



From Feminism to Womanism : The Image of
Black Woman in " The Color Purple" by Alice
Walker

من النسوية الى النسائية : صورة المرأة السوداء في رواية
اللون البنفسجي لأليس ووكر

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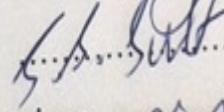
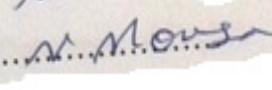
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work for my lovely father, who made me what I am today, who instilled in me the appreciation of knowledge.

I also dedicate it to my supportive mother without whose loving patience and constant encouragement this pursuit of knowledge would have never borne fruit.

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Abstract

Alice Walker is one of the most inspiring Afro-American writers. She coined the term womanism to defend the black rights. She shows interest in the whole people around the world. *The Color Purple* (1982) is a novel where Walker discusses many important themes that she stresses in her writings. Racism, sexism, intra-racial racism, traditional gender role, patriarchy, poverty, family centeredness, discrimination, gender conflict, domestic violence, and having an identity are some of the main topics that the novel tackles.

The thesis looks at how Celie, the major character in the novel and other black female characters are presented in their society and in the white society. The thesis highlights the difficulties that black women face. They have two burdens; the first one for being a woman and the other for being black. Alice Walker gives a glimmer of hope at the end of the story when all the black characters free themselves and establish their own identities as independent individuals.

The first chapter gives an introduction for the novel and the thesis as well. While the second chapter focuses on the review of the related literature. The third chapter highlights the methodology that the researcher followed in order to conclude the recommendations. The fourth chapter displays the specific analysis of main issues in the novel itself. The last chapter presents the conclusion and the recommendations.

This study attempts to highlight the effects of the black patriarchy on the black women and to discuss the difference between two different critical approaches which are feminism and womanism. It shows how Walker moves in this novel from feminism which is a more limited theory to womanism which is a more inclusive and a more comprehensive approach to women's issues.

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الملخص

أليس ووكر واحدة من أكثر الكتاب الأمريكيين المنحدرين من أصول أفريقية الهاما. لقد قامت بصياغة مصطلح النسائية للدفاع عن حقوق السود. تظهر ووكر اهتماما بجميع الناس حول العالم.

تناقش ووكر في رواية اللون البنفسجي (1982) العديد من الموضوعات المهمة والتي ركزت عليها في نظريتها. العنصرية والتمييز على أساس الجنس والعنصرية الداخلية والدور التقليدي للجنسين والمجتمع الذكوري والفقير والتمركز حول الأسرة والتمييز والصراع بين الجنسين والعنف المنزلي ووجود الهوية هي بعض المواضيع الأساسية التي تتناولها الرواية.

هذه الدراسة تبحث في نظرة المجتمع الأسود والمجتمع الأبيض الى سلي والى جميع الشخصيات النسائية في الرواية. كما أنها تركز على اظهار الصعوبات التي تواجه النساء السود حيث أنهن يواجهن عبيئين رئيسيين , الأول لكونهن نساء والثاني لكونهن سود.

قدمت ووكر بصيصا من الأمل في اخر الرواية عندما تحررت جميع النسوة في الرواية وقمن بتأسيس هويتهم كنساء مستقلات.

الفصل الأول من الدراسة يصور المعلومات التمهيدية حول الرواية والرسالة بينما يركز الفصل الثاني على الدراسات السابقة. أما الفصل الثالث يسلط الضوء على المنهجية التي اتبعتها الباحثة. ويعرض الفصل الرابع تحليلا مفصلا للقضايا التي تناولتها الرواية أما الفصل الأخير فهو الخاتمة والتوصيات.

تهدف الرسالة الى ابراز تأثيرات المجتمع الذكوري على المرأة السوداء والمقلنة بين النسوية والنسائية. وتبين الرسالة كيف تنتقل ووكر في هذه الرواية من النسوية بنظرتها المحدودة الى النسائية التي تشكل منهاجا وتسعا وشاملا في معالجة مشاكل المرأة .

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The masterpiece of the African- American writer Alice Walker *The Color Purple* (1982) has enlightened readers and film viewers to the civil rights history, women's history and colored people's history. Many studies have built on this novel; researchers have explored the family role, the concepts of God and self-realization, among many other subjects. Yet, they didn't pay enough attention to the females in the novel. Walker chooses a young fourteen -year old girl to tell her story, following the epistolary narrative style. She writes letters to God and then to Nettie, her sister. The girl writes because, at the beginning of the novel, her dad threatens her saying: "You better never tell anybody but God. I'd kill your mammy "(p.3). She is black, ugly and uneducated. She suffered from repeated rape by her father and hard beating by him and by her husband as well. She was forced to marry the Mr._ and raised his children from his previous marriage. She used to be submissive, silent and unpaid worker. She fought forcefully to gain the knowledge that is necessary to know and develop herself.

The novel sheds light on how a woman is seen by herself, by others and what it takes to reject oppression and to get out from the male's self- interest. It has four main female characters. Every female character has its own oppression cycle. Walker breaks the traditional wave of African- American writers who picture black women as victims whereas the black men are physically strong and dominant. Walker, in

contrast, makes Celie, after passing the male- oriented life, lead her own life and move from a patriarchal to a matriarchal society.

The novel questions the class struggle among the black society and the utopian female world. It discusses the racism and sexism that work together to disgrace women's role and existence in order to maintain the masculine power. It also raises questions about the family construction, i.e. whether it is a dominance of the traditional gender role or a collaborative effort from male and female agents.

1.2 Statement of the problem

As a black woman herself, Alice Walker talks about the hardships that black women pass through their lives not only for being women but for being black as well. The lack of self- recognition as an individual person and the lack of human rights as black people are the problems that the researcher wants to examine in the study. Thus, the main focus of the study will be on the novel, not as a reflection of American feminist issues only but mainly as a representation of the issues women face in different parts of the world.

1.3 Objectives of the study

This study aims to :

1. Show with the help of Feminism and Womanism approaches the ways in which Walker's protagonist suffers in black society from both black people and white people.
2. Explore the image of black woman in black society and the role of intra- racial racism.

3. Investigate how far the protagonist's suffering can be relevant to universal issues faced by women in general.

4- To distinguish between feminism and womanism as two different terms.

1.4 Questions of the study

This study intends to answer the following questions:

1-How does the black patriarchy affect the image of black women in *The Color Purple*?

2-In what ways is the language that the novel's protagonist, Celie uses linked to identity?

3-How does Alice Walker present the patriarchal ideology in women's life in black society?

4-What's the difference between feminism and womanism?

1.5 Significance of the study

Alice Walker is an Afro-American writer. Her novel *The Color Purple* (1982) tackles the sufferings that black women undergo and the relationship between black women and black men. A good number of writers have written about male's dominance over women. However, they have approached this issue from a feminist perspective. The significance of this study stems from the fact that it will tackle the issues the characters in this novel face from a womanist perspective. The research will focus on the females' struggle among the black society by looking at some of the aspects in the novel from a womanist point of view. Also, the researcher intends to explore the role

of racism and intra-racial racism in the novel as concepts related to the womanism approach.

1.6 Limitations and limits of the study

This study is focused on the black patriarchal society, so the white image of women is ignored. Moreover, the findings of the study cannot be claimed to apply to each and every novel with the same issues.

1.7 Definition of terms

1- Feminism: is a collection of movements and ideologies which aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. A feminist advocates or supports the rights and equality of women.

2- Womanism : According to Alice Walker who coined this term in 1983 in her collection of essays titled as *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, it is From womanish. (Opp. of "girlish", i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in great depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folks expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. Serious

3- Patriarchal society: the society in which females are dominated by males in most aspects of life.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of related literature

1.1 Theoretical Literature

This chapter studies the womanism and feminism theories and their different aspects as viewed by critics. Many critics have studied the novel from a feminist point of view even many others have read it as a womanist literary work. It is, therefore, worth mentioning the main differences and the similarities between these two critical viewpoints.

Feminism calls for the rights and equality of women. It attempts to reject and even rebel against the ignorance of women's rights. It aims to give women their rights just as the males. Betty Friedan discusses in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) the traditional gender roles, the policies which are unfair to women at politics, work, and education. She tackles the discrimination that women suffer from; she also talks about the submissive woman at home and the direct responsibility of man for subduing her personality and causing the loss of her identity. The second-wave feminism began in the 1970s. It empowered the movement with great literary works such as Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1971), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971), Nancy Friday's *My Mother My Self: The Daughter's Search for Identity* (1977) and many others.

In 1993 Rebecca- Walker, a famous feminist author, coined the term Third-wave feminism to describe a new movement of feminism which depends on actions. Rebecca published her work *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*.

Feminists, whether females or males, argue that technology has an impact over women. For example Lynne B. Iglitzin in *Women in the World* (1976) says that the technological and socioeconomic advances have changed women's lives. Women now go to work, the roles of women inside the house lightened. Women's work is varied. They work in public and private sectors in politics, business, and public services organizations. They prove that they are able to handle what men handle. Nevertheless, socially speaking, women still depend upon males of the family for permission and domicile. "There may be a constitutional amendment on equal rights for women in one country or a statute barring sex discrimination in another. Yet everywhere sex-stereotyped and views based upon traditional norms and values prevail." (p.8). He adds that there are four reasons for men's superiority over women. First, the physical strength of the male. Second, the cultural norms. Third, the religious beliefs. Fourth, the shift from communal to private property. In other words, we have four authorities that used to enrich the patriarchal development, biological, cultural, religious, and economic.

Feminism is based on the view that male-dominated institutions and male-oriented values and beliefs have lasted so long and have been so universal that they have become almost standard beliefs that we can find in any society. Hence, the need to counteract this patriarchal argument. Feminists say that from a traditional patriarchal view, women's work should suit her personality; it can be nurturing work such as a teacher, a nurse, a secretary, etc. Woman is always connected to a male. She is a sister, a daughter, a mother, a wife. Her identity comes through a male. She can't stand alone by her name. She is a daughter of a male, a wife of a male. That means her name is tied to a male. No matter what a woman's achievement may be, her basic role is a wife or a mother. Her job outside the house isn't that important. Woman can't

be fully independent without a help from a male. Feminists add that patriarchy believes that women should leave politics and many other activities and professions to men for they don't have the high intellectual and physical qualities that men have. Feminists maintain that these thoughts are male- oriented and lead to the perpetuation of patriarchal societies and deprive the women's rights which constitution guarantees. So, feminism calls for legal, educational and familial rights for women.

Rita Felski in *The Gender of Modernity* (1995) argues that industry, the media and technology are masculine while females are considered as the consumers for these changes as wives, mothers and sisters. Such a view makes women concerned more about having a theme and an identity for themselves. They eventually try to play a more significant role in the family and in her larger society in order to be productive and to have a role in life.

In her book, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1999) Bell Hooks presents the blindness that the feminist approach suffers from when it comes to black women or lower class women. She traces the period of black history from slavery days till the modern era. She criticizes some feminist statements when they use the color to reflect the suffering that whites handle. She highlights the role of black women in building and developing America. She presents the sexism, racism, de-humanizing and even intra- racial racism the black women are forced to deal with in their lives while the Feminist theory totally neglects.

Black Feminist Thought by Patricia H. Collins (2000) argues that Black intellectuals in the USA raise the essential issues that black women face. A lot of them believe that the main reason for that discrimination is the politics. The policies over the previous centuries regard black as slaves who have no right to practice their

lives as the white people do. African-American women came to the US in order to work. That created a big gap relating to intellectuality. Women had to spend their time at work; so they had no time to practice any intellectual activity; besides they had to pay a large amount of money if they wanted to survive. Another important problem at that time was the privileges that white people had as compared with the blacks. For example, Afro-American women were forbidden from voting. Inside the court – rooms Afro-American women did not receive good treatment. Even education was considered for whites only and slaves had no access to the knowledge that the masters attained. It was very rare then to find a black intellectual; and if you found one; that was considered as an exception. Despite the new regulations of teaching Afro-American women; still they couldn't be teachers, critics or scholars.

Gender - based discrimination is one of the major issues that feminism fights. Feminists distinguish between the term sex and gender. They define sex as a biological constitution that separates males from females. While they defined gender as a reference to our behavior as socially programmed men and women . Abba Amawin in her book *Against All Odds* (2001) explains that even though women ask for equality but gender-based discrimination can be found in marriage, nationality, passports, citizenship and taxation and social pension. In her view, family has remained " patriarchal and hierarchical in structure on the basis of sex and age"(p. 10). The young obey the elders, females obey males. According to the patriarchal traditions female should be submissive to the males of the family whether a father, a brother, a husband, an uncle or a cousin. Such traditions are still highly respected despite the latest changes in the human societies everywhere. Women should obey males blindly if they don't listen to them they will be considered as bad girls.

