileen believes Minny has never been so frightened and blames Hilly and the white mistresses for that. Then, she thinks that the child she is raising will behave just the same as her mother and the white employers.

12- *"I look down at Baby Girl, who I know, deep down, I can't keep from turning out like her mama."* (p.33)

This utterance is formed by one speech act. The first part of the speech act is assertive (*"I look down at Baby Girl"*). In the second part there is grammatical negative; however, Aibileen is committed to the truth of what she is stating, therefore this second part is also an assertion. From the analysis of the deep structure we can infer implicit valuations having as object both Aibileen and her white mistress. With the expression *"I can't keep her from turning out like her mama"* Aibileen recognizes that despite of her teachings she is not capable of putting an end to the discriminatory attitudes handed from one generation to the next. Therefore, she is giving a negative appreciation of herself with an emotional tone of pessimism and dissatisfaction. In this utterance, Aibileen also gives a negative appreciation of her employer, Baby Girl's mother, who will foster a racist behavior in her child. Both valuations show Aibileen's

disapproval. These valuations are ideological and Aibileen is expressive (contained), sure and sincere. Her experience after raising seventeen kids has shown her that despite all the love and care she give to the babies, the socio cultural and political context of a segregationist society makes them assume the discriminatory practices.

Situational context: Miss Leefolt tells Aibileen that the bathroom for her in the garage is finished and she insists that Aibileen cannot use the bathroom inside the house anymore. Aibileen already knew that but she does not say anything to avoid bothering her. Since Miss Leefolt keeps insisting on the same matter, Aibileen tells her that she is going to clean the bathroom inside of the house and she is never going to use it again. Although Miss Leefolt says she does not have to do right away, her body language is telling Aibileen the opposite. Aibileen feels bothered and angry.

13- *“ I don’t know what to say to her. All I know is, I ain't saying it. And I know she ain't saying what she want a say either and it’s a strange thing happening here cause nobody saying anything and we still managing to have us a conversation.”* (p. 35)

This utterance is formed by four speech acts. The first speech acts is assertive but we could infer there is an implicit valuation whose object is Aibileen. She is giving a negative appreciation of herself having both psychological and ideological domains. The second speech act is also assertive and reinforces the idea that Aibileen feels the urge to show her defiance; nevertheless, she is repressing her emotions and the need to answer back. The third speech act is also assertive. Finally, in the last speech act, Aibileen valuates the whole scene. The use of the word “strange” makes this appreciation ambiguous substantiated by the fact that Aibileen’s education was not enough to make her understand this phenomenon. Therefore, although she gives negative appreciations of the factors involved, when analyzing the whole situation she does not have the tools to accurate emit a clear judgment. There is uncertainty first in the surface structure when she says “I don’t know what to say to her” but the fact is she knows she can’t say what she is thinking. And she knows what the employer wants to say but doesn’t say either; they are having a silent conversation based on

the mistress-maid power relationship. In the deep structure of the utterance the category of loyalty is evident in the cognitive aspect. She is sure about what her employer means, otherwise they were not “having a conversation” as she expresses.

In this utterance as a whole, Aibileen is disapproving, expressive (contained), sincere, sure, and the emotional tone shows her dissatisfaction. This utterance describes an important element in the mistress-maid relationship. White mistresses exert their power by different means and maids are supposed to obey in order to keep their job. In this case only by her body language, Aibileen’s employer communicated what she wanted, although she has said something different to sound polite. This communication may have been developed since slavery in which domestic slaves had to decode their mistresses' messages in order to avoid any retaliation.

Situational context: Aibileen is playing with Mae Mobley and has fun telling the girl to look for her tail. She is amazed about how children believe everything they are told and remembers when she met in the street a boy she had helped raise. She describes the way the boy hugged her and both remembered what she used to tell him.

14-“*And how I told him don’t drink coffee or he gone turn colored. He say he still ain't drunk a cup a coffee and he twenty-one years old. It’s always nice seeing the kids grown up fine.*” (p. 106)

This utterance is composed of three speech acts. The first speech act is assertive but we can infer an implicit valuation. In this speech act a cause-effect relations is being expressed. Since Aibileen does not want the child to drink coffee, she scares the kid with the possibility he might turn colored. Obviously, Aibileen is playing with the boy’s imagination; nevertheless, by scaring him that way she is attributing to the fact of being colored a negative connotation. She is using the mental model of being black is bad to reinforce the action of not drinking coffee. However, she was not ill-

intentionally giving negative appreciations of both coffee and being colored. This teaching, although flawed, did not hamper the relation with the boy. The fact that she established a bond with the boy is evident when he hugged her in the street after so many years. The second speech act is indirect and assertive and it shows Aibileen method was successful. In the last speech act, she gives a positive qualitative evaluation of her teaching results in the boy given by the use of the words “nice” and “fine”. The subject is sure and approving.

The relation established between coffee and black people is present in other cultures as well. Nevertheless, this utterance evidences the racist bias in the people’s minds resulting from the hegemonic view of race. This becomes an ideological problem charging Aibileen’s speech with racism, an issue dealt with when discussing about racial imaginary. This utterance is an example of what it has been criticized by members of the African- American community about this novel, how it strengthens the biases and racist stereotypes about black people when trying to defend equality. This event in the novel contrasts with other truly positive teachings Aibileen has given to Mae Mobley in which she tries to make the girl understand blacks and whites are equals. Therefore, this utterance evidences how Aibileen has changed her way of teaching.

Situational context: Aibileen is already helping Skeeter write the book and she is telling her stories as a maid. She reads what she has written about her first job experience when she was thirteen. She explains how she was fired on her first day for making a mistake when counting the silver at the governor’s mansion.

15-“*Shame ain’t black, like dirt, like I always thought it was. Shame be the color of a new white uniform your mother ironed all night to pay for, white without smudge or a speck a word on it.*” (p. 176)

This utterance is formed by two assertive speech acts. The first speech act has a grammatical negative; however, it is also assertive since the valuating subject is committed to the truth of what she is saying. In the deep structure, we can infer an implicit valuation. The subject of enunciation employs a simile so the valuating subject makes an explicit comparison of equality illustrating what she used to think when she was a teenager. She used to believe that such as feeling was related to the color of her skin, related to negative aspects like dirt and diseases due to the acceptance of the hegemonic ideology imposed by the white community. After that incident she understood she was mistaken and that feeling was not specifically a result of skin color but of her social condition represented by the symbol of the uniform in the second speech act. Although in the surface structure shame seems to be the object of the valuation in the whole utterance, in the deep structure the object of the valuation is feeling ashamed for being black. The valuating subject is giving a negative appreciation about this feeling and this utterance shows the subject's certainty and emotional tone of disappointment showing her disapproval of the situation she was through.

It could be stated that these valuations are related to the ideological domain. By means of a metaphor, the valuating subject expresses her opinion regarding the social condition of black maids, submitted to the domestic regime imposed by her white employers. The analysis of the deep structure of this utterance shows the relation between race, gender and social condition. This is intersectional relation has been implicitly stated in the novel by other valuating subjects.

Situational context: Miss Hilly bothers Aibileen by asking her questions related to segregation, a topic she insists on discussing at Miss Leefolt's house. She asks Aibileen if she likes having her own separate bathroom expressing that is what the government wants and one should disobey the law. Aibileen tries to agree with Hilly, even though she does not want Mae Mobley to listen to it since this would clash with all she has taught her about equality. Then, Hilly asks Aibileen if she would want to study in a school full of white people. Aibileen wants to be as honest as possible while

avoiding bothering Hilly with her answer. Then she replies that she would not want to be in a school full of white people but a school in which whites and blacks are together. Hilly states that blacks and whites are too different to be together. Aibileen wants to answer back but she keeps her thoughts inside.

16-“ *A course we different! Everybody know colored people and white people ain't the same. But we still just people!*” (p.218)

This utterance is formed by three speech acts. The first speech is assertive. In the second speech act there is a grammatical negative. The third speech act is also assertive. Nevertheless, from the deep surface of this utterance as a whole we can infer an implicit valuation having the existing racial situation as object of the valuation. The axiological value of this ideological appreciation is ambivalent in the first two speech acts. Aibileen is speaking about the existing racial situation. Although in the surface structure it might seem she agrees with the fact that blacks and white are different, the analysis of the seep structure shows she is not accepting it, she is only stating the hegemonic belief. The differences among races or even the existence of races has been widely discussed and people may have a positive or a negative opinion about this matter according to their own ideology. From the analysis of the last speech act, we can infer a conclusive analytic evaluation stating that despite the skin color blacks and whites are human beings. In this utterance the valuating subject is certain, sincere, gushing, and categorical.

This utterance represents Aibileen's awakening regarding the racist divide created by the segregationist and hegemonic ideology. Although she states there is in fact a line dividing both communities, she asserts her belief that blacks and whites belong to the human race. People in general are different, not because of their skin color but the existence of diverse aptitudes, attitudes, opinions, values and beliefs in the human race.

Situational context: Aibileen knows Miss Hilly is suspicious about Skeeter. Hilly read a compromising document Skeeter had in her satchel. At Miss Leefolt's house Miss Hilly said that she was going to take action against Skeeter because she did not want to have an integrationist friend. Therefore, Aibileen is worried and wants Miss Skeeter to call her so she can tell her about this situation. Then, Aibileen starts writing her prayers, but thinks about the possible retaliation plan Hilly could be preparing.

17-*"I reckon I know pretty well what would happen if the white ladies found out we was writing about them, telling the truth a what they really like."* (p. 220)

This utterance is formed by one speech act. The valuating subject is giving an appreciation of herself based on her experience after years working as a maid. Because of the use of the expression "pretty well", in the surface it seems the appreciation is positive. However, the axiological value of this appreciation is ambivalent. Since she knows about the employer's negative attitudes towards the people who defy them, she is prepared for what is coming. Knowing that terrible consequences are coming helps her to be ready and help the others to overcome them. The valuating subject is sincere, sure, and well-intentioned. The emotional tone reveals her concern. On the other hand, the domain of the valuation might be ideological since the fight Aibileen and her friends are going to face is result of the opposition of contrary ideological points of view: segregation and discrimination versus integration and acceptance.

Situational context: From her experience, Aibileen starts describing how white women using their power position respond when they feel threatened. She states that unlike white men, they do not attack back using their strength like. Their retaliation is neither physical nor immediate.

18- *"No, white womens like to keep they hands clean. They got a shiny little set a tools they use, sharp as witches' fingernails, tidy and laid out neat, like the picks on a dentist tray. They gone take they time with em."* (p. 221)

This utterance is formed by three speech acts. The first speech act is assertive. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer an implicit valuation. As valuating subject, Aibileen gives a negative appreciation about the white mistresses, the objects of the valuation. In the second speech act the subject of enunciation uses similes for comparison by means of which the valuating subject expresses a negative appreciation having the white ladies' resources as object of the valuation. The axiological value is negative given by the expressions "*sharp as witches' fingernails*" and "*the picks on a dentist tray*", which are dreadful images. From this speech act we can also infer there is another valuation which has the white mistresses as object. "Witches" and "dentists" are frightening characters in popular culture. Therefore, there is a hierarchical comparison for equality. The last speech act is assertive, but it helps in describing the mistresses' modus operandi. Aibileen considers they are ruthless when carrying their revenge.

In the whole utterance the domain of the valuation is ethical and moral. These despicable white female employers like to keep the appearances as if they had done anything wrong. The valuating subject is sure, categorical and sincere about this appreciation. She is disapproving and the emotional tone is of fear.

Situational context: Aibileen is at Minny's house when they listen to the radio announcing Medgar Evers was shot at his house in front of his children and he passed away. This news shocks both Aibileen and Minny. Minny is afraid about her children's future and Aibileen is worried about the worsening of sociopolitical situation.

19- "*It's all them white peoples that breaks me, standing around the colored neighborhood.*" (p. 230)

This utterance is formed by one assertive speech act. Nevertheless, we can infer the existence of an implicit valuation in the deep structure. The valuating subject is giving

a negative appreciation of the racial violence inflicted on the African-American community. The domains of this valuation are psychological, emotional, ethical and moral. The emotional tone shows the valuating subject's sadness, grief, and disappointment. Aibileen is sincere showing her disapproval. After some advances in the Civil Rights Movement, the death of the leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Medgar Evers, was a terrible blow for the black community. His assassination proved that there was still a long way to go before the rights of African Americans were fully respected. Aibileen as part of that context and feels the pessimism that brought this sad event.

Situational context: Aibileen and the girl she is raising, Mae Mobley, spend all the time together. The child loves listening to her stories. After checking that Miss Leefolt is not around to hear them, Aibileen decides to tell the girl a new story.

20-“He was a real nice Martian, Mister King. Looked just like us, nose, mouth, hair up on his head, but sometime people looked at him funny and sometime, well, I guess sometime people was just downright mean.” (p. 349)

This utterance is composed of four speech acts. The analysis of the illocutive dimension shows that the first speech act is an appreciation having Martin Luther King as object of the valuation. The axiological value is positive. The domain is ethical and moral. The emotional tone of this speech act shows admiration. The second speech is assertive, but we could infer there is a positive appreciation having an aesthetic domain. The subject of the valuation is Luther King. The third and fourth speech acts are negative appreciations of people against the Civil Rights. The domain of both valuations is ethical and moral. In these two speech acts the valuating subject is disapproving, expressive (contained), sincere and categorical.

Telling stories to Mae Mobley is Aibileen's main act of defiance. By creating this stories result of her imagination, Aibileen teaches Mae Mobley some concepts and values like equality, acceptance and tolerance. This utterance illustrates the way Aibileen tells the child about one of the main leaders during the Civil Rights, Martin

Luther King. Since mentioning his name at Miss Leefolt would be a risky thing to do, Aibileen creates the character of a Martian to tell the girl about this personality. In doing this in the deep structure she is being insincere but well intentioned.

Situational context: After the publication and success of the book, Skeeter is going to work in New York. She went to Aibileen's home to say goodbye. Aibileen gives her a copy of the book they wrote together with the gratitude words and signatures of the members of her church. Aibileen tells Skeeter that Constantine, the maid who raised her, would have been really proud of her. Later in bed Aibileen thinks about Skeeter's possibility to start a new life in New York and wishes she could have that chance too.

21-*"But I'm not young. My life's about done ."* (p. 513)

This utterance is formed by two speech acts. The first speech act is a negative appreciation having Aibileen as subject of the valuation. The domain of this valuation is physical. The second speech act is a negative appreciation having a psychological domain. The object of the valuation is Aibileen's life. In both speech acts the emotional tone is pessimistic and evidences dissatisfaction. The valuating subject is categorical, disapproving, sure, sincere and expressive (contained).

The release of the book caused a great stir and Aibileen is worried about the possibility of losing her job. She is in her late fifties and all she has ever done is working as a maid.