In her book *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (2003) Estelle B. Freedman highlights the history of feminism saying that in 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft the English philosopher wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. According to her, this book created what she calls the First- wave of Feminism. The book is British but American women read it and showed interest in it. Despite the huge spread of Mary's book and the agreement of women to the book's philosophy it was only in July 1848 that feminism movement started at Seneca Falls Convention in the United States. She adds that during the World War 1 men fought at war; so women took the control of the states and replaced the men at their jobs. They handled the same jobs that men do. That increased the suffrage, yet it didn't give women their rights even after the war. During World War II millions of men again had to leave the country and enlist in the war. Women at this period worked at the military factories and the states organizations and institutions. They kept the economy going during the war time. When the war was over, women got the experience and proved that they were able to work the same jobs that men do. So that was the birth of the Second-wave of feminism movement.

Lois Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today* (2006) examines the ways in which literature and other productions reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women. (Tyson, 2006, P.85). She argues that males are the source of authority in the traditional patriarchal society. They even pass that power to their male children. She adds that Feminism doesn't belong to a certain nation since all women are subjected to some sort of patriarchal oppression. Tyson points out that feminism has many weaknesses that many people in color claim that it is not a sufficient movement for them. She also indicates that Alice Walker used the term "Womanism" in her book *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*

(1983). According to Tyson, Walker uses the term to describe black and colored feminist. In Walker's view, feminism excludes the black women from its agenda, it doesn't give much attention to race since it's a white oriented.

Many studies have been written on *The Color Purple*, but these studies examined the novel from a purely feminist perspective. Originally, Alice Walker intended to widen the term **Womanism** and to show its implications clearly in her novels. She realized that Feminism was not an appropriate theory to discuss the black women's sufferings since white people have not faced what black people have suffered from.

Walker tries to reflect her ideas and views about womanism in her novel *The Color Purple*. King- Kok Cheung in *"Don't Tell": Imposed Silences in The Color Purple and The Woman Warrior* (1988) says that Celie after her father threatens to not tell anyone but God chooses paper to tell out her story . She reverses the silence into a voice of hers, she turns the threat into a creation of a new woman. Celie speaks aggressively to ban the dominance again. She judges moral issues not according to what God says but according to people's opinion. At the end of the story, Celie writes in a better way using Black English dialect. However, she proves that she is not "dumb" as her father described her. At the end, she is free and happy. She sews and wears pants, she speaks her mind, and she has her own way. In short, she is completely transformed.

Cynthia Hamilton in *Alice Walker's Politics or the Politics of the Color Purple* (1988) links the novel with the real life issues that many people face, not only black people but the whites as well. She comments that this novel can't be for black only; it is universal. It doesn't discuss the story of black young girl it tells the history of slavery that white people are responsible for. The novelist suggests the strengthening of the laws in order to put a punishment for every rapist whether from inside the

family or outside it . She writes about the alienation in our life, the broken family ties. Celie succeeds in knowing the missing part in her life; it is her identity. Walker believes that the sense of victimization is a universal issue. It doesn't depend on sex or color or race or nationality. So, the only way to escape that victimization is through transformation (Hamilton .1988.p. 382). Walker is the first one to give a voice to a victim. At the end of the novel Walker shows that nothing is impossible. The white woman depends on a black woman. The colonizers (men) return to their homes alone while their women become very independent financially and socially. People in Africa return to America.

Walker selects her female characters in a way that makes them universal and many people from different parts of the world can identify with. All of them experience males' dominance whether black or white. All of them know that the only way to live better is to transform into new individuals depending on themselves. As a writer concerned with social issue, Walker wants for her characters a better life by education, communication, self- reliance and hard work.

The question of race is presented as a main factor in distinguishing feminism from womanism. In *Race and Domesticity in The Color Purple*, Linda Selzer (1995) asserts that Walker creates a domestic ignorant black woman who doesn't know anything about outer life . Celie doesn't fight race only; she fights intra- racial racism, sex and class in her black society. Walker presents race through kinship relationships in the novel. Celie says that: " White people is black peoples' children" [sic] (Walker. 1982. P.231) Adams' story has an influence in Olinka society since they believe that he was a white man and marries a black woman. Depending on this Celie predicts that race discrimination will not vanish from the societies. She says that it is an old way

for reinforcing the males' dominance and so, she doesn't think it will disappear in the society.

Lynn Pifer and Tricia Slusser (1998) comment in their *Looking at the Back of Your Head on The Color Purple* from a Lacanian psychoanalysis theory. They write that Celie presents a mirror stage in the novel since she develops her selfhood in the novel. Celie experienced rape in a young age so she has a false concept of her body and of herself. When Celie writes letters to God she writes "I have always been a good girl," (Walker. 1982. P.11) expressing that she doesn't feel that she is a good girl anymore. Then Celie calls her husband the Mr.- to say how much she is detached from him. The writers say: "According to Lacan, the need for symbolic language in the post-mirror stage points to the fact that all subjects remain split. Meconnaissance allows a subject to believe in his or her wholeness, but this is simply an illusion one might carry for life" (Lynn Pifer and Tricia Slusser.1998.P. 49). Celie at the end of the novel celebrates her language even when a friend of hers asks her to use standard English because the language she uses makes her appear like a dumb. She says that: "Look like to me only a fool would want you to talk in a way that feels peculiar to your mind" (Walker. 1982. 223). She accepts her selfhood with her language and her body. Mirror stage applies very correctly for Celie since she makes big advancements in her character and in herself acceptance. Lacan claims that we all work hard to achieve unified images of self that is rarely achieved. Yet, Celie achieves this and has a unified self image.

In *Philomela Speaks: Alice Walker's Revisioning of Rape Archetypes in The Color Purple* by Martha J. Cutter (2000) argues that Walker reverses Philomela's myth where the woman in the myth couldn't speak about her rape nor about her rapist even when she wrote to her sister she was dead by then and her sister kept her voice in

a letter. While Celie breaks that and tells Shug verbally about her raping experience and before that she writes to God telling Him about her rapist. The text raises many binary oppositions like feminine and masculine, pretty and ugly, spoken and silenced. Cutter writes that "In Walker's hands Philomela's speech becomes the instrument for a radical metamorphosis of the individual as well as a subversive deconstruction of the power structures that undergird both patriarchal language and the patriarchal world itself." (Cutter. 2000.P. 164) . Walker changes a lot of the myth events. In the myth the sisters die while in this novel the two sisters return to their house. Celie creates her own language and business. She is responsible for narrating her story and other women's stories. Celie breaks the male cycle when she announces her own desires to live the rest of her life in her home away from the Mr.-'s abuse. Celie redeems Shug's broken health while Shug redeems Celie's broken heart and self.

Lois Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today* (2006) says that African- American literature has focused mainly on showing the political, social and economic circumstances that women live. She mentions that Alice Walker argues that there are three types of women which writers use to represent black women as characters in literature. The first kind is the "suspended woman" the weak and the submissive female. She suffers from the physical and verbal violence. The second type is the "assimilated woman". This type is the one who looks for acceptance in the white society, so she neglects her black roots and tries harder to be welcomed in the white society. The third type is the "emergent woman" who is aware of her oppression and is capable of changing the circumstances around her she is much stronger than the suspended woman. (p.394)

1.2 Empirical literature

Patricia Harris Abrams (1985) in *The Gift of Loneliness: Alice Walker's The Color Purple* finds that Walker believes in women's independence as human creatures. They can control their lives as Celie does. The novel tells Celie's story that takes thirty years to be completed. Walker uses a very interesting way of presenting the source of oppression when Nettie writes to Celie telling her about the Olinka tribe in Africa. Nettie tells her the past in order to understand the present. She discusses the slavery in the past in order to understand why black women suffer; Walker chooses the place in Africa to provide a sense of honesty and a background for the black's suffering. She shows the male's dominance and power over helpless women. Ironically enough, Celie's mother was a quilt maker because of that she had to suffer more from her husband. Nettie writes to Celie that in Olinka it is men who make the quilts; women are not allowed to sew them.

Abrams points out that Walker believes in the power of change : "Walker believes strongly in the ability of people to change and grow, attributing this belief to her work in registering black voters in Mississippi during the Civil Rights Movement, when she saw a great deal of change."(Abrams. 1985.p.30) . He shows that all her characters in the novel undergo some change in one way or another.

Catthuan L. Nguyen (2010) in his thesis *A Joint Reading of The Color Purple and The Awakening: From Feminism to Womanism and the significance of Authentic Feminism Space* highlights what Walker believes is the basis for supporting the black society. Walker believes in the role of family in constructing the community that is aware of its civil rights. Even more Alice Walker calls the single family (community) since she thinks that the single family is responsible for having the power of development. That is reflected in her novel *The Color Purple* when Walker creates her female characters to pass through the racial traumas more than class struggle

which is basically a feminist concern. The question of race covers the novel as a whole not only one female character suffers from this but also all the female characters in the novel. Celie doesn't face the race problem in her society from the whites even worse, she experiences the intra-racial racism. Sofia has to go to jail because she refused to work in the Mayor's house as a servant and after leaving the jail she is forced to work as a servant in the Mayor's house.

Celie realizes the importance of the role of sisterhood in the novel. Her true love feelings revolve around the female characters like her sister, Sofia and Shug. She knows that the only loyalty that she can offer is for her females. She condemns the patriarchal society that ignores her needs. Through her relationship with Nettie her sister she can speak her mind openly without any fear. Walker wants to summarize that women can change their way of life and can pick a better path. She seems to be urging women to create their own community's principles rather than accepting the dominant social principles. Nguyen mentions that "'Whiteness' and 'blackness' as cultural signifiers appear in ...text as mechanisms for understanding the appropriation of norms and establishment of social taboos." (Nguyen.2010.p.9) He comments on considering the white as beautiful whereas the black as ugly. In *The Color Purple*, he observes "it becomes evident that black is beautiful and physical robustness and vigor in the female are celebrated and coveted and serve as the source and strength of personal and social elevation." (Nguye.2010.p.9). When Celie describes God to Shug she says: "big and old and tall and gray bearded and white He wear white robes and go barefooted. Blue eyes? She ast. Sort of Bluish-gray. Cool. Big though. White lashes I say. " (Walker. 1982, p.195) . Shug realizes that Celie thinks of God from a racist masculine point of view. She believes that since God is powerful that makes

him a man, and since he is beautiful that makes him white. She also says : " . . the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful, and lowdown" (Walker. 1982. p. 175).

Nguyen's study was important for this thesis. However, Nguyen focuses in his study on the idea of sexism in the black society ignoring many other aspects that black women face. This thesis covers many other remaining aspects that black women suffer from specially the intra- racial racism. The intra-racial racism has a direct influence over the characters in the novel. Beauty, class and education play a greater role in the black society to gain respect and their least rights as women. Black woman can't be independent until she proves that she is strong enough to do that. Nguyen's doesn't cover the role of patriarchal society in strengthen the abuse over women, since they are physically weaker. Patriarchal society destroys women's personalities as we see in the novel. Women in America or in Africa couldn't speak until they have the right to do so from a male; a father or a husband. The economic independence is totally refused by men because they feel that it weakens their manly appearance if women provide the family. Shug in the novel has many males around her but when she gets sick nobody accepts to treat her till she gets fine again. People don't respect her, they like her appearance but they don't agree morally on what she is doing specially when she left her kids.

Maria Berg Jorgensen in her thesis *Women, Letters and the Empire : The role of the epistolary narrative in Alice Walker's The Color Purple.*(2011) says that this novel aims to give a voice to the voiceless. She explains that Celie heals when she is heard. Celie is able to survive because her voice is kept in letters and then is loudly heard when she breaks her dad's taboo and tells Shug about her raping by her dad. She asserts that the novel is more political than feminist. She adds:" The story in *The*

Color Purple is the story of a woman telling her story in her voice." (Jorgensen. 2011.p. 27-28). Celie is the one who narrates her own story, so that makes the story more reliable. She has the responsibility to narrate other characters' stories and voices. But at the end she finds her own voice and this makes the difference. The novel shows the race troubles that black people suffer and inflict. Walker finds many solutions to the characters in the novel but there is one final solution to the race problem. The only thing she can hope for is that the next generations will try to achieve some reconciliation within their societies and within the black and the white communities.

In her study entitled *Breaking the Silence* (2012) Sigrún Tinna Sveinsdóttir mentions that this novel can be read as two stories; the first one is the story of Celie as a silenced woman who receives the oppression and says nothing, she only writes letters to God. The second one is the stronger Celie who finally finds her path and voice and now she is able to free herself from the brutality. The writer adds that every female in the novel has her own story but all of them have one thing in common which is silencing them by male characters. The female characters have experienced the abuse physically and verbally. At the end of the novel the female characters feel comfortable with themselves. They refuse the oppression and the strong force that works hard to silence them. The men are the silencers and the women are the silenced. The novel has three main themes; the role of silencing women, the relationships between sexes and males' power. In the writer's opinion, Walker proves that black women understand silencing better since it doesn't mean the act of not speaking but the act of social oppression. They understand it because they pass the notion of slavery so they can judge better about the social abuse. Every female character in the novel experienced her silencing cycle.