Situational context: Aibileen threatens Hilly with exposing her as the one in the novel that ate the pie with Minny's feces. She says that she will have all the time to write about it in jail. Hilly answers that no one is going to believe her. Aibileen answers that she should not been so sure.

22- *"I been told I'm a pretty good writer."* (p. 519)

This utterance is formed by one speech act. The analysis of the illocutive dimension shows that the valuating subject is giving an appreciation of herself. The axiological value is positive and the valuation is related to the intellectual domain. The valuating subject is gushing, sure, sincere, and approving. The emotional tone shows her confidence.

Since little Aibileen has been good at writing. Once her primary teacher told her to keep writing because she was really good. Nevertheless after she dropped out to start working, no one praised her skill again. The success of the book and the job offer at the newspaper proved her she was good as a writer and gave her the confidence to challenge Hilly.

Situational context: After the incident with Hilly, Aibileen decides to stop working for Miss Leefolt. She says goodbye to Mae Mobley and promises her she is the last kid she is going to raise. Aibileen picks up all her belongings and goes to the back door with sadness.

23- *"But at the same time feeling, in a way, that I'm free, like Minny."* (p. 522)

This utterance is formed by one speech act. The valuating subject gives an appreciation of herself. The axiological value is positive and the domain is psychological. The valuating subject is sure, sincere, and expressive (contained). Aibileen is sad because she left Mae Mobley behind and lost her job. However, she feels that a new moment in her life has begun after leaving her work as a maid for good. She compares the freedom she is feeling to Minny's after getting rid of her husband.

Situational context: Then, Aibileen starts thinking about the mistresses she left behind, especially about Hilly.

24- *“Cause Miss Hilly, she in her own jail, but with a lifelong term.”* (p. 522)

This utterance is formed by one assertive speech act, but we can infer an implicit valuation. The valuating subject gives an appreciation of Miss Hilly. The axiological value is negative and the domains of the valuation are psychological and ideological. The valuating subject is categorical, sincere, sure, and disapproving. Aibileen considers she has been liberated from a world of pretense whereas Miss Hilly will have to continue living in it and eventually pay the consequences of her actions.

Situational context: Aibileen does not know what to do from that moment on. Skeeter found a job for her as a writer in a local newspaper, but the money she will receive is not going to be enough. She looks around and thinks about her whole life changed that morning, but despite the despair she feels hope.

25- *“Maybe I ain’t too old to start over, I think, and I laugh and cry at the same time at this. Cause last night I thought I was finished with everything new.”* (p. 522)

This utterance is formed by three speech acts. The first speech act has a grammatical negative, but the analysis of the deep structure shows it is valuative. The last two speech acts are assertive. In the valuative speech act, the valuating subject gives an ambivalent appreciation of herself with physical and psychological domains. The use of “old” gives the utterance a negative value since the word means in one of its lexicosemantic variants that something or someone is advanced in age. Nevertheless, the adverb “too”, meaning “to an excessive degree” with the grammatical negative “ain’t” adds a positive value to the utterance by stating the possibility for Aibileen to move on.

The valuating subject is expressive (contained), uncertain, sincere, approving, and interested. Although the valuating subject is not confident, the emotional tone is optimistic. Despite the uncertainty regarding her future, which leads to the ambivalence in the axiological value, Aibileen is ready to start a new life.

3.5- Characterization of Aibileen as valuating subject

Aibileen is a main character and one of the narrators of this novel. Aibileen's taxonomic features are "woman", "black", "Southern" and "poor". The subject of enunciation, by means of Aibileen's discourse as illocutive agent and valuating subject, portrays and denounces what according to her opinion the evils of U.S. society were during the Civil Rights period in the South.

Taking that into consideration, as the result of the data gathered, the valuating subject is mostly appreciative (88%). The analysis of the domain of the valuation illustrate her appreciations are mainly psychological (44%), ideological (32%), and ethical-moral (28%). There are also few instances of emotional (20%), intellectual (8%), aesthetic and physical (4%).

From the axiological point of view, most of the speech acts are negative (56%), especially when the object of the valuation is the status quo, the white mistresses, or herself. However, there are also positive ones (28%) especially when referring to her friend Minny, and to a lesser extent, ambivalent and ambiguous (16%). On the whole Aibileen is both disapproving and categorical (48%).

A great number of Aibileen's valuative speech acts are marked with the modal semantic category of loyalty. Aibileen is very sincere about the things she says. When she is positive about something, she is well-intentioned. Nevertheless, there are some instances in which she is insincere, especially when she is talking to the mistresses. In those cases she is trying to protect herself or her friends.

Another modal semantic category that is present is that of certainty. Aibileen is most of the times certain about what she is conveying. Therefore, according to the

discursive-cognoscitive perspective the valuating subject is sure. Her certainty makes her a reliable narrator of the story. On the other hand, the analysis of the volitional perspective illustrates that she tends to show indecision.

The modal semantic category of affectivity is also present, most of the time in the perspective of love when she makes reference to her son, her friends Minny and Skeeter, and Mae Mobley, the last girl she raised. However, she also shows disaffection when it comes to the mistresses.

The modal semantic category of expressiveness is another constant in his valuative speech acts. Aibileen is most of the times contained; therefore she is characterized by having a contained expressiveness. But there are some instances in which she is not contained and even gushing at the end of the novel. The emotional tone in her valuative speech acts shows most of the times her disappointment, dissatisfaction, pessimism or fear. When Aibileen talks about painful events in her life, like her son's death, she uses repeatedly certain expressions or words that make her speech acts expressive.

When compared to Minny, the valuating subject of the previous term papers, Aibileen is more contained and less outspoken. She feels the urge to speak up, but controls her anger and prefers to challenge the status quo with quieter means like telling stories to the children she raised about positive values such as tolerance, self-acceptance, and equality. Her self-valuations tend to be negative in almost all the aspects of her life, proving that she has a low self-esteem. However, she tries to foster a feeling of empowerment in the girl she is raising, something that she did not have when she was young. Her attitude only seems to change by the end of the novel when she becomes more confident, outspoken and optimistic.

Aibileen is the driving force behind the writing of the book; she convinces her friend Minny and the other maids to participate. Although she does not confront directly her employers like Minny does, Aibileen is capable of using other means of resistance to help their friends and trick the mistresses. Therefore, the analysis of the valuating subject evidences the existence of a double-consciousness. On the other hand, she

uses her personal painful experiences to grow and face the challenges in life. Therefore, the level of personal biography as site of domination and resistance was present in the analysis of Aibileen as well as Minny.

The analysis of some utterances taking into consideration the aspects discussed about the racial imaginary illustrated the presence of valuating speech acts that were not consistent with the previous valuations given by Aibileen. Hence, there is a possibility that this resulted from the author's unintentional charge of prejudices that might have been given by a lack of thorough analysis of African-American characters as explained by the theory of the racial imaginary.

Conclusions

Literary works are fragments of the objective reality shaped by the author's psychological, aesthetic and ethical world, which readers may accept or reject. Literary discourse is modal and the writers as subjects of enunciation employ these characters as illocutive agents, which will express valuations about objects of the world.

Historical novels attempt to portray the ambiance and convey the manners, and social conditions of a precedent period with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact. On the other hand, sentimental novels describe unjust situations drawn from real life experiences giving a theory of power and a way to remedy the injustice. These novels not only portray the world as it is, but also as it should be.

Undoubtedly *The Help* is a novel sharing characteristics with both types of literary genres. For the writing of this work, the author tried to illustrate the ambiance and social conditions of the Civil Rights period in the South, a moment which had an impact on the private lives of the fictional characters. This novel deals with the lives of African-American maids working for white households in Mississippi. Two African-

American women and one white socialite get together to write a book denouncing the injustices occurred in the domestic milieu.

In this setting the novel reveals how Jim Crow laws strengthened the domination of the white by restricting the physical spaces shared by blacks and whites. The novel also portrays how African Americans had to abide by a racial etiquette system that reinforced their subordination whereas white people avoided doing any action that could imply social equality among the races. Specifically, *The Help* focuses on the relation between black and white women, how sexism and racism made a difference in their sex roles, and how white women exerted their power toward black women.

The post racial stance versus the call for the acknowledgement and respect for diversity in the 21st century U. S. society may have had an influence on mainstream media and the portrayal of racial relations in literature. The context of political and social affairs may have had an impact on the writing and reception of *The Help*.

Some of the criticisms of this novel were given by some members of the African-American community, which aroused the question on whether a white author can write in the voice of a black person. This subject led the author of the diploma paper to research on the matter, which led to the study of the theory regarding the racial imaginary, the way culture imagines the narrative opportunities, the feelings and situations, the subjects, forms, and voices available to both characters of different races and their authors.

Considering this, the dimensional analysis of Aibileen's valuative utterances was carried out in order to find if the intersection of gender and race as well as the racial imaginary had an influence on Aibileen's discourse as valuating subject.

The modal semantic categories that stood out were loyalty, certainty, and expressiveness. The valuating subject was most of the times sincere, sure, and her expressiveness was mostly contained having a pessimistic and dissatisfied emotional tone.

This analysis showed that most of her valuative speech acts were appreciative and the predominant axiological value was mostly negative, especially when the objects of the valuation were the status quo, the white mistresses and herself, proving the existence of the intersection of race and gender in the level of personal experience. It was found the presence of a double consciousness in her discourse, which enabled her to deal with the power relations established between the white mistresses and the black maids.

At the beginning of the novel, it is evident that Aibileen is a black maid who has lived for fifty years in a repressive environment, which turned her, as many African Americans, into a submissive and pessimistic person accepting the status quo with resignation. Nevertheless, she was able of challenging the system by fostering positive qualities in the white children she was raising. After her son's death she changes progressively her behavior, becoming a leader capable of uniting black maids for the writing of the book, a woman able of lying for protecting her friends and speaking up for defending her rights.

When comparing both African-American female characters, Minny, valuating subject analyzed in the previous term papers, and Aibileen, some similarities and differences can be found. Both tend to give negative appreciations; however, Aibileen is contained whereas Minny is gushing. In both cases the level of personal experience serves as an empowering tool and illustrates the intersection of race and gender in the characters' lives. Both apply their own standards of thought according to their own life experience. Minny's self-valuations are mostly positive whereas Aibileen's are negative, proving that the latter has a lower self-esteem. However, this difference could be given by the age difference among them.

The analysis carried out also illustrated characteristics of womanist and irrepressible women in Minny and Aibileen's discourse. The intersection of race and gender and the racial imaginary is present throughout their discourse.

Recommendations

After having concluded the present diploma paper, I would like to suggest that this research be expanded. Therefore, I recommend to:

- Continue with the dimensional analysis of other characters
- Continue with the analysis of the presence of a racial imaginary in other novels
- Use the bibliography as reference for the disciplines of Linguistic Studies and Discourse Analysis and Literary Studies

Theoretical Framework

Appreciative valuation: those which express a communicative intention marked by the open and socially indefiniteness of the valuation as regards the object intentionally considered; thus, appreciations are based on a diffuse, socialized

norms and do not call for a definite status on the part of the valuating subject, nor do they imply any definitive consequences for the object of the valuation. It is integrated by two elements: the content of the traits of the domain (ethical, practical, and intellectual, among others) and the character of the conclusion (categorical and problematic) (Galbán Pozo, 2003).

Category of Affectivity expresses the subjective attitude towards what is said on the basis of the emotions that the objects and phenomena of reality arise in the subjects. Three different pairs of contraries reflecting three different degrees of tension or intensity have been distinguished: Like vs. Dislike (lower tension), Affect vs. Disaffect (mid-tension), and Love vs. Hatred (higher tension) (Galbán Pozo, 2003)

Category of Certainty expresses the subjective attitude assumed about what is said based on the pragmatic value of certainty, which, from a cognitive perspective, is equated with sound, clear and evident knowledge of things; and from the volitional perspective, with the strength that must mark volitional actions of the subject (Galbán Pozo, 2003)

Category of Expressiveness expresses the subjective attitude towards what is said about the object and phenomena of reality, highlighting the speaker's emotional state from a two-fold perspective; namely, that of the mode of expression characterized by such contraries as Gush vs. Contention, and that of emotional tone conveyed, which reflects the opposition of such contraries as Satisfaction vs. Dissatisfaction (Galbán Pozo, 2003).

Category of Interest expresses the subjective attitude assumed about what is said, highlighting how the objects or phenomena of reality are capable of directing or not the focus of attention and intentness on the object or how they represent a stimulus to bring about a conscious act (Galbán Pozo, 2003).

Category of Loyalty conveys the subjective attitude assumed about what is said from one of the three perspectives (Galbán Pozo, 2003).

Category of Valuation expresses the intentional and subjective attitude assumed in relation to what is communicated, on the basis of the social norms which consider the pragmatic value of objects and phenomena that can be ascertained on a scale of axiological and parametric values (Galbán Pozo, 2003).

Context: is a subjective construction or definition of participants of the social situation in which they are discursively interacting (Van Dijk, 2004).

Discourse Analysis: is oriented towards the discursive process in specific social and cultural contexts, which are going to determine the differences in a given enunciation. Therefore, DA does not only studies its formal component, but also analyzes it from its unbreakable tie between the social context in which the communicative event is produced and the mental processes that are realized in the moment of enunciation” (Salgado Ramírez, 2012).

Discourse: process and activity of linguistic interaction as social practice, in which the identity of the human being is reflected, both social and individual, in a concrete historical sociocultural context, which presents diverse signs of ideology as a social phenomena, which covers the systems of political, religious, ethic, economic, cultural among other values, acquired by the enunciating subject in social interaction” (Salgado Ramírez, 2012).

Evaluative valuation: those which convey a communicative intention marked by the definitive, constrained and transcendental character of the valuation of the object intentionally submitted to it, so that said valuation is bound to a socially pre-established and linguistically structured scale in which the valued object is assigned a certain value that involves certain consequences for it. In line with this, the evaluating subject’s status is socially acknowledged in order to account for the transcendence of his/ her act.

Simple normative evaluation which *is a semantic infra-category that expresses the speaker’s (subject) judgment towards the quality, action, or attitude of someone or*

something (the object of valuation), in accordance to norms, standards, rules, or stereotypes placed in a socially accepted scale of values (Correoso, 2003).

Non prescriptive simple normative evaluative valuation: *it is an evaluation of the quality, quantity, state, or behavior of someone or something in correspondence or not to the socially accepted norms. But it does not convey any kind of indication about further behavior, attitude, or action that the object of the valuation should adopt. (Correoso, 2003).*

Prescriptive simple normative evaluative valuation: *this subcategory is oriented to the preservation and strict performance of established rules and conventions. It conveys some sort of recommendation or implication that prescribes the way the object of the valuation should adopt. (Correoso, 2003).*

Hierarchizing valuation: those which express a communicative intention marked by hierarchical order assigned to the object, intentionally considered, with respect to others, taken as references on the basis of a socially-established and linguistically-structured scale that is characterized by its relative values.