Blossom Shimayam Ottah-Agede observes in *Gendered Selves Reconstruction in Alice Walker's The Color Purple and Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (2013) that many critics discussed the novel from a feminist point of view and talked about the suffering of the main characters. Walker refuses to be called a feminist since feminism is concerned with white women's issues. She thinks that womanism is more universal. It neglects the differences between women in terms of race, color, or social class. Shimayam Ottah-Aged bases the study on the feminist perspective alone. The researcher bases the discussion of the main issues in the novel on the notion of womanism rather than feminism. This approach would enable the reader to see the novel from a wider and perhaps a new perspective. Thus, the novel would be seen not as a work concerned with a limited perspective but a reflection of universal issues that require greater attention. Celie's problem is not confined to black American community but to various communities.

Chapter Three

3.1 Methods and procedures

The method to be used in this study is the feminism and womanism approach in light of which the researcher will trace some of the main topics in *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. The study intends to analyze in detail the major events and the characters that show how the black patriarchal community bans women from having the rights which the law gave them. It will also discuss some actions that expose the traditional gender role and the impact of the black social customs over women's decisions and actions.

3.2 Methods of the study

The researcher will analyze the novel focusing on the female characters and themes and the epistolary style. Though the traditional feminist approach will be referred to in one way or another, the main concentration will focus on the womanist approach which is somewhat different from the feminist approach in that it tends to be concerned with character image rather than the more general issues of woman as woman in the full sense of the word. Studies that have dealt with this concept will be focused on to provide the background for the discussion.

3.3 Procedures of the study.

- 1- Reading the novel and the biography of Alice Walker.
- 2- Tracing the development of feminism and womanism.

- 3- Reading the previous studies related to the main topics.
- 4- Studying and investigating Alice Walker's ideas concerning womanism.
- 5- Analyzing the themes and the technical aspects of the work.
- 6- Discussing the findings.
- 7- Conclusion

3.4 Feminism

In its general definition, feminism is a movement that aims to establish political, legal, cultural and economic rights for women. According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* Feminism is: "the advocacy of women's rights on ground of equality of the sexes." According to Tyson, feminist criticism "examines the ways in which literature and other cultural productions reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women" (Tyson,2006, P.81). Weedon, defines feminism as "a politics directed at changing existing power relations, between women and men in society, which structure all areas of life, the family, . . . and welfare" (Weedon. 1997,p,1). Another definition for feminism is given by Lizabeth Goodman who defines feminism as "a recognition of the historical and cultural subordination of women . . . and a resolve to do something about it" (Goodman. 1996, p. 1). Goodman argues that feminism is a rebellious movement where women have to fight the principles of the patriarchy to enhance their positions in the society and to overcome women's marginalization.

Catthua. L. Nguyen defines feminism as follows:

Feminism, according to the works of influential critics such as Simone De Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler, is an umbrella term for any

movement that seeks to highlight the subjectification of women and their exclusion from participation in active areas of life, to ameliorate the conditions of existence of woman at any or all levels, or to bring forth her being and all its complexities as a force to be reckoned with. Feminism fundamentally posits that western society is dominantly patriarchal and progress is predicated upon the recognition of oppression of women and the initiative to rewrite their lives."(Nguyen, 2010, pp.9-10)

Feminists are aware of the struggle that women lead in traditional patriarchal societies. The belief of male's superiority over females is the crucial issue on the feminists' agenda. The belief of males' power over females based on gender is another characteristic that they take in to account; because of that, they distinguish between gender and sex. Recently, women themselves have shown more awareness of their positions in the patriarchal society. This awareness leads thinkers whether males or females to dig deep in the patriarchal society in order to understand its conception regarding women. Feminists find that literature is the fruitful field for patriarchal thoughts. They believe that women in literature are presented as weak, silent, submissive, passive, obedient and fully conform. As soon as the woman tries to go out of the patriarchal circle, she will be looked at as "evil". Feminists work for better women's existence; they don't have one concern but "the very question of what it is to be a woman, . . . and campaigns against the objectification of women as sexual objects for male consumption" (Weedon.1997.P. 1). Women have been presented in male's literature as mute, their experiences have been criticized as less trustworthy and their works have been examined as a biographical account while the only voice that can be heard is the male's voice, and their experiences have been regarded as a universal literature.

Feminism has also gained currency in engaging with different critical theories like psychoanalysis where they establish a deep understanding of the female's characters and a vast knowledge of the author him\her self. Another critical approach that feminism has engaged with is post- colonial theory where women are seen as the "colonized" and the patriarchal society is the "colonizer". Both theories discuss the imbalance between the two powers and both refuse the "otherness".

No one can deny the importance of feminism theory whether in its impact over the society or for other critical theories. Actually, the importance of this theory lies in the fact that it recognizes racial, educational, ethnic, class and cultural differences between women and men. White female oppression is totally different from black female oppression. A woman in America suffers from certain constrains that a woman in Africa may not suffer from. They argue that even in the same country, women's needs and oppression may differ.

3.5 The History of Feminism

In order to understand its manifestations, we have to study the history of feminism. The term first appeared in France in 1880's, then in Great Britain in 1890's and after that in the United States of America in 1910. Earlier, and in 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft had written *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* where she highlighted the marginalized role that women played in the Western society. She asked them to define themselves as women, to give their own views about being a woman and not just accepting what the patriarchal society declares. She asked them to believe in their gender since they are the only ones who can change the oppression. Mary's book created the First- wave Feminism. The First- wave feminist movement asked for women's rights of education, empowerment, work, voting and personal freedom.

The second-wave feminism was interested mainly in sisterhood. It empowered the movement with its great literary works such as Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1971), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971), Nancy Friday's *My Mother My Self: The Daughter's Search for Identity* (1977). The second-wave feminism failed to achieve its most important goals because the government was not supporting such a movement and perhaps because it did not receive the necessary public support especially from men who opposed many of what they considered extremist views.

Third-wave feminism appeared in the 1990s. According to Margot Badran (1993) this movement has somehow different issues to care about such as national health care, child care, passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, sexuality, sexual self-esteem, balancing family and work, gender justice. In April, 22, 2004 women went on strike to call for black women's rights, immigrants' rights and poor women's rights. The U.S government supported the strike. They showed the power of the new generation of feminists.

Although the second wave feminism believed in sisterhood, the third wave was interested in individuality. The writers of the second wave focused on legal rights, political rights, educational rights, whereas, the third wave writers focused on women's emotional needs, marriage, and being free from life burden as a woman. The third wave writers talked about sex and sexuality but the second wave writers were more conservative. And finally, the third wave was much more universal in its outlook.

Eliane Showalter divided women's in literature into three phases. The first one is the feminine phase (1840-1880) where women authors like Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot accepted the male's norms and believed in the universality of male's literature. They portrayed women from traditional patriarchy lenses. George Eliot

wrote under male pseudonym in order to get the acceptance of the audience. The second phase is the feminist phase (1880-1920) where women “had seen the emergence of the so-called, new woman □ phenomenon, in which intelligent, liberated feminists were seen taking up the strong roles in the public world” (Matthews,2008, p. 92). The third phase is the female phase (1920-the present) where women wrote their own issues and published them using their own voices and names.

Others have classified feminism according to the place. They argue that there are three types of feminism: American feminism, French feminism and British feminism. The American feminism believes in the importance of activism to achieve the movement goals. The American feminist critic Anette Kolodny contends that female writers are obliged to write according to males' pens because they have the upper hand on the press. Their voices as women don't appear as long as they write against the male's hegemony.

The second strain is French feminism which has taken two forms: the first one is materialistic feminism and the second one is psychoanalytic feminism. The first form is interested in the economic and the physical conditions that are used to oppress women. They believe that " women are not born feminine but rather conditioned to be feminine by patriarchy" (Tyson.2006.P.96). The psychoanalytic feminism is concerned with the impact of patriarchy on the psychological status of women. The psychoanalytic feminist critics argue that the oppression on the materialist side is as much demanding as psychological side and even the last one is more important because it has a " lasting foundation" (Tyson.2006, p. 100).

The third strain is British feminism where feminists demand for the practice of feminism and apply it on the real world and not only speculate and theorize about it.

Ironically, while white women try to get rid of patriarchy in their societies, they practice another form of oppression over women of color. Hooks argues that " if women want to be set free, they must work together ignoring any differences between themselves". (p.35).

Feminism and Womanism:

Feminism has been accused of being a white oriented movement which is concerned mainly with the whites' issues. Ward and Herndle comment on feminism, saying that it is "markedly white, middle-class, Western, and heterosexual" (Ward & Herndl, 1997, p. 259). For many, feminism deals only with women, usually white color women, and almost no one or nothing else.

In contrast, womanism doesn't separate women's issues from males' issues since they both suffer from the same problems: race and color discrimination. By and large, feminism heavily focuses on women and their problems while womanism focuses on race and more general problems. Womanism doesn't see masculinity as a threat; it believes that both genders are considered outsiders, so this movement works hard to prove that Afro-American can be insiders. Smith notices that "the meaning of blackness in this country shapes profoundly the experience of gender, just as the conditions of womanhood affect ineluctably the experience of race." (Smith, 1997, p. 17).

Feminists look for the style and the language that the author uses to criticize the text from a feminist point of view. Black writers have their own language that barley white critics can understand and that leads to neglect a lot of black writers without considering their literature universal. Reading black literature carries with it more than the image of woman in literature; it has a wider view such as the racism, sexism,

the massive economical problems and slavery. Womanists do not view black women's suffering as a result of their color but also because of their culture. Thus, womanists try to look at women's issues from a wider and a more universal perspective.

Walker explains that accepting the feminists' ideas as they are without any change would mean only one thing: erasing the black woman and the woman of color's experience. However, she admits that we can't separate the woman's call from the race demands, so feminism and womanism can't be completely separated. Black literature was neglected by the white writers who believed that it doesn't reflect universal issues or even issues that are close to their culture.

Reading through the womanism and feminism theories can reveal many similarities between the two theories and the need for women to come together, regardless of their difference in race or color. (Williams, 1986, p.303). Above all, womanism is a more comprehensive term than feminism. When Alice Walker uses the term womanism she argues that this term attempts to reflect the wholeness and the survival for the entire people, females and males, whites and blacks. Walker refuses to be seen either as black or as a woman. She refuses to be judged twice, once for being black and the other for being a woman.

In her well-known essay, Walker defines Womanism as follows:

Womanist 1. From *womanish*. (opp. of "girlish", i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know

more and in great depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown, Responsible in charge and serious.

She adds:

2. *Also*: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?” And “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.”

And finally,

3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself.

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender. (Walker, 1984,xi-xii)

Walker wants to give a voice for the black neglected women regardless of their origin or ethnicity. She encourages relationships in the black society whether sexual or not sexual. She also calls for more flexibility in the black society where a woman

can raise her children plus her sisters' or friends' children. She focuses on the idea of promoting the women's rights but not by destroying their relationship with their men or even by losing their motherhood.

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham argues that feminism is very different from womanism since “The Africana woman did not see the man as her primary enemy as does the White feminist, who is carrying out an age-old battle with her White male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. Africana men have never had the same institutionalized power to oppress Africana women as White men have had to oppress White women (Higginbotham, 1989, p. 54). She says that womanism exposes the gap between feminism and its actual practice. It tackles wider issues that feminism doesn't take into account such as class, race and nationalism since feminism is mainly a middle class movement. Despite this, feminists claim that black literature is a revolutionary literature that asks for quests and protests. They argue that it gives a clear idea about their internal and external insecurity that they are living with. They argue that black people believe that whites are the real reason for subjugating the blacks and are the reason for their depression. The racial and white cultural texts view black males as beasts and physically powerful while black women as temptresses. On the other hand, they show white women as pure, sensitive and feminine. And this is the racial injustice that Alice Walker tries to fight. On the other hand, for both white and black, women are controlled by the patriarchy; they are chained by the myth of male's dominance over female because of their muscles.

Womanism asks females to celebrate their differences whether in color or race or even education. Walker dislikes the novels where the black woman's aim is to

integrate with the white society at the expense of her original society. she hates the texts where the woman is preferred due to her beauty or sexuality and nothing more. She asks for texts where black woman tries to realize herself among the whole world as a black woman who tells her real experience and who wants to be looked at as a full human being with all her weaknesses and qualities.