Illocutionary Dimension: that which reflects the features appearing in the interactional and intentional contents of speech acts.

Modal Dimension: that which relates to the noetic process and involves the psychological attitudes assumed in the connection with whatever is conveyed in the discourse. Such attitudes become objective through the linguistic means that permit to express them in the act of communication.

Modality: the component of an utterance or any expression which manifests the presence of a recognized type of subjective position of the subject to what is said in discourse and of the listener to what he/she interprets, and in his case the reference to reality is realized only through the dictum (Galbán, 2003).

Valuating subject: The issuer of discourse who conveys a communicative intention that reveals his/her subjective attitude with respect to the object

intentionally considered, so as to attribute to or acknowledge in it a given value from a socially-set scale (Caballero, 1989, Op. Cit. Salgado, 2009).

Racial imaginary: The way culture imagines the narrative opportunities, the feelings and situations, the subjects and use of stylistic devices, the forms and voices, available both to characters of different races and their authors. The racial imaginary changes through time since artists interact with it, challenging it and altering its availabilities. Questions of race not only influence the content (narrative, images or stereotypes) but also the form (the grammar and word choice) (Loffreda & Rankine, 2015).

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Annexes

Historical Background

From the 17th century to the American Civil War

The history of African-Americans began in the early 17th century, when the first 20 Africans were landed in the colony of Virginia to work as indentured servants like most free European immigrants. Nevertheless, this source of labor failed to provide sufficient workforce. As a result of the constant labor shortage and with the aim of

holding black servants beyond the normal term of indenture, in the second half of that century slavery was legally established in Virginia, and later in all English colonies by 1750.

More than 400 000 Africans were brought by the slave trade to the territory of what is now the United States. Blacks were visible targets for enslavement because their skin color was different from the rest of the population. In addition, the belief that they were an inferior race with an uncivilized culture helped whites rationalize black slavery. Also, the cheap price of large numbers of slaves made profitable their use in plantation agriculture. Hence, slavery became a widespread and economical practice in the South, whose main crops were tobacco, rice, sugar, and cotton.

By mid-18th century, more than 90 percent of American slaves lived in that region. Even though slavery hindered other economic activities, black slaves played an important role in boosting the economy of the Southern colonies. Especially the cotton boom made thousands of plantation owners rich. Although Northern businessmen were also beneficiaries of slave trade and the investments in the plantations of the South, slavery did not succeed in the industrial North, where the development of commercial agriculture was restricted because of the soil and climate. Therefore, slavery did not have the economic significance in the Northern colonies as it had in the Southern ones (Wong, 2014).

Northerners and Southerners not only had different levels of economic development, but also had opposite views on the slavery issue. Southerners argued that black people were unable of caring for themselves; hence, slavery was a generous means for protecting them. On the other hand, most Northerners did not believe in the benevolence of the institution and called for the emancipation of the slaves. For instance, Northern leading abolitionists, like Gerrit Smith⁸, Samuel Joseph May⁹, and

⁸ Gerrit Smith (1797-1874) was a leading American social reformer, abolitionist, and politician, who made significant financial contributions to the Liberty Party, and helped the African-American communities in New York. (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008)

⁹ Samuel Joseph May (1797-1871) was a radical American reformer involved in multiple reform movements including education, abolitionism, and women's rights. (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008)

William Lloyd Garrison¹⁰, strongly raised their voices and took part in the activities of several organizations aiming at helping slaves escape, such as the Underground Railroad¹¹. In addition, the horrors of slavery were described by the Connecticut-born writer Harriet Beecher Stowe¹². Her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, written in 1852, proved the falseness of the Southern belief that slavery was a blessing for the blacks (Wong, 2014).

As a result, the two regions grew even more apart because of the issue of slavery. In the 1840s and '50s the Northern states wanted to outlaw slavery in the future western states. Southerners feared that the attitude of the North would eventually jeopardize existing slaveholdings in the South. Therefore, they threatened to withdraw from the Union with the aim of protecting their right to keep slaves. The Southern states organized the Confederate States of America¹³ in late 1860 after the election of Abraham Lincoln, the antislavery republican candidate for the presidency. These last events triggered the American Civil War on April 12, 1861.

Even though the goal of this struggle was maintaining the country united, not emancipating the slaves, many people from both regions thought that the armed conflict would solve both problems. As a matter of fact, many slaves escaped to the North during the war period, and generals representing the Union established abolitionist policies in the Southern land they defeated. Furthermore, Congress passed laws allowing the rescue of slaves from the property of rebellious Southerners.

¹⁰ William Lloyd Garrison (1805 – 1879) was an American abolitionist, journalist, and social reformer. He was the editor of the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* and one of the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society.(Enciclopedia Britannica 2008)

¹¹The Underground Railroad was a system existing in the Northern states of the U.S., consisting of secret routes and safe houses, by which escaped slaves from the South were secretly helped by sympathetic Northerners to reach places of safety in the North or in Canada.(Enciclopedia Britannica 2008)

¹² Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) was an influential American abolitionist and writer, best known for her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that encouraged the anti-slavery forces of the North.(Enciclopedia Britannica 2008).

¹³ Between Dec. 20, 1860, and Feb. 1, 1861, six southern states (South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana) declared their withdrawal from the United States and organized a separate and independent government called the Confederate States of America. A seventh state, Texas, was admitted to the confederation on March 2. (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008).

The Reconstruction Era and Southern segregation

After the Union victory, the President Abraham Lincoln presented the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862(Wong, 2014). Issued on January 1, 1863, this document only freed slaves in the regions of the Confederacy where the North still had not regain legitimacy to claim freedom. With the passage of the 13th Amendment, ratified on December 6, 1865, slavery was formally abolished in the United States. From that year to 1877, a period known as the Reconstruction era began with the aim of rebuilding national unity and guaranteeing civil rights to the former slaves.

The Congress introduced new legislation which recognized the civil rights of African-Americans and granted voting rights to African-American men. Nevertheless, Southern Democrats were against the Republican rule. Despite of the cumulative federal efforts, black Americans still faced hatred, hostility, and harassment. In order to terrorize blacks and prevent them from voting, violent white-supremacist groups were created such as the Ku Klux Klan¹⁴.

By the end of the Reconstruction, these terrorist organizations came to power. The Democratic Party gained control of government in the South, and instituted systemic discriminatory policies through laws of unequal racial segregation. In the 20th century, the institutionalized racism and legal discrimination were hardened. African-Americans could not go the same places as whites. There were areas for whites only, and others for "colored" people. When speaking, blacks were expected to address whites as "Mr.," "Sir," or "Ma'am. African-American men were not to shake hands with whites, and they could not make eye-contact with white women if they do not wanted to be accused of highly inappropriate sexual advances.

In the Southern states, where the majority of black Americans still lived, informally and systematically enforced racial stratification solidified the pre-existing social

¹⁴ A secret terrorist organization whose objective was the restoration of white supremacy through intimidation and violence aimed at the newly enfranchised black freedmen. (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008).

order. The Jim Crow¹⁵ laws were introduced to keep races separated and the black population under control. These measures, which maintained the inferior status of African-Americans, included among others, the outlawing of the marriage between blacks and whites, the town segregation into black and white residential areas, and the education of black children in separated schools. Jim Crow laws also required that public places and public transportation, like trains and buses, have separated facilities for whites and blacks.

Despite the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, the denial of voting rights was also included in the system of segregation. From 1890 to 1910, all Southern states governments imposed conditions for voting, such as property ownership, which only few blacks were able to acquire; and paying a poll tax, which was almost impossible for the Southern blacks, who suffered extreme poverty. Furthermore, since the Democratic primaries were open only to whites in most states, the few blacks that met the requirements could not choose the candidates. Therefore, African-Americans had no power to stop discrimination because even the ability to struggle for equality had been undermined by the segregationist legislation.

However, the oppressiveness of the Jim Crow period gave strong impetus to African-American protest writing: novels, short stories, social commentaries, and poems. Some of these talented literary works had the intention of reviving the fervor of the antislavery era and confronting the racist attitudes in the United States. One outstanding example was W.E.B. Du Bois¹⁶'s collection of groundbreaking essays on race entitled *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois, member of the Niagara

¹⁵ The Jim Crow Laws were state and local laws enacted in the Southern and border states of the United States and enforced between 1876 and 1965. They mandated "separate but equal" status for black Americans. In reality, this led to treatment and accommodations that were almost always inferior to those provided to white Americans. (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008).

¹⁶ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was an American sociologist and the most important black protest leader in the United States during the first half of the 20th century. He was the head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 and edited *The Crisis*, the NAACP's magazine, from 1910 to 1934. (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008).

Movement¹⁷ by means of his own experiences described how blacks lived in the American society.

In the 1920's the writings created by black Americans morphed into more creative and vigorous works that disclosed and stimulated a new confidence and social pride. The vast black ghetto of Harlem, in New York City, became the place where artists, writers, and musicians gathered to share their experiences and provide mutual encouragement. As a result, this period of flowering in African-American literature and art from 1919 to the mid-1930s is known as the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement¹⁸. Gifted poets like Countee Cullen(1903-1943), Langston Hughes(1902–1967) and novelists such as Rudolph Fisher(1897-1934), Zora Neale Hurston(1891-1960), and Jean Toomer (1894-1967) cultivated personal self-expression, self-confidence, and literary experimentation. On the other hand, the Blues became the first musical genre originated in the African-American communities that gained considerable fame. In 1914, W. C. Handy (1873–1958) composed the "St. Louis Blues," one of the first Blues songs to become a popular hit. Jazz was also a result of that fruitful time. Louis Armstrong (1901–1971) became one of the most salient leading jazz musicians (Wong, 2014).

The Harlem Renaissance challenged racism and stereotypes. It promoted progressive politics, and racial and social integration. In this period noted black leaders emerged like A. Philip Randolph (1889–1979), a labor leader who founded the first black union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Previously, in 1909 the National Association from the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.)¹⁹ had been created with the goal of improving the conditions of black Americans. His leader W.E.B. Du Bois, before mentioned, and the N.A.A.C.P. drew the attention to

¹⁷ The Niagara Movement was an organization of black intellectuals led by W.E.B. Du Bois, which called for full political, civil, and social rights for black Americans. It was the forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008).

¹⁸ This movement was named after *The New Negro* (1925), an anthology that featured the early work of some of the most gifted Harlem Renaissance writers. The "New Negro," according to its editor Alain Locke, differed from the "Old Negro" in assertiveness and self-confidence, which led New Negro writers to question traditional "white" aesthetic standards. (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008).

¹⁹ The N.A.A.C.P. was an interracial American organization created to work for the abolition of segregation and discrimination in housing, education, employment, voting, and transportation; to oppose racism; and to ensure African Americans their constitutional rights.

the difficulties facing African Americans such as housing, education, jobs, and voting rights. Therefore, by providing the African-American community with the spirit of self-determination, the Harlem Renaissance contributed to the formation of the cornerstone of the later civil rights movement.

By mid-20th century, other black personalities turned into role models for African Americans. The diplomat Ralph J. Bunche (1904–1971) was the first black to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950. The same year Gwendolyn Brooks (1912–2000) was the first black to receive the Pulitzer Prize for a collection of poems published in the 1949 book *Annie Allen*. And last but not least, in 1955, Marian Anderson (1897–1993) became the first black singer to play a leading role in New York City's Metropolitan Opera.

Despite some attempts by black Americans aiming at improving the status of this racial minority group in society, there was no single, united movement or leader. The black political movements remained relatively weak and divided. However this situation would change in the 1960's, convulsive years characterized by the surge of progressive movements. Among them, the Civil Rights Movement stood out because of its widespread protests against the Jim Crow laws and its use of pacifist strategies.

African American's Situation under Eisenhower²⁰'s Terms

The 1950's can be considered as a decade of economic, technological and social development for the American society. The automobile revolution, which doubled the production of cars, and the implementation of the interstate highway system enhanced communications and had a great impact on the American lifestyle.

However, during the 1950's African Americans continued facing racial disadvantages. They were assigned the worst paid jobs, and they were denied access to public services, hospitals and schools. Famous cases of segregation were brought to public attention in those years, such as Linda Brown's and Rosa Parks'.

²⁰ US president Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969; served 1953–61)

The Linda Brown's case versus the Topeka Board of Education reached the Supreme Court of the United States. Linda was an African-American girl that had to walk a long distances to receive education because she could not attend the local for-whites-only school. The schools for white people had better conditions and teaching materials than those destined to blacks by Boards of Education. On May 19th, 1954 Chief Justice Earl Warren announced to the courtroom that the constitution was "color blind". As a result, the Supreme Court ordered the Topeka Board of Education to end segregation in its schools. The decision brought about a strong resistance in the Southern states.

The bus system was also a discriminatory environment for blacks. Most rows of seating towards the front of the bus were destined to white people and only few seats in the back were left to blacks. In 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give her bus seat to a white man, a violation of the city's racial segregation ordinances. This event brought about the first organized mass protest by blacks, a 382-day boycott of the municipal bus company. African Americans represented 70% of the bus riders. As a result, the revenue of the city bus department decreased. When Parks won a Supreme Court decision declaring Montgomery's segregated seating unconstitutional, the boycott ended.

These civil rights advances made race a main nationwide concern during Eisenhower's second term. In 1957, the president became involved in the racial issue when the Arkansas governor Orval E. Faubus (1910–1994), blocked the integration of a high school in Little Rock by impeding the entrance of black students. To put into effect the court order to integrate the schools, Eisenhower mobilized federal troops. On the other hand, the Congress was impelled to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1960, the first civil rights law in 82 years, aiming at protecting black voters.

1960's: A Convulsive Decade

A series of nonviolent activities against the Jim Crow laws²¹ gave birth to the Civil Rights Movement, which awakened the nation's awareness to the precarious situation of African-Americans. Using passive resistance, this broad social movement was aimed at changing the discriminatory practices and at giving black Americans full citizenship rights. Also known as the Black Freedom Movement, the political, legal, and social struggle included boycotts, sit-ins, and marches.

Black students were committed to the Civil Rights too. In February 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina, four African-American college students entered a store and sat down at the counter. The salesperson refused to serve them. However, they continued to sit peacefully as whites tormented them at the counter. After this, many sit-ins took place against racism and inequality. Sit-ins continued throughout the South and spread to other areas. Eventually, after many sit-ins and other non-violent protests, including marches and boycotts, places began to agree to desegregate.