In her article *"Saving the Life That Is Your Own"* Walker insists on establishing a model if we want to present a womanist text. She argues : "The absence of models, in literature as in life, to say nothing of painting, is an occupational hazard for the artist, simply because models in art, in behavior, in growth of spirit and intellect-even if rejected- enrich and enlarge one's view of existence" (Walker, 1984,p.20). In the same article Walker talks about finding a model for herself in the black southern writer Zora Neale Hurston. She read her name in a footnote and when she looked for more information about the name, she found many similarities between herself and her precursor. They are both neglected – at least in Walker's case, at first. They are both black females who are fighting in male- dominated areas; which are literature, literary criticism, and anthropology.

Walker says that whenever a writer or a critic looks for a model, it has to suit the racial, sexual and cultural needs. Walker makes it clear that the duty for black author isn't easy at all. She adds that the black author:

“Will be concerned with raising a reading level from the second grade to third, with simplifying history and writing it down (or reciting it) for the old folks. With helping illiterates fill out foodstamp forms-for they must eat, revolution or not. The dull, frustrating work with our people is the work of the black

revolutionary artist. It means, most of all, staying close enough to them to be there whenever they need you." (Byrd, 1983, p. 126).

Walker mentions that it is the duty of the black author to educate people, to tell them more about their true history, to widen the black academic knowledge and to render the black experiences and challenges. In her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker raises the awareness of respecting the previous black authors especially women black authors. She maintains that the role of the author is to revolt for the feebleness in the civil rights and make the readers see what the writer sees also suffer from what he suffers, to complete what she starts at defending colorist, racist, sexist ideologies, to gain knowledge from her own victories and defeats . She believes that it is the role of the writer to picture the African- American people as they really are, to provide texts that show the racism ideologies that they suffer from, to highlight the relationship between politics, economics and race. She asks black writers to present the black woman as a human being , not as a symbol for representing – or misrepresenting- the servitude. She does not oppose the presentation of black women as hard workers but she prefers to link their experiences as blacks with the traditions of African American people.

Walker also stresses on identifying the black woman in the texts by showing the hardships that women handle in the workplace, whether sexual or otherwise. She also calls for the need to reveal the oppression that black women face because of their features or color whether in schools or in dealing with white or black people. She also adds that the only way that women in color can avoid problems because of their distinct color is by putting their hands together and establishing their own business.

When the novel *The Color Purple* won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988 many critics raised this question: "Why has she chosen to create that much of caring women who struggle against violent, self-centered men?" She replied as follows:

" I wanted to explore the relationship between men and women, and why women are always condemned for doing what men do as an expression of their masculinity. Why are women so easily "tramps" and "traitors" when men are heroes for engaging in the same activity? Why do women stand for this?" (Walker,1994, p. 197).

Critics argue that not only black males have suffered from racism; even women have. Even among the same society there is a difference based on color i.e. dark-skinned black and light-skinned black. The novel was written by a woman so, this is the image of a man in the eyes of a woman. Celie – Walker's protagonist- is presented as a domestic figure, where she has no connection with the outer world. She doesn't know anything about what goes on outside her place; she awaits her husband to tell her, and he barley tells her what goes on.

Walker's loyalty to her people and color is obvious in her novels, essays, stories and even poems. She has discussed race issue; she talks about black women in general ad black writers in particular. Walker in her works talks also about black men. And that shows her desire to help both genders and to prove that the womanist movement is universal and not restrictive.

The feminist movement has played a great role in raising the awareness for women's rights, not only in literature but even in the societies as a whole. Traditional gender roles present the man as rational, strong, protective and determined person while it presents women as irrational, weak, and unresolved. Feminism is now one of

the major issues in the world. It tackles political, religious, and socioeconomic matters. In the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century policies over the world guaranteed women's rights at politics, labor, marriage and travelling yet the social attitude towards women's rights has not achieved what it is supposed to.

Women around the world are still under the control of their fathers, brothers, uncles or any male in the family and they have no right to refuse such a custom. Even though they are financially independent, have jobs and have the same pay as men have, are educated and have this right which is guaranteed by the constitutions, their rights are lost at home within the family traditions. According to the patriarchal society since the man is the stronger partner, the protector, the rational, the experienced and the family provider, he has all the reasons to be the superior. Customs teach the female to respect and to obey blindly their fathers, brothers, uncles or any male in the family. A good woman is the good wife, the dedicated mother, the submissive sister. Despite the recent transformations of women in the whole world, still the males stick to their patriarchy and superiority.

Many critics have distinguished between the term "women's fiction" and "feminism". According to Nina Baym, women's fiction can be defined as the fiction that is "written by women, addressed to women, and tells one particular story about women." (Brown, 1989, p.2) On the other hand, feminism according to Oxford dictionary is "the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes". So depending on feminism definition both males and females can write about women's issues. However, Alice Walker chooses another term to describe her writing loyalties. She uses the term Womanism in order to show the sufferings that the women from different cultures, races and colors are experiencing. Walker states that:

"Womanist is to feminist as *purple* to lavender "(Walker,1983,p. XII). She describes her text as purple in comparison with other feminist texts which are lavender. The color purple is very rich, the color of imperial, glory and power. So, giving such a color to poor black woman, Walker seeks to show the sense of heroism in her life. She writes in her preface in *The Color Purple* that "this color (purple)...is always a surprise but everywhere in nature"(Walker, 1982,p. XI).

Walker defines womanism as a “consciousness that incorporates racial, cultural, sexual, national, economic, and political considerations" (Brown, 1989, p.4). She doesn't write only stories that express the physical needs for one woman in particular; she weaves an outstanding language and incidents that the protagonist in her novel *The Color Purple* uses to overcome her social and linguistic barriers. Walker is rebelling against topics and themes that are far away from her reserved culture. She considers the black society as a community which consists of men and women and in that case the theory of womanism is not separatist.

In this respect, Walker is not only concerned with political or civil rights; she is also concerned with ethnic, cultural rights as well as female sensibility. Walker makes her protagonist Celie break her silence, refuse her oppression and influence other female characters in the novel. Walker shows that the sufferings that women face are rooted in the black society from slavery. Celie as Carolyn Heilbrun describes her is "outsider twice over" (Williams,1986, p.37), once because she is a woman and the other one because she is black. That leads her to handle the penalty of sexism and racism as well. As Showalter says in this respect, black woman is both “the Other Woman, the silenced partner” (Showalter, 1997, p. 214).

Actually, Black American literature goes back in history to the late 18th century. The first book that was written by an Afro-American writer is *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* in 1773 by a Negro African girl called Phillis Wheatley. The author tried to reflect in her book the desire to be equal and free. Many authors followed Philips and in 1861 Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* raised many questions about the real need to liberate women from slavery. The writer stressed that black women suffer even more than black men since they have to go work, they are raped, they are forced to bear more kids, they are doing all the house work and worse than that, they are sexually oppressed. Following that work, many black authors talked and wrote about their civil rights and the need to cancel the slavery.

Some critics have argued that Afro-American literature is unique because of their folklore, music, culture and myths that originally came from Africa. Others have argued that the uniqueness refers to the issues that they raised in their writings such as racism, slavery, labor exploitation and the injustice laws. Some of them even claimed that the works of Phillis Wheatley, Jupiter Hammon, and Frederick Douglass are not even Afro-American works. Black writers in this era believed themselves to be Negroes writers who produce Negro literature. Those writers worked hard to establish an identity to the black culture and literature.

Between 1900-1945, the black movement made great achievements especially after the Great Migration when a lot of black people migrated to northern America looking for better economical advances. During this period, black people look ahead to their future specially after spreading their culture, folk tales, music, costumes and literature in the northern part of America.

During 1950s- 1960s the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement flourished. In the 1960s they joined into one movement under the name of the Black Power Movement. In that era many female writers wrote but this time away from racial issues and focusing more on myths and reading the double- consciousness in the literature. Gradually, black writers began to assume greater significance and their literature began to be looked as a field by itself. They had the courage to talk freely about the slavery decades where they used to be silenced whenever a writer talked about his experience and a black.

African- American Literature doesn't only reflect political or social domains; it also tackles psychological, intellectual, aesthetic and ideological subjects. It has also been looked at as a production of oppressed and subjected people who only want to rebel against the injustice their race had to endure. Consequently, they tried to distinguish their real identity as Africans and to show that American culture was imposed upon them. Because of that, they struggled to have their own language, their own literature and their own ideologies. (Tyson, 2006 , p. 363). Afro-American writers wrote about their own concerns and their own lifestyle and values and tried to dismiss the superiority of white people.

Langston Hughes a black writer who published a book entitled as *Good Morning* (1951) where he uses the Black English language and inserts the black music. He wanted people to appreciate the black creativity and arts. He speaks for and about the Afro-American people demanding the white authorities in America to make the blacks equal opportunities with the whites. A very good text which discusses slavery in a very sentimental way is *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) written by Harriet Jacob. They belief of black's inability to write was spread in America. White

readers didn't read anything written by blacks. To pull the white reader to read a text that is written by blacks was a challenge that Jacob could face. Yet, still many other black writers fight to make their literature readable by whites. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is another good example on novels that have been accepted by the whites. Though Morrison used the Black English and she included a lot of black's folklore and traditions. The novel created a sense of appreciating the black's heritage and past.

Walker is credited with coining the term "Womanism". She argues that feminism is not capable of responding to the blacks' needs since it only focuses on the whites. Walker wants to liberate women who believe in their inferiority or are programmed to accept the black patriarchy as a canon. She fights the feeling of being "unhomed" that most of women from other races and cultures pass through. As a concept, "unhomed" is different from being homeless. The latter denotes losing the place where you are living at while the former tells more about being inside that place but losing the security and acceptance from the people, culture or yourself. Walker asks for the liberation and freedom of black women everywhere from the double oppression that they undergo: their gender (being women) and race (being black or colored).

Walker unveils the discriminatory practices within black society. It is interesting to note that even inside the black society there is an intra-racial racism. Blacks discriminate people among their race according to darker color or more African physical appearance like face or nose. In her novels and stories Walker presents different kinds of racism; for example she discusses the internalized racism where people in color believe in their inferiority to whites. On the other hand, she writes about institutionalized racism where institutions practice racism. In her novel *The*

Color Purple, Walker chooses her protagonist to speak and write Black English as a language that she uses to express herself. Strangely enough, American white people consider that language as a form of English language that lacks correctness. They don't count it as a language itself. Walker uses her own black diction but she inspires us with the beauty of that language leading us to appreciate the beauty of the black culture that generates this language. Walker is not only eager to distinguish her culture from the culture of the whites; she also wants to prove her heritage and origin as black and to express her thoughts for both whites and blacks.

Many critics raise doubts about the African culture and language and some of them have opposed Walker's views on such critical issues as culture, race, gender and ethnicity. Walker classifies the black female characters in the African- American literature into three categories of women. She calls the first type the "suspended woman" where the woman is oppressed by the males and her society and she can't do anything to defend or even protect herself. This type is found largely in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries literature. The second type is called "assimilated woman" where the woman tries hard to identify herself with the white society. She doesn't suffer from any kind of physical violence but only a psychological need to be accepted. This type is found in the 1940s and 1950s literature. The last type is "emergent woman". In this type the woman has the necessary awareness of her needs, abilities and can lead her life depending on her choices. She is ready to share her experience with others and to know the oppression that males try to practice over her. This type is typical of the 1960s. After 1970s, critics thought of the need to add new category that is "liberated woman". The liberated woman knows her desires and she works hard to discover her abilities and goes with it. (Tyson, 2006, p.394)

Chapter Four

From Feminism to Womanism: A womanist Critique of *The Color Purple*

Alice Walker has influenced the black society with her many novels and stories which fight for the blacks' rights in a Western society which is programmed to consider people in color as slaves, inferiors and low classed. Walker wants to free the policies and the minds of black people of accepting being second -class citizens.

Walker describes herself “as apologist and chronicler for black women” (Washington, 1993.p.39). She coins the term Womanism to announce that feminism movement is insufficient to deliver her message as a black woman who carries three concerns that are being an author, being a female author and finally being a black female author. She witnesses the sexism, the racism as well the nationalism that her people suffer from. She finds that even though feminism is a movement that is directed to woman yet, it doesn't include the hardships that black people face. But first, here is a short biographical sketch of Alice Walker.

1.1 The Biography of Alice Walker

Alice Walker was born in Georgia in 1944. She was the eighth child of Willie Lee Walker. Her father worked as a sharecropper in Georgia. That made Walker witness clearly how white people treated black people. At the age of eight she was shot by a BB gun from her brother, which led her to lose sight in her right eye. But according to her that was a blessing because that made her able to see people and things in their realities and to notice peoples' relationships and most importantly was to write stories and poems.

When Alice finished her high school she chose Spelman College in Atlanta to pursue her higher education. She was very well- known as an activist in civil rights. In 1963 Walker moved to Sarah Lawrence College in New York she where was

surprised when she found herself among the only five black students in the college. Walker travelled to Africa in 1965 but when she got back she was paralyzed for being pregnant. She was afraid of being alienated that she broke the social taboo and got pregnant. She thought seriously of committing suicide, but after many failed trials a friend of her advised her to visit a clinic. She went there .She lost the unwanted baby and relieved herself. On the other hand, she made use of that experience in helping and supporting her friends. Literarily speaking, she started to realize the oppression that women undergo and the complicated relationships between their bodies and their social and patriarchal norms. That shows up clearly in her theory as a womanist and in her stories. In 1960s she worked at the New York City Welfare Department. Even though the interracial marriage was against law in Mississippi, Walker got in 1969 married to Melvyn Leventhal, a white lawyer and moved to Mississippi. Leaving the New York City Welfare Department, she worked at Jackson State College in 1969 and in Tougaloo College in 1970-1971. She started writing stories and poems but she wrote her first novel in 1970 under the title *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. She worked in Wellesley College as well as the University of Massachusetts in Boston as a teacher for black female authors. Walker published the collection of short stories *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women* as well as a volume of poetry, *Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems*. Walker became associate professor at Yale University in 1977. In 1979 she published a new volume of poetry, *Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll See You In The Morning*. In 1981, Walker published another collection of short stories titled as *You Can't Keep a Good Woman*.

The Color Purple appeared in 1982, where Walker treats the themes of sexism and racism. The novel had a huge popularity after winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1983. That success was followed in 1983 when she published a collection of essays *In Search of*

Our Mothers' Gardens. After that Walker published in 1991 a children's story *Finding the Green Stone* while in 1992 she published *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. She wrote in 1993 *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women*. *Anything We Love Can Be Saved: A Writer's Activism* is a book which was published in 1997. It mainly tackled her political views. *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1988) is a novel which discusses female sexuality. *The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart*, is a collection of short stories that appeared in 2000. This book has a special treatment from critics and readers because it has autobiographical references. Her adoring of poetry didn't stop. In 2003 she writes *Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth*. In 2004 she wrote *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart*, about a black author. Walker became a symbol for universalized literature, where she discussed global issues that concern all humans. *The Color Purple* presents a stage for Walker to introduce Zora Neale Hurston, an Afro-American writer, who didn't have the fame that she deserves after her writings. Walker as well calls for protecting the African American heritage from loss. Walker didn't celebrate the success of her novel alone; she represents the Southern Afro-American people and culture as the main themes of the novel.

1.4 *The Color Purple*

The Color Purple is a very well-known novel that was written by Alice Walker in 1982. It is the work which made Alice Walker win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1983. The novel has been chosen to be filmed and directed by the creative director Steven Spielberg also the famous Oprah Winfrey took a role in the film in 1985. After the huge success of the film, it became musical theatre in 2004. The novel was attacked from black critics and people who read the novel. It was attacked for picturing the black male as a rapist and a beast. The female protagonist is unrealistic

for accepting all that suffering. They claim that her weakness is unbelievable. Other critics criticized Walker's writing style. They say it is an imitation of the eighteenth century writing, especially the epistolary novel.

The novel follows the epistolary style. Celie , the novel protagonist, writes letters to God and then to her sister Nettie after she knows that her addressee doesn't read her letters. Celie is a fourteen year old girl who is raped by her father after her mother's death. She has given birth to two children who are taken away from her. She is forced to marry the Mr.- as Celie calls him who has four children from his previous marriage. Her younger sister moves to live with her. But the Mr.- admires her and tries to rape her. When she doesn't approve this, he kicks her out of his house and asks her never to come back.

Celie's life takes a different route when she meets Shug Avery and Sofia. Shug is the Mr's.- previous lover and Sofia is his daughter- in- law. Sofia is very different from Celie. She used to fight every male in the family. She used to stand in their face and force them to have her rights and needs. Sofia doesn't accept Harpo's concept as a husband. Yet, he learns this concept from his father. He doesn't help in house chores because this is a woman's job , not his. He beats her and controls her since he is her husband. Sofia's life is controlled not because of Harpo alone but by the Mayor's white wife who takes her to work as a maid after Sofia is slapped by the Mayor because she doesn't accept to work in his wife's house as a maid. She enters jail and spends many years until she accepts to work as a maid for his wife.

Shug on the other hand, is a very independent woman who enjoys herself as a woman. Shug confesses to Celie that she is independent physically but inside her she is chained. Shug becomes Celie's lover then teaches her many things about her body

and her spirituality. She also teaches her the meaning of God, she helps her to find her own way away from the males' dominance. She establishes her own financial independence.

The story twists when Shug and Celie find out that the Mr.- hides Nettie's letters for many years. After that Celie found the letters and read them. She knew that Nettie had found her two lost children. They are with Samuel and Corrine a married couple who want to go to Africa exactly to Olinka on a missionary trip. Reading the letters Celie knows that who she thinks her father is not her real father. He is a business man who married her mother after her real father's death. She reads that Nettie asks Samuel to tell her the truth about the children. She finally discovers that they are not Samuel's kids. Finding all that Celie decides to leave Albert, the Mr.- . she goes to live with Shug in Memphis, where she becomes a well- known trousers designer. She establishes her financial independence. She continues to write letters but not to God anymore. She writes to Nettie.

Shug leaves Celie to marry a nineteen year old man. She marries him because she is old. Nobody cares for an old woman. Celie doesn't accept to remarry Albert but she keeps him as a friend. Her sister Nettie can't help people in Olinka since the forest is taken by colonized people. She marries Samuel after Corrine's death and she is going to come back in order to see Celie and Celie can see her kids as well.

The novel discusses the two liberations for Celie : first as a woman who is mentally slave and breaks that slavery when she tells Shug about her father's raping. Second, Nettie's letters which reveal the truth and make Celie decide to leave her husband and go back to her step father to take the home from him. Celie surprises Albert when she speaks in a strong voice and expresses her anger and real feelings

toward him. He couldn't believe that Celie's voice becomes heard and she becomes noticed.

The novel represents women's suffering and humiliation. The title itself is taken from the argument between Shug and Celie about the concept of God. Shug says: " I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it"(Walker. 1982. P. 196)

The novel tackles race issues as well. It doesn't present the story of a single woman who is raped and abused because she is a woman. It presents a real suffering that many women handle according to their gender and race. It is a universal concern. The completely patriarchal society is replaced by a matriarchal society where women take care of other women's children and take care of each other. By love and understanding they make their lives better. Celie learns to love herself before she loves males.

The novel starts with a warning for Celie. Her dad says : " You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (11). Because of that Celie writes letters to God. She has a need to speak about her rape experience. She needs to express herself but she doesn't find a way to do that except by writing. She wants to speak out her thoughts and to defend herself through words only. The novel doesn't present Celie as the only female who is silenced. All the females in the novel are silenced but Celie is the only one who is silenced directly. Walker chooses her protagonist to be a black uneducated girl from the south. Women in the south understand oppression better because they face the physical and the emotional oppressions daily. Celie suffers from every male she has met. Her dad rapes her, and takes her kids away from her. Even worse, he prohibits her from telling anyone about her suffering. He takes away her voice and neglects her. Then he sells her to the Mr.- who doesn't treat her well. He

beats her, he makes her a maid in the house where she has to clean, cook, take care of his children from his previous marriage and finally please him in bed. Even Harpo makes her suffer in the first days of marriage. He uses his physical violence to humiliate and insult her. She says: “He pick up the rock and laid my head open. The blood run all down tween my breasts” (p.14). Celie doesn't respond, she only sits away and waits for someone to rescue her. Maybe because she receives a stronger abuse than that, she doesn't fight back. Or maybe because she doesn't know how to fight since she used to be abused and to accept the aggressive treatment. She loses everyone she loves, her mother has passed away and her sister has been kicked away from the Mr.'s.- house when she refuses to accept his desires and raping her. Nettie writes to her asking her to write : “I remember one time you said your life made you feel so ashamed you couldn't even talk about it to God, you had to write it” (p.117) , her actual voice isn't heard. She needs someone to listen so, she decides to write to God. As Gates mentions: “Walker represents Celie's growth of self-consciousness as an act of writing ... Celie, in her letters, writes herself into being” (Gates.1995.p 243). Celie creates herself into being when she fights the silence imposed on her, contrary to her mother, her nameless mother. She knows what her husband does but she can't respond or even face him. Even when she has the strength that is needed to confront him, she asks him : " How come she find his hair in the girls room if he don't never go in there like he say” (p.102) he answers saying that is because Celie has a boyfriend. She doesn't believe him, but she says nothing to stop the mess.

The only time that she has a voice is when she died ; she cursed her husband and screamed. After that, her dad brings a new mum; Celie thinks that her dad will stop raping her, but he doesn't. The new mum realizes what her husband is doing. Again

she says nothing. She only cries in her room. She has no voice to try to stop that. Surprisingly, Pa doesn't beat her or treat her badly, there is no sign that he does, so, what stops her from speaking? Probably, it's her inner fear of the male's power or maybe because she knows that whether she speaks or not, she will not be heard. On the other hand, Shug in the novel is presented as a strong woman where we can't imagine that she is silenced but she is. Celie describes her as : "Shug Avery standing upside a piano, elbow crook, hand on her hip. She wearing a hat like Indian chiefs. Her mouth open showing all her teef and don't nothing seem to be troubling her mind" (p.7). Shug has many contradictory features with Celie. She is comfortable with her body and sexuality, she is beautiful and she knows how to "domesticate" the Mr.- . People around her don't respect her. They talk about her in her back. The Mr.'s - father refuses to let his son marry her because "his daddy tol him I'm trash, my mama trash before me, His brother say the same" (p.109). When she is sick, nobody helps her (except the Mr.-)they even call her "Queen honeybee", while her dad calls her "Tramp". When she gets sick she is left alone in the farm. This is another face of silencing. Since silence doesn't only mean to ban someone from the verbal speaking, it's the social and the cultural pressures that lead to stop speaking or to hesitate about doing so. Shug in one way or another decides to get back her power by acting like a man. She uses the male diction which needs a woman to be dared in order to enter male's area. Celie comments on this saying:

Shug say, girl you look like a good time, you do. That when I notice how Shug talk and act sometimes like a man. Men say stuff like that to women, Girl you look like a good time. Women always talk about hair and heath. How many babies living or dead, or got teef. Not bout how some woman they hugging on look like a good time . (p.72)

While Celie tries to gain a voice, Shug makes a first step toward having an identity. She knows that in her society she can't be independent until she proves that she has some masculine characteristics. Harpo's mother knows that her husband doesn't love her and he spends most of his time with Shug, which makes people in the country talk bad things about her. Harpo's mother is killed at the beginning of the novel by her lover. She has a lover the same as her husband. They both commit the same social crime but she is dead because she is a female while her husband marries again and keeps his relationship with Shug.

Nettie runs away from rape twice; first time from her dad and the second time from The Mr.-. She refuses to have the same destiny that her sister has, so she leaves the house twice. Her dad refuses to let the Mr.- marry her because she isn't "spoiled" yet. She is much prettier than Celie. She goes to school and she knows how to read and write. She teaches Celie how to read and write yet, Celie couldn't complete her home education because the Mr.- makes Nettie leave the house. Even worse, he doesn't let Celie read her sister's letters. He hides them whereas Celie keeps writing to Nettie hoping that one day she will receive something from her sister that proves that she is still alive. His control over the two females in the novel is a sign of his power and his silencing attitude. He knows that in hiding these letters he prevents Celie from communicating with Nettie and finding her own voice. And Nettie as well will suspect her sister's existence. Nettie hides a secret that detaches her from Celie, Samuel and Corrine. She knows that the two kids aren't Corrine's ;they are Celie's. She can't have the voice that is needed to express her thoughts and suspicions till the end of the novel.

Sofia is another strong female character who speaks her mind. Celie describes her as:

look cross the yard. I see Sofia dragging a ladder and then lean it up gainst the house. She wearing a old pair of Harpo pants. Got her head tied up in a headrag. She clam up the ladder to the roof, begin to hammer in nails. Sound echo the yard like shots. (p.58).