Despite the efforts, violence against the movement continued. Medgar Evers (1925–1963), civil rights activist who was helping blacks to register to vote, was murdered by KKK member Byron de la Beckwith (1920–2001) in Jackson, Mississippi. In addition, in September 15, 1963, Ku Klux Klan's men destroyed one side of a Birmingham church by means of a stack of dynamite. The bomb exploded in proximity to twenty-six children preparing in basement assembly room. The 16th Street Baptist Church bombing killed four 11 -14 year-old black girls.

This outrageous event was the KKK response to the March on Washington. On August 28, 1963, more than 200,000 people gathered peaceably in the Lincoln Memorial to demand equal justice for all citizens under the law. Martin Luther King's famous *I Have a Dream* speech encouraged and motivated interracial crowds. His prophetic words about a future of equality for all the Americans became a symbol of the Civil Rights Movement and had a strong effect on national opinion. Consequently, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, authorizing the enforcement

²¹ The Jim Crow Laws were state and local laws enacted in the Southern and border states of the United States and enforced between 1876 and 1965. They mandated "separate but equal" status for black Americans. In reality, this led to treatment and accommodations that were almost always inferior to those provided to white Americans. (Enciclopedia Britannica 2008).

of desegregation in employment practices and public accommodations by the federal government. Nevertheless, the lack of cooperation of local authorities in many areas hindered the act enforcement.

King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his effective pacifist strategies that same year. Other legislative achievements during the Civil Rights Movement were the restoration of voting rights thanks to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, that banned discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. The Voting Rights Act was the result of an organized procession of demonstrators supporting the elimination of voting rights barriers. Thirty thousand protesters participated in the Selma to Montgomery marches, which lasted for four days in Alabama. By order of the President Lyndon Baines Johnson, federal troops protected them. However, Southern law authorities started beating peaceful protesters, scenes that were televised and infuriated the American audience.

After the law was passed, one million African Americans, who had never been allowed to vote, had that opportunity between 1965 and 1968. However, heightening discrimination and violence continued. Therefore, contrary to what Martin Luther King Jr. had preached, other black activist groups, such as the Black Muslims and the Black Panthers, advocated forming communities for African Americans only and using violence in reaction to discriminatory practices. The Black Muslims movement had been created by its leader Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975) in 1934. This organization viewed integration of blacks and whites in daily social, economic, and political life as a threat to their social identity. Muhammad advocated the creation of an African American nation within the United States. Later, Malcolm X (1925–1965) assumed the leadership role of the organization until his assassination in 1965 by members of the Nation of Islam, a religious organization with whom Malcolm X had political disputes.

Shortly after his death, Malcolm X's ideas inspired Huey P. Newton (1942–1989) and Bobby Seale (1936–). They founded the Black Panthers in 1966, which in the beginning promoted a violent revolution against government authorities, but later

became less violent. Another prominent leader died before the end of the 1960s. On April 4, 1968, the political assassination of Martin Luther King brought about a wave of race riots throughout the United States.

King became object of international homage after his death. These actions proved that his legacy would endure forever. In the late 1960s, laws outlawing discrimination and affirmative action programs put an end to the Jim Crow era. Black student enrollments in previous schools for whites augmented significantly. In addition, the African-American studies movement developed and increased appreciation of black heritage. Furthermore, the number of blacks elected as government officials rose by the end of the 1970s. In 1973, Tom Bradley (1917– 1998) was one of the first black American mayor of a major city like Los Angeles. In spite of these victories, the struggle against racial prejudice and discrimination in the United States has continued into the 21st century.

Summary of the literary analysis of the Novel *The Help*²² carried out in the previous term paper

A novel is a fictional prose narrative, that can be distinguished by its greater length and complexity. It deals especially with human experience through a usually connected sequence of events or plot, in which one or several characters are shown in processes of change and social relationship.

The Help, novel released on 2009, was written by Kathryn Stockett. The main characters are a young white woman, and two African-American maids working for white households during the early 1960s in Mississippi, one of the most segregationist states in the United States of America. The characters of *The Help* are round, well-developed, and complex. They grow in the course of the story.

²² In order to write this chapter Wong's term paper (2014) was taken into account

The novel begins at the earliest possible chronological point (*ab ovo*) when one of the main characters, Aibileen, introduces herself as a housemaid. The story continues chronologically without any interruption, except for the moments of flashbacks in which the three main characters, Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter, reflect about important past events in their lives that have a repercussion in their current life (Wong, 2014).

Title

Even though the nominal title of this novel (*The Help*) could be considered as ambiguous, it indicates what the novel is going to deal with.

Setting

The story takes place in Jackson, Mississippi, in an interesting period in the United States: the 1960's. Many historians would rightfully describe this decade as the turning point of the Black Movement (Correoso, A., et al, 1983). The turbulent Civil Rights Movement becomes the driving force behind the struggle against the awful situation of unemployment, poverty, and segregation faced by the African Americans. During this period, individuals and civil rights organizations challenged discrimination with a variety of activities, including protest marches, boycotts, and sit-ins.

Plot

Change has not arrived at the Deep South. African-American housemaids working for middle-class whites, Aibileen and Minny, continue their daily routine of cleaning up, cooking, taking care of the households and the white children, and tolerating hardships. They constantly have to face the segregationist rules of the town.

In this murky ambiance of concern and hopeful expectations brought about by civil right activists, Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan graduates from the University of Mississippi and returns home with the dream of becoming a writer. She starts writing a housekeeping column for the local newspaper. Since the Phelans' maid, who raised

Skeeter, does not work for her anymore, she asks Aibileen for advice. However, the column serves merely as an excuse for writing about the African-American maids and their experiences working in Southern white households. She is encouraged by a New York publisher to continue writing about these experiences; nevertheless, black women are afraid about the consequences of talking to her. Finally, turbulent events in town make domestic workers to contribute to Skeeter's testimony on Southern society. This book provides African-American women with a feeling of empowerment. Despite that the protagonists do not participate actively in the actual Civil Rights Movement, at least some of them manage to make a change in their own lives.

Subject Matter and Theme

Undoubtedly, the subject matter of this novel is racial discrimination. The entire premise is based upon three women's struggle against racism in Jackson, during the early 1960s. A large amount of examples portrays how racism is self-manifested in the everyday reality of the African-American maids in white homes.

The theme is: Three women, one white and two black, join efforts to fight for a hopeful change in the United States' racial relations.

Major Characters

Minnie Jackson served as the valuating subject of the previous research. She is a vivacious black maid in her thirties, who is mother of five kids (Leroy Junior, Sugar, Felicia, Kindra, and Benny), and a sixth on the way, and wife of an abusive and alcoholic husband (Leroy). This relatively young hefty woman works all day outside of her home, cooking and cleaning for middle-class white families in Jackson, Mississippi. And when she finishes her work, she has to do the household chores at home, and still has time to participate in the church activities and to help her maid friends. Minny is a wonderful cook; but her most outstanding characteristic is her rebellious mouth. Even if it can cost her the job, she is not afraid of speaking her mind. This feature makes her unpopular among the white employers. She decides to

participate in the writing of a book that denounces the injustices faced by black maids in Mississippi. Because of her experience of living and working in a racist town, Minny has developed her own perspective on the matters that concern the African-American struggle. Despite not being directly involved in the Civil Rights Movement, she is committed to the fight, and applies her own standards of thought and action to challenge the dominant ideology. After a first approach to critical discourse analysis of some of her speech acts, she proved to be a complex character that values herself in ambivalent ways depending on the context. She is dynamic and round, having the capacity to change her way of thinking during the novel.