Sofia shows male characteristics, she speaks like a man, she works like a man, she eats like a man and she wears like a man. She used to fight for her right to be heard. She says : “All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles” (p.39) . She fights Harpo. Celie says that they fight " like two mens" (p.39). The Mr.- advises Harpo to hit Sofia. He says that "Wives is like Children," he says, "You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a sound beating" (p.42). Sofia is a strong woman who faces her husband and fights back. She says : "I'm getting tired of Harpo. All he think about since us married is how to make me mind. He don't want a wife, he want a dog" (p.67). Strangely enough, Sofia discovers that she has to fight women as well. Celie advises Harpo to " beat her " (p.37) in order to make her a woman. It turns out that Celie finds beating is a normal issue in the husband- wife relationship. She is amazed when she finds out that Sofia doesn't accept to be beaten. Celie realizes how she is different from her. “I like Sofia, but she don’t act like me at all. Is she talking when Harpo and Mr._____come in the room, she keep right on. If they ast her where something at, she say she don’t know” (p.38). Sofia's women's fighting isn't limited to Celie alone. She fights the Mayor's wife when she asks her to be a maid for her. She is beaten, imprisoned, and forced to be a maid only because she says No. just as Harpo beats her to be settled down, the whites beat her to be a slave for them. They don't cope with a strong black, so what if that black figure is a woman. They still have the

sense of slavery and classism in their relationships with blacks. When Celie sees Sofia after she is imprisoned, she wonders:

When I see Sofia I don't know why she alive. They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her on one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tounge the size of my arm, it stick out tween her teef like a piece of rubber. She can't talk and she just about the color of a eggplant. (p.92).

After all that suffering Sofia reacts like Celie. She stops fighting, she calms down and loses her voice and strength especially when she works in the mayor's house.

Women in the novel receive oppression and silencing from different factors. The most important factor is the male. Walker opens the novel with a threat from a strong male whose relationship is indefinable. Celie can't disobey her father. She has to listen to her oppressor and silencer. Again she moves to her husband who has a strong control over her because he is a husband. She has to obey him and accept his silencing and abuse. Trudier Harris argues that : “what Celie records – the degradation, abuse, dehumanization – is not only morally repulsive, but it invites spectator readers to generalize about black people in the same negative ways that have gone on for centuries” (Harris, 2003, p.156). In some ways, she is right, but the novel presents more facts about the black society in general, not the man in particular, plus it tackles the slavery relationship between whites and blacks. Walker maintains that the novel is not for blacks , it is for women in color in general; it works even for whites. It tackles issues that concern every society whether black or white. Hamilton (p.385) argues that the novel describes the master\slave relationship whether this master is black or white, both lead to the same impact on the slave. Walker herself has her opinion on this and

in one of her interviews she talks about her novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) commenting on a mean character in the novel who is Brownfield :

I will not ignore people like Brownfield. I want you to know I know they exist. I want to tell you about them, and there is no way you are going to avoid them. You are going to have to deal with them. I wish people would do that rather than tell me that this is not the right image. You know, they say the man Brownfield is too mean; nobody's this mean." (Walker , quoted in *Black Women Writers at Work* 177)

She asks people to stop neglecting such characters' existence because they are there. Celie's dad and the Mr.- are there in our societies whether black or white. Walker refuses to be silenced in order to protect the image of black man. She asks women to speak and to openly tell their experiences in sexism and racism. The attack is not against the black man alone, it is against all the oppressors. Celie finds The Bible instructions to obey fathers and mothers as an excuse to not speak. She thinks God is a man, since he is strong and has a will. She describes him as " Big and old and tall and gray bearded and white. He wear white robes and go barefooted. Blue eyes? She ast. Sort of Bluish- gray. cool. Big though. White lashes I say" (p.195). Celie's definition of God is influenced by her previous experience of oppression by white people. She doesn't personally engage herself with white people but she witnesses what happened to Sofia and that leaves an influence. When she discovers her sister's letters she says: "Anyhow, I say, the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown" (p.173). Shug helps Celie to realize what is God, she says:

God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God ... Don't look like nothing, she say. It ain't no picture show. It ain't

something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself. I believe God is everything, say Shug. Everything that is or ever was or ever will be. And when you can feel that, and be a happy to feel that, you've found it. She say, My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then other people. But one day when I was feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. (p.176)

Shug frees God from being in church. She says that God is a soul that can be found everywhere. Shug in this context refers to a black culture where they believe that God is a mother for motherless and a father for fatherless. This sentence is used a lot in the black ceremonies inside the church. Celie believes God to be a " He", a white bearded man. She makes him a picture in order to reflect her knowing of him. She displays the picture as a man. Interestingly, during all her life she suffers from the males in her life. So how come she writes to God to help her and to listen to her when she thinks of him as a "He" ? As she finds her voice, Celie becomes aware of God as a great hand to her in her battle. She reconceptualizes God from a totally racist masculine point of view into a positive point of view. Celie asks the Mr.- to stop speaking claiming that her words are not from her ; they are from trees . She says that "until you do right by me, I say, everything you even dream about will fail. I give it to him straight, just like is come to me. And it seem to come to me from the trees" (P.187) since trees are God's creation in one way or another Celie admits that she has the power from God. She says : "Every lick you hit me you will suffer twice, I say. Then I say, You better stop talking because all I'm telling you ain't coming just from me. Look like when I open my moth the air rush in and shape words" (p.176). Celie finds different ways to speak to God ;she tells Harpo and Sofia that "I smoke when I

want to talk to God. I smoke when I want to make love. Lately I feel like me and God make love just fine anyhow. Whether I smoke reefer or not” (p.197) amazingly, how much she has changed at the beginning she had to write to God because this was the only way to tell someone about her life but now she speaks to God at any time she wants.

Shug widens the term God when she says that God loves everyone equally, meaning that God doesn't care about gender or color or nationality. Nettie learns more about black women's suffering in Olinka tribe in Africa. She wonders how men sit and women have to do all the work, how men control every step in the women's lives and how young girls had to face scarred and genital mutilations as if these scars and genital mutilation are ways to differentiate their culture from the imperialist culture and deference to her subverts patriarchal notions that women are subordinate to men. Men in Olinka don't listen to women when they speak; they don't even look at them. Afro- American writers tend to universalize their experiences of women's racism and the cultural norms of the white and the black societies.

The question of race is one of the most important issues in *The Color Purple's* list. When Celie asks the Mr.- about the meaning of having a life if we suffer, he answers :

You ast yourself one question. It leads to fifteen. I start to wonder why us need love.Why us suffer. Why us black. Why us men and women. Where do children really come from. And if you ast yourself why you black or a man or woman or a bush it don't mean nothing if you don't ast why you here period (p.27).

Walker's voice appears in the oral Black English which Celie uses to write in. The novel presents old racist stereotypes about pathology in black communities and of black men in particular. Womanism offers a new perspective on the traditional

questions of gender, race, culture and nationality. It also covers such general issue as imperialism and the relationships between Europe and Africa, whites and blacks, men and women, everywhere with an emphasis on unity and bridging the gap between different races and cultures, especially because womanism offers a more humanistic views than feminism. At the time when Samuel , Corrine and Nettie arrive in Africa, the Olinka have not yet personally experienced the hardships and ravages of racism. Unlike American blacks who saw during the nineteenth century that their race was a stigma to them, the Olinkas see no reason to view their race as a burden. Therefore, the idealistic preaching of the African- American ministers falls on deaf ears as well as their notions that the native Africans would automatically identify with them on the basis of race prove naïve.

Walker's point is that one's identity is much more complex and wide- reaching than one's race. Though race may play a part in identity, considerations of gender, class, culture, and nationality are just as important, sometimes more so. Celie and Nettie and other female characters help to uncover the dominant white society. The novel covers the conflict between different people's classes. In the novel abuse happened because of the individual's powers. The father abuses as a father, The Mr.- abuses as a husband, Samuel and Corrine as a representative of the colonial countries and whites. Whites abuse blacks, men abuse women and colonial countries abuse their colonized countries. The text deconstructs the modern upper white class through Sofia, where she is forced to work as a servant because she tells the Mayor " Hell No" (p.81). Walker chooses a character with masculine physique and manners. In every scene where she is presented as a servant, she is identified as a black woman. The presence of racial iconography shows the existence of discrimination in contemporary

America even though the novel was written fifty years after the black's slavery in the U.S.

Feminism doesn't tackle the issue of class or race; on the contrary it depends on the classism in order to guarantee elegant life; they do demand the men to hire servants who are the lower class to work for them. That raises many doubts about feminism's credibility. The marks of servant appear on Sofia's body as well as in her spirit. The effect of racism and classism is shown in her conscious and unconscious. Two female characters bear the marks of racism in *The Color Purple* on their body making them a subject to gaze and embarrassment. Sofia has marks after leaving the jail because of the trinity she receives. These marks are as a reminder of the costs of resistance and the difficulties of combating cultural and institutional racism. Tashi decides to defy the white imperialist culture and embody the struggle of traditional cultural values against colonization by having two painful African traditions- facial scarring and genital mutilation. Walker makes her female characters appear less beautiful to emphasize the theme of beauty in the black and white societies claiming that the white body is much beautiful than the black body. Whiteness which is identified as beautiful and blackness which is identified as ugly are two important cultural signifiers that the text highlights. Walker twists the usual perspective that white is much prettier than black. She argues that black is beautiful in a different way where black women must celebrate these differences and love their bodies. Sofia, after leaving the jail and working as a servant becomes speechless. She doesn't use her strong voice anymore; she reacts like Celie in the past indicating that she lost her identity and voice because of racism. Deep inside, she becomes less- willing and sad. She doesn't laugh till the end of the story when Miss Millie announces that she is free now. Walker doesn't show us her inner thoughts or dreams after jail as if the racism experience detaches

her from being a completely human being and to exist only to serve the masters. Tragically, the reasons that make her appear interesting in the novel and make the readers enjoy her are the same reasons that make the readers empathize with her and feel sorry to lose these characteristics. Still at the end, she dared to speak and to say No to a white man while Celie doesn't have that courage to speak up her mind or even to talk to the white woman in the store even though she believes that the baby that the white woman is carrying is hers.

Racism's impact appears also in the economic side in the novel. Alphonso says that:

Take me, he say, I know how they is. The key to all of 'em is money. The trouble with our people is as soon as they got out of slavery they didn't want to give the white man nothing else. But the fact is, you got to give 'em something. Either your money, your land, your woman or your ass. So what I did was just right off offer to give 'em money. Before I planted a seed, I made sure this one and that one knowed one seed out of three was planted for him. Before I ground a grain of wheat, the same thing. And when I opened up your daddy's old store in town, I bought me my own white boy to run it. And what make it so good, he say, I bought him with whitefolks' money. (p.155)

He compromises with white people in order to have his benefits. He hires a white man to work in his dry goods store. He lives in a house which looks like white people's house. He marries a fifteen years old girl because her parents work for him and live in his land and he has many white friends who have guns. His relationship with blacks is not paternalistic. When Celie has the store, she keeps the white man and asks Sofia to work there as well. Walker draws steps toward peace between

blacks and whites. She finds that separatism between the races is a social matter which can be solved by working together and understanding each other's differences.

Racism in the novel doesn't appear only among White- Black people but intra-racial racism plays an important role as well. Where Nettie has the right to go to school and has her right of education, Celie doesn't have that right only because she is " ugly". She has to accept marrying the one she doesn't love because her "Pa" forces her to and she has no right to say no. "Pa" even doesn't respect her and describes her with bad words because she is ugly black old spoiled girl. So, Sofia is not the only maid in the novel, Celie is a servant at the end. She has to cook to the Mr.- and his children. She has to run after the kids and make sure that they don't need anything. She has to comb their hair and not hurt them or shout at them. She has to say nothing at all regarding the kids ; only to respond to their needs and desires. She writes to God telling him about the hardships that she has to handle without complaining. Yet, she does all that as fast as she can; nevertheless, the Mr. - beats her if he finds something he doesn't like or approve of.

That leads Celie to some transformation. She doesn't believe in her domestic role in the house only. She doesn't find it a bliss to be a wife. She leaves her house feeling more confident and satisfied. She knows that by being a devoted wife she agrees to the traditional gender role that the black society is deeply built on. She refuses to give her body and soul any more to be a good woman in the society's eyes since she becomes aware of the oppression, self- destruction and humiliation that she passes through. She casts herself in a binary opposition with Sofia and Shug to realize the differences between them and her. She makes them as a reference for the picture of woman that she seeks for. She knows exactly what she needs to acquire and what she doesn't want to have. She frees herself and her body as well from commodity. At the

end of the novel she sees herself beautiful and she also suspects being ugly. Along the novel the Mr.- tries to objectify Celie while at the end she departs from the patriarchy and starts a tie of womanhood for herself. She is now able to see herself from another view and to feel her existence far from submission to patriarchy. Celie now possesses the strength, the character and the self acceptance to stay alive and to gain the personal identity away from consuming his money or his reflection as a husband.

Feminists believe that one of the reasons why men are strong is because of their financial status as providers. They consider themselves as producers while women as consumers. All that leads women to be self-scarifying and deny themselves even though , they bear the pressure of their hard life. Women in *The Color Purple* decide to break this idea and to work to establish their own businesses. Ceile becomes a self-empowered woman by starting business in making pants. She has her own money after that while Shug sings and gains the money. Even Squeak pursues singing as a career and has money. In this way, we see a clear movement from traditional feminism to the new womanism where women are empowered to have their business, to have their jobs, and to be morally and spiritually indent and free of men's pressure.