Aibileen Clark is Minny's best friend. This character is the valuating subject of this diploma paper. Being the daughter of a maid and granddaughter of a house slave, she has worked as a maid in white households since little age. A nurturing character, she has raised seventeen white children, and at present she takes care of the eighteenth, the Leefolt family's little girl. Her personal life has been unfortunate. Her husband abandoned her after the birth of her son Treelore, who dies years later because no one assisted him after an accident. Since that moment, Aibileen feels the bitterness growing inside of her. First, she does not want to be involved in the writing of the book. Nevertheless, she serves as the intermediary between the other black maids needed for the project and the author, Skeeter. Therefore, Aibileen is a dynamic character. At the end of the novel, she is fired, but her spirit is not broken. Showing different aspects of her personality, she is evidently a round character throughout the novel because of her complexity.

Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan is a young white rich woman graduated from the University of Mississippi. She returns to her hometown of Jackson, Mississippi with the idea of finding a job and becoming a writer. Unlike most of her Southern contemporaries, she is not interested in marriage and starting a family because that means giving up her dream of being a respected author. She is a round character with progressive thinking, which makes her differ from the other racist ladies in town. She writes a manuscript of denounce called *Help* with assistance from black maids.

Even though that activity represents a danger for her social life, she does not hesitate, which makes her a dynamic character.

Secondary Characters

Hilly Holbrook is a flawed character who enjoys controlling others and intimidating those who defy her authority like Minny, Aibileen, and Skeeter. She is the daughter of Minny's former employer. She is against the close relation Skeeter has with the maids; after the publication of the book, she tries to ruin their lives. She is a flat and static character because she does not undergo any change and her actions are predictable.

Celia Foote is Minny's present employer. Because of her humble origin, her manners, and her provocative appearance, she is considered "white trash" and is rejected by all the white ladies in town. She does not discriminate against black people. Having a sweet and depressed personality at the same time, she forms a particular bond with Minny. Even though she is portrayed as a superficial blond at the beginning of the novel, she is a round character facing an internal conflict about being incapable of fitting in and forming a family. However, she is static.

Elizabeth Leefolt is Aibileen's employer. She is Hilly and Skeeter's friend. Hilly can easily manipulate her. She is not an affectionate woman to her daughter Mae Mobley, and leaves all her care to Aibileen, who becomes the child's primary caretaker, teacher and substitute mother. She is a flat and static character because she is not able of thinking on her own, she always manipulated by Hilly.

Leroy Jackson is Minny's alcoholic husband. He abuses Minny verbally and physically because he knows the strong personality she has and that is his way of controlling her. When Minny's involvement in the book is suspected, he is fired from his job.

Johnny Foote is Celia's husband and also Minny's employer. Like his wife, he does not discriminate against Minny and he trusts her to take care of Celia's health. Despite his portrayal as a Southern biased person in the first chapters of the novel,

he proves being a tender and grateful person to Minny, showing his roundness as a character.

Point of view: There are multiple points of view since the novel is narrated in first person by the major characters: the maids Aibileen and Minny, and the young socialite, Skeeter. They alternate on a regular basis and they describe the same period of time events from their own perspective. “During the whole novel, the reader is restricted to the perceptions, inner thoughts, memories and feelings of those three characters. Given the narrative structure of the novel and combinations of rather long stretches of the protagonists’ inner speech and dialogues, an attentive reader can notice that each character has a unique way of speaking. With each of them, Stockett employed certain dialectal and stylistic features quite consistently” (Wong, 2014).

Style, Tone and Irony

Stockett, the author of this book, uses the following stylistic devices: onomatopoeias (*Whoooooah!*), hyperboles and metaphors (*The shame is so heavy I think it might pull me to the floor*), similes (*he is a pig and sweats like one too*), and graphons. The use of graphons is the most noticeable one because the author employs African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to present the way black maids speak. This includes double negatives, often with —ain’t as the auxiliary (“***Ain’t no way I’m gonna do something crazy as that***”, p.152), omission of subject in many sentences (“***Wore big glasses and reading all the time***”, p.3), wrong spelling and omission of syllables (“...he was slow ***bout*** things like that”, “***I spec this is the smallest house***” p.4), and misuse of the grammatical aspects of the verb, such as omission and misuse of the tenses (“...they ***was gone*** get married” p.2).

Throughout the novel Minny is the most ironic maid. The predominant type of irony is the situational irony because what it is expected to happen is not what actually occurs. An example of situational irony is the moment in which Minny, tired of Hilly’s mistreatment, decides to punish her by introducing her feces in a pie she made for Hilly. The irony is that Hilly before knowing the ingredients of the pie she finds it

delicious. Hence, there is an incongruity between what is expected to happen and what actually happens.

The novel has a critical tone because even though the author is white, she never takes the side of the white people. She ridicules and criticizes them by using sarcasm and irony instead (*"I spot a single copy of an American Slave. I grab it, but when I opened it, ...someone has written **NIGGER BOOK**... I am not disturbed by the words as by the fact that **the handwriting looks like a third grader's**"*p.202). Nevertheless, the author is sympathetic towards the African-American people because she portrays their grievances and she condemns the way they were treated (*"I read through four of the twenty-five pages, mesmerized by how many laws exist to separate us"* p.203)

Characterization of Minny as Valuating Subject:

Minny is an African-American woman living and working as a maid in Jackson, Mississippi during the 1960s. She applies her own standards of beauty and thought according to her own life experience.

The presence of certainty and expressiveness in the illocutive agent's discourse was analyzed in order to make a characterization of the valuating subject. To do so the analysis of the theoretical bases concerning modality, and valuation, certainty and expressiveness as macrosemantic categories were of paramount importance. The analysis of a sample of utterances said by Minny as illocutive agent was carried out.

As valuating subject in *The Help*, Minny is mostly appreciative and her appreciations are mainly ethical, moral, ideological, and psychological. From the axiological point of view most of the utterances are negative. On the whole, Minny's utterances make her a certain, decided, gushing, and dissatisfied valuating subject. The characteristics of the valuative utterances change according to the object of the valuation. Therefore, a more detailed analysis is necessary. It is required analyze the utterances referring to the established order, herself as working woman and

human being, and herself as a wife, focusing the attention especially in the last two objects of the valuation.

When the established order is the object of her valuation, Minny is appreciative (100%) and her appreciations are mainly ideological, ethical and moral, and they are axiologically negative. She is certain, gushing, and dissatisfied when expressing her worries and often, fear.

As a result, the utterances said by Minny evidences she tends to give appreciations (88%) about the established order, herself as a working woman, and herself as a wife. Generally speaking, her appreciations are mostly ethical, moral (63%), and ideological (50%). However, focusing specifically on these two objects of the valuation: herself as a working woman, and herself as a wife, Minny's appreciations are also practical (21%), physical (16%), and psychological (38%). She values herself positively as a mother, domestic servant and member of the community. Taking into account certainty and expressiveness, Minny is most of the times certain (88%), decided (71%), gushing (63%), and dissatisfied (79%). Nevertheless, when it comes to her marital relation, Minny's valuation of herself is negative, and she is less certain, more undecided, contained, and dissatisfied.

It is important to highlight that there is a probable equivalence between the volitional perspective and the mode of expression, showing the same percentages in utterances with different objects of valuation.

Concluding, the author as enunciating subject uses Minny as an agent to portray the segregationist environment faced by African-American women. The writer makes the characters reveal the sociocultural reality concerning African-American women, and this analysis has served as a way to prove it.