Walker as a womanist believes in the power of change that women can do to each other since the world that they live in is male dominated. Women change their perspectives about men because of a woman. Celie rebels against Mr.- after she knows Shug and Sofia. Shug and Sofia help her to transform from a silent naïve young girl to a mature self- asserted woman. Celie's ability to move from one place to another is a proof of her maturity. She learns by this how to face life's challenges without a help of a male. Actually, all these developments and new changes make a turning- point in the way feminism is treated. Women in *The Color Purple* are not a repetition of countless previous women who continued to the subservient to men.

They are now new women who can challenge the traditional role in which feminism presented them.

Walker as an Afro-American writer shows the duality of the American patriarchy since she is an African who lives in America. She is considered as an outsider in the dominant white American society and an insider among the minority of the black African society. These two contradictions play a major role in her writing. Walker's protagonist represents the African-American society which suffers from gender and race discriminations. Walker doesn't deny the traumas that black people themselves undergo in the black society. She shows the sense of victimization among the black women who live under the masculine prejudice from one side and the color of their skin from another side. Black people tend to see women who have darker skin or more African features as ugly whereas if the skin is light then that woman is considered beautiful, as if the color white is beautiful and the color black is ugly.

Walker fights the patriarchal society which alienates, dehumanizes, demoralizes, oppresses and makes women feel insecure not only in the black society but also in the whole societies. Celie believes that the man is ubiquitous and because of that he behaves as a God. She believes that he is everywhere and he has the ultimate power to fight her weakness, using another woman that is Shug. Shug is a very confident woman who makes Celie stop considering the man as a powerful authority which women can't deny. She tells Celie : " He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain't. Whenever you trying to pray, and man plop himself on the other end of it, tell him to git lost, say Shug. Conjure up flowers, wind, water, a big rock (p.179). Shug is trying to help Celie in renewing herself in changing the way she thinks about men. Shug's existence which

may appear as a threat to her marriage in the beginning is now a bliss to Celie, because it helps her to transform into another, much stronger character.

Womanism stresses the idea of women standing on each other's side to counteract the hegemony of men which threatens them. When the Mr.- sees Celie as nothing but : "You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam, he say, you nothing at all" (p.46) . Women around her encourage her to fight back. The Mr.- in this context displays the male's patriarchy. Not only does Shug ask her to fight back but also her sister Nettie asks her to do the same. She says: "You've got to fight and get away from Albert. He ain't no good" (p. 119). Celie used to write to God but when she feels disappointed since she lost her beloved sister and two children, her faith in God is shaken. She says: "God might hear you. Let 'im hear me, I say. if he ever listened to poor colored women the world would be a different place, I can tell you.... Amen". (p.175) . For the first time in the novel Celie appears angry. She feels that God doesn't listen to her or help her at all because God is just a man like everyman she met who doesn't care about women's in color oppression but she finds three women who care about her and make her reconstruct herself: Shug, Nettie and Sofia. These three women she loves the most and she tells them honestly what she thinks without being ashamed or afraid. They have made her change her opinion about herself while she doesn't see herself more than an ugly, black, poor, ignorant, weak and worthless is now courageous, beautiful, assertive and strong. Nettie knows her sister's submission and because of that she asks her to fight not only the Mr.- but even his kids who oppress her even they are much younger than her. She writes: "You got to let them know who got the upper hand. They got it I say. But she keep on. You got to fight. You got to fight. But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive"(p.26). Celie doesn't know how to fight since she didn't fight before. All what

she knows is how to stay alive in a patriarchal society where women have no voice. She depends on Nettie to fight for her but when Nettie left the house she writes: " I can't do it for you. You got to fight for yourself...She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (p.29).

Celie's reliance on Nettie stops as soon as she leaves the house and runs away. Now it is her turn to fight alone. But Sofia completes the fighting cycle when she tells Celie that : " All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy.I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in the family of men" (p.46).Sofia declares that a woman has to fight every male in the patriarchal community that believes women have to follow the male's power blindly. Sofia refuses to stay with Harpo after he beats her. She doesn't listen to Celie when she asks her to stay only because he is her husband. The assertive, strong-willed Sofia leaves the house. That teaches Celie to rediscover her identity and to stand in front of the Mr.'s tyrant behaviors also to know that women are not domestic objects where they have to fight for the best of their family even if the man is bad. The oppression that Southern black women face is reflected in the novel through Celie mainly and other black females in the novel.

The novel traces the psychological development of black women in general who transferred from being inexperienced to self-actualization stage. Celie's liberation happens after racial marginalization. This marginalization is not from the black males only but also from the white women who support the white males in oppressing the black women. What happens to Sofia is an example. The mayor's wife supports her husband when he punishes Sofia and puts her in jail. People around her consider her as a man because she has the physical strength so she deserves what happens to her. Since she is a woman she must be submissive. Sofia's free spirit is supported by her

strong body and her dissatisfaction with her social norms. She refuses to be abused by anyone even Harpo. When they fight, she hurts him physically and emotionally. He becomes aware that Sofia's strength is irresistible and he feels that he does not completely have the male's characteristics. He finds the solution in gaining weight; so he starts to eat too much to become fat and strong just like Sofia. Because of her refusing to be oppressed, she loses Harpo and after that she goes to jail where she is sentenced to work for twelve years at the Mayor's house. That means she will lose her strength. She confesses to Celie that she becomes like her and that when someone asks her to do something, she pretends that she is Celie and does the job without refusing. The hardship Sofia faces serves as a reminder of the costs of resistance and the difficulties of combating cultural and institutional racism.

As part of the movement from feminism to womanism, we see black women in the novel helping each other; they even take care of each other's children. Celie takes care of the Mr.-'s children from his previous marriage, Squeak takes care of Sofia's children and Nettie takes care of Corrine children who are biologically Celie's children. They alienate themselves from men. Whenever they face a trouble, they solve it themselves as women away from male's dominance. Moreover, they try to minimize the male's role in the novel since they know that by doing so they guarantee their roles as women in the society.

As mentioned earlier, education has the main focus for womanists. Originally, Celie lacks education. She doesn't know how to read correctly until Nettie teaches her reading and writing. She doesn't go to school because she is ugly and fat. She even doesn't know pregnancy. She calls it "fat". Harris argues that "her lack of understanding about the pregnancy is also probable within the environment in which she grew up" (p.156). When her step- father raps her, she doesn't know what is

happening. She doesn't know the names of most the things around her. In one of her letters to God she writes “Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me” (p.3). When Nettie sends her a letter , she doesn't know to what country the stamp refers to. She writes:

Saturday morning Shug put Nettie letter in my lap. Little fat queen of England stamps on it, plus stamps that got peanuts, coconuts, rubber trees and say Africa. I don't know where England at. Don't know where Africa at either. So I still don't know where Nettie at (p.102).

Her ignorance of most of the things around her reflects her domestic role even though she has the tendency to understand the events around her. Celie and Nettie are sure that only by knowledge they can survive. Celie writes: “Us both be hitting Nettie’s schoolbooks pretty hard, cause us knows we got to be smart to git away” (p.11). They believe in the importance of education as a way to defy the abuse and oppression that they are facing. While Nettie has the right to go to school, Celie is banned from having education.

Walker presents a historical flash back when Celie's step- father acts as an oppressor where black people in the past used to be treated as slaves, so they couldn't go to school and had the necessary education. He tries to silence her. He doesn't want people to know that he raps her, “The first time I got big Pa took me out of school. He never care that I love it” (p.19). He takes her away from her school ignoring her longing for education. After that ,he takes her kids away from her without even asking her or caring about how she may feel.

The education problem is not codified only in a certain society, Walker makes it clear that all black societies whether in America or other places suffer from this ,she writes:

The African male order, just like its American counterpart, denies the validity of female expression; girl children are not permitted to participate in the education provided by the missionaries, and they are considered the property of first their fathers and then their husbands. As a sign of their entry into womanhood, they undergo a ritual of scarification, which literally marks their role in society (Walker, 1983, P.62).

Nettie notices that in Africa women can't go to school. They have to stay at home and have only the domestic knowledge that they need in order to make good wives. Men in Olinka prefer the ignorant women who don't know the things that they know. They find it easier to rule women who are not educated, who are not aware of their rights and who are submissive to the gender roles in their society. Even when girls start to attend the missionary school, they are forced to use the language of males and to know what males want them to know but nothing more.

The language that Nettie uses is a male - oriented language. She speaks Standard English; on the other hand, Celie frees herself from using such a language and creates her own. Critics find Celie's language is much more enjoying than Nettie's. That gives a proof of Celie's transformation. She refuses to use the same language that males created and she has her own language. The same as her recreation; she refuses to stay a passive woman following the male's orders. So she creates her own self and starts her independence. She asserts herself in the face of the men who try to hurt her and abuse her. Her dilemma is not an old problem that we don't know where it comes from or if it is related to one country rather than another. Walker emphasizes the universality of oppression; she "transforms Celie's individual story into an allegory of the black southern struggle for spiritual liberation and for reconciliation to a homeland"(Walker, 1983,p.115). Hamilton argues that "The facts of today allow us to

identify completely with a lonely, isolated, alienated young woman, a woman left without a family because of the meanness of the significant men in her life – stepfather, father, husband” (Hamilton.1988.p.381). Walker finds the answer in love and change. She believes in the possibility for change and redemption. She believes in women's love or bond that can create a better society suggesting in this way the argument of womanism. She urges the world to stop thinking of the black woman as burden carriers she writes: "A black woman is the mule of the world, because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else - everyone else - refused to carry"(Walker, 1983, p. 237).

The Color Purple presents another historical reminiscence of the slavery. When Celie's Pa takes her children away it is like the case of selling kids for ownership or working in fields. At that case women have no rights to object or refuse to give their kids. The ownership is only to the father who can sell his kids or to a male thief who takes the kids and sells them. Even the migration recalls the past migration from the South to the North as if the migration is from slavery to freedom. When Celie moves to Memphis and makes her business she becomes economically independent. Similar to Afro-American people, when they left the South and went to the North they became economically free while their heritage and cultural identity faced a threat where they decided to leave the North and went back to the South but they had the economic power that they needed.

Celie's journey to the North changes her a lot; she meets new people, she starts her business, she reads the newspaper and finds people are "fussing and fighting and pointing fingers at other people, and never even looking for no peace"(Walker, 1982, p.208) .She has an identity there and for the first time she signs a letter to Nettie using her name. She is now more confident and self- assured than before. She wasn't able to

define herself in the beginning of the novel. She hears her dad saying that she is ugly whereas she hears the Mr.- saying : "Who you think you is?...You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam, he say, you nothing at all"(Walker, 1982,p.204). Celie doesn't know who she is exactly. But as soon as she defines herself she answers the Mr.-:"I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook...But I'm here" (Walker, 1982, p.205). She becomes totally different. She writes to Nettie telling her: "I am so happy. I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time. And you alive and be home soon. With our children" (Walker,1982,p.213). She develops a new identity and a new self – awareness by establishing a business for her, freeing herself by empowering true feeling of love, surrounding herself with friends and finally waiting for her kids and sister to come back. That is the new Celie: "I feels different. Look different..."(Walker, 1982, p.215) who even the Mr.- doesn't know she says commenting on this "I pass Mr_____ house and him sitting on the porch and he didn't even know who I was"(Walker, 1982, p.215). Celie comes back home but this time to her own home and farm. She has a rebirth that leads her to feel happy. Linda Tate comments on this. "To heal itself and make peace with the South, the black community needs to work toward new definition of the relations between the races and the sexes,"(Tate, 1994, p. 126) .Walker breaks what is agreed on the White- Black relationship by making Eleanor Jane (the daughter of the Mayor) work for Sofia by her own free will. Celie hires a white man where Sofia has to deal with him since she is a clerk in Celie's work place. She also challenges the gender roles in the black society. *The Color Purple* shows the possibility for economic and social intergradations between blacks and whites which totally contradicts what Celie mentions in the past, when her father and his store were burnt by a white merchant

who didn't like the success of the store and claimed that the store takes all the black business away from him.

All the women in the novel are presented as scarifying and self-denying. According to Walker, they are "suspended women" where they are victims by society and men. They have no voices to scream or to speak. As part of her womanism the first thing that Walker does is involving the women in the novel in a close sisterhood. Walker chooses quilt making which is a traditional handicraft in Africa as a symbol of the "female bonding that restores the women to a sense of completeness and independence"(Henderson, 2014, p. 320). The quilt needs to collect different things in order to make one piece. Celie does so when she collects her parts of her own and establishing a new strong person. Quilt making becomes a reminder in *The Color Purple* for the heritage of Afro-American people. Another important reminder is the color. Afro-American people used to feel ashamed of wearing bright colors like red or purple or yellow. They believe that black people shouldn't wear such bright colors because these colors belong to Africa, the uncivilized Africa. So, wearing these colors means the person is not civilized. Walker wants the Afro-American to be proud of the African culture and heritage.

Finally, we can say that Walker twists the ending of the novel ; she opens the novel with horrible sufferings that female characters face while she ends the novel with a happy end where all the female characters reconcile with themselves and see themselves as self-worthy people. Celie feels the respect and the love that she lacks all through the novel. She is reunited with her two kids, sister ,her friends and the Mr.- but only as close friends . She refuses to be his wife again. That reunion is on the 4th of July the Independence Day of the United States of America, and the Independence

Day for Celie as well. She is now able to let her voice be heard; she fades of the gender – roles in her society. Nettie on the other hand, returns to the south where she finds her sister waiting for her. Sofia returns to Harpo after she gains her freedom plus Miss Eleanor Jane works for Sofia; when her dad asks her: "Whoever heard of a white woman working for niggers?" Miss Eleanor Jane answers, "Whoever heard of somebody like Sophia working for trash? (p.238). Shug returns to her home after leaving the young man that she recently married. Squeak demands people around her to call her by her name, Mary Agens, and she pursues a singing career. Adam symbolically bridges the gap between African and American culture when he undergoes a facial scarring like the African girl Tashi, then he marries her.

Women in the novel had their right to reconstruct their identity either as independent women or naïve women. We believe in Celie since she is the narrator, her suffering are real and her expression of the oppression that the males she knows did to her has a great impact on her spirit. According to Morgan Winifred, Walker: "creates a utopic vision of new southern community"(Winifred,1997,p.127). She has a point when she chooses a southern woman to tell her story. All women in the south have suffered from male's abuse in one way or another, that oppression leads them to reject it and assert their identity as humans in their community. Life in the south and then moving to north is symbolic. It doesn't tell only the physical growth for Celie but it denotes the psychological growth as well. Walker comments on this saying : "To encounter That Which Is Beyond Understanding But Not Beyond Loving and to say: I see and hear you clearly, Great Mystery, now that I expect to see and hear you everywhere I am, which is the right place"(Walker, 1982,p. XII).

Strangely enough, the oppression that Celie received was an awakening for women of color all over the world. Celie fights fiercely to have her rights and dignity. She

doesn't own that rights from black people alone; she has the acceptance from white people as well. That appears in her store where she works with a white man, and when she sells her pants to white women as well; as if the two contradictory sides unify themselves. Even Afro-American people and African people compromise with each other for example Adam Celie's son marries Tashi the African girl and brought her to America. This separation happens because of slave trade and colonialism long time ago. Afro-American black people adopted the American lifestyle which is a white style. Afro- American blacks consider African blacks as their ancestors. That means they are not proud of saying that they are African since Africa is a backward country. In the novel that appears clearly. African blacks still stick to their values, cultural heritage and traditional norms. People in Olinka refuse to let girls go to schools. They think that when a girl has her right at education no man will marry her. Nettie answers Tashi's father: "The world is changing" he replies: " Our women are respected here... we should never let them tramp the world as American women do"(p.136). Another aspect shows the difference between them is medicine. African people refuse to see doctors or have medicine. When Tashi's father suffers from Malaria, he drinks some herbs and the African traditional medicine.

The contradiction appears in most of the female characters. These contradictions become a source of revolution. Celie's weakness leads her to accept beating and humiliation, she says: " He beat me like he beat the children...it all I can do not cry, I make myself a wood. I say to myself , Celie you a tree" (p.22). She thinks it is normal to suffer from a domestic violence and abuse. But as soon as she finds her voice in letters, she becomes a mouth for women to say that they are humans and they are women.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Color Purple is a novel where womanism, feminism, sexism, racism, colonialism and traditional gender roles are the main issues that the novel tackles. Walker stresses the idea of making our world a place for better life. She admits the differences between people, yet she believes as well that these differences can't be a source of oppression or humiliation. She uses the novel as a signifier for human reactions against the abuse. Feminists look in this novel for the established stereotypes, while Walker believes in the ability of establishing our own lives and selves. Walker asks us through Celie to realize our own selves as individuals. She demands to stop judging blacks according to their past, or even humiliating them and considering them as second -class citizens. She encourages blacks to believe in themselves and in their color. She encourages them to fight the traditional gender roles, especially women's roles. She challenges the idea that we were born in a patriarchal society where we have to accept the traditional gender roles and if we don't, then we will be looked at as bad citizens.

Walker in *The Color Purple* asks women to wake up from that coma and start to construct their own identities as independent women. She totally believes in the inner strength that women have. She uses Celie as a symbol of that power. Celie didn't realize that she had all the power needed to change her life, but when she felt so with the Mr.- she showed that power. Celie in her home "works as a mule". She has to clean the house, take care of the kids and then work in the field while her husband " Sit on the porch, looking out at nothing" (p.27). Even in Olinka black women have to

work, inside homes and in the fields. No matter where they are, black women face the sexism of patriarchal society that shows the male's upper hand over women. The novel traces the life of Celie, starting from a naïve girl up to an assertive woman. And in this way, Walker utilizes Celie's transformation from a passive, subservient woman to a self-assured female as an example of womanism.

The journey that Celie undergoes from one place to another is much like her internal transformational journey to find an identity for herself. When we first met Celie, we saw her as uneducated and submissive. She is passive; she doesn't respond to the abuse and she pretends that she is a tree in order to handle the oppression. But when she finally finds her voice she establishes an independent identity. She learns how to love, how to enjoy life and most importantly is how to feel like a real woman. She stops following the will of a man who is torturing her and is ready to fight back. That gives her the certainty of things around her. She is free now; she is not doomed to accept the male's neglect and humiliating treatment.

Race is a serious issue that exists in the American society as a whole. Since 1526 when the first ship carried the African people to work for white American people, the slave trade had born. African people weren't only forced to leave their country and to work as slaves. They were also mistreated and forbidden to go back to Africa. They came to the new continent hoping for free and comfortable life, to discover that they are only slaves for the white people. Since then, the social norms, cultural norms and even law haven't helped the blacks. They are still looked at them as inferior. Walker intends to change this inferiority where the law is designed by the whites, so it gives them the authority over the blacks. In one of her interviews with Sharon Wilson, she says: " For the whites who have been very keen on staying white- if that's the way they want it, then that's fine. But it means then they come in one color and are just one

segment that has separated itself from the rest of humankind, and are very isolated in the world because they are a minority." (Wilson, 1992 , p.323)

Celie is a black girl who lost her father because of a white racist who was jealous of her dad's success. Celie's life is turned upside down because of this incident. She is no more a happy little girl. She has to lead her life alone. She also has to take care of her younger sister after her mother's death. Nettie, on the other hand, shows a great surprise when the African president calls his people "natives" ,she says:" It was the first time I'd heard a black man use that word." (p.120). She doesn't feel she belongs to America since she is not purely American; neither she is an African. She is a double- consciousness girl. She is aware of belonging to two different conflicting cultures; the black culture which she inherits from Africa and the European culture which is imposed on her. So, they have to gain two different characters; one at home with family and the other is outside home with whites. This clear concentration on culture is an essential part of womanism as contrasted with feminism. Instead of concentrating on one single culture, there is reference to a plurality of culture or what may be called multiculturalism.

Another aspect that shows the double consciousness is the language. Celie uses Black Vernacular English. The Black English doesn't actually fulfill the grammatical rules. It depends mostly on the meaning. Even the pronunciation is different. White Americans consider this language as incorrect form of language rather than a language by itself. In this way, language is utilized as a means of underlining the importance of culture and identity.

The Afro-American writers use two linguistic features; orality and folk motifs. Orality is the spoken quality of the language. "[it] gives a literary work a sense of immediacy, of human presence, by giving readers the feeling they are hearing a

human voice."(Tyson, 2006, p.389). In Walker's novel , orality appears through using Black English and through associating the language with the Blues, the typically south black American music. As Tyson points out, : " Blues is a form of African American cultural self- expression that both influences and is influenced by, that both affects and reflects, all other forms of African American expressive culture" (Tyson, 2006, p.391). Blues links the traditions of African people with the modernity in America. It is their voice to raise their concerns and demands whether spiritual needs or material needs to the whites. By making this linkage between the originally African music and modern life in America, Walker expands the horizon of women's issues. The question that she is addressing is how to create a sense of harmony between black culture and white culture in America. Like her precursor Zora Nael Harston, Walker is trying to bridge the gap between these two cultures, in an attempt to produce out them of a harmonious whole.

On the other hand, folk motifs "Includes a wide range of character types and folk practices and creates a sense of continuity with the African and African America past." (Tyson, 2006, p.389). The types of the characters that Walker chooses are local, those we can find in our daily dealing with others. Even their practices are close to their culture. The characters are similar to the traditional Afro-American people. They sing, most of them work as farmers, they live in the countryside, they go to church and they sing Blues. They relate the past with the present. They are aware of the fact that they are discriminated by the whites because of their race, their color and even their culture. That is why Walker is clearly putting a greater emphasis on culture and education as part of her attempts to promote womanism instead of stopping at feminism which, in her opinion, seems to have lost a great deal of its appeal in its early stages of development.

Womanists don't stand for the rights of women only. They are not apart from the other sex. They ask for the rights of males as well as Walker argues that although sexism is a vital issue that she tries to get rid of, still racism influences people more than sexism. The cultural norms give males in general a visible position. They have the authority to control women. Womanism doesn't call for putting motherhood aside and enjoying personal freedom. Instead, it calls on women to enjoy their status as mothers and to have their rights. Womanism sees the female's status as an empowering factor. This is because the next generation will be born and" through their providing a stable home that would allow their husbands to focus their attentions on the issues concerning their communities outward and through their role as supportive "sisters" encouraging the men that the community could advance socially "(Blackmon, 2004,p.2). Compared with woamnism, feminism doesn't include classism and racism on its agenda. It doesn't have the concerns or the rights that black women are asking for. It is mainly concerned with white women's issues. Even more, it is basically concerned with white women's weakness and their suppression and oppression by patriarchy. In the final analysis, women are seen in a war or a fight with men for gaining their equal rights without there being a common ground on which the two sides can meet to achieve useful goals.

Concentrating more on black women than on white women, Walker was certain about the black women's ability to carve their own path. She tries to define not only black women's position but also black men's. As Hudson-Weems observes:

The Africana woman did not see the man as her primary enemy as does the White feminist, who is carrying out an age-old battle with her White male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. Africana men have never had the same institutionalized power to oppress Africana women as White men

have had to oppress White women. (...in the effort to fight against racial injustice) Black women cannot afford the luxury, if you will, of being consumed by gender issues. (Hudson-Weems,2004, p. 25-28)

Thus, Walker goes a step further and offers womanism as a better option than feminism, though, of course, she does not neglect the importance of feminism. In fact, she sees the two forces working together for the benefit of both genders regardless of race, ethnicity, color or origin.

She works for the wholeness and survival of all people. She stresses on sharing the experiences in order to develop self- realization among the blacks. Walker chooses woman to describe her gender, not female. She believes that "woman" is a more universal term than "female". Walker asks for sisterhood, family centeredness, role- flexibility, fighting against oppression, spirituality, ambition and the welfare of the whole population and all people. Unlike feminism womanism focuses on the social, political and cultural concerns that affect the whole society. It tries to unify the blacks whether they are from Africa or America or any country in the world. It believes that to gain the freedom, the change must start from the family. Walker calls the single family a community in order to reveal the importance of the familial role in women's for freedom.

While Feminism asks for the rights of the middle- classed women and encourages them to hire servants to help them inside the home, womanism fights the classism in the society and treats all people as equal, regardless of race or color. Womanism ignores the economics based differences between people. It believes that whether a person is poor or rich they need to stand beside each other and to fight the whites' hegemony.

Many black men have shown dissatisfaction with *The Color Purple*. They criticize Walker for being very aggressive with the black man. Some of them go further by claiming that she utilized her style as a way for having fame and acceptance among the whites. Walker refuses what they said. She explains that this is the truth that most black families suffer from and they don't show this or speak about it. Walker was able to break the taboos and mastered the necessary courage to raise such sensitive topics in her novel. Psychologists explain this phenomenon in the black society. They argue that because of the blacks' slavery, black men had to leave his homeland and to work as servants in the new land. Blacks as a whole were mistreated. They were beaten and forbidden from living a normal life. They were also banned from expressing any human feelings. They had to say only yes. They had to live among the discriminating white society and to accept white men's superiority. They didn't have the legal rights that the whites had. After all, the only place where they could show their manhood was their homes. They didn't go to schools, so they still lived traditional ways of life. Their intellectual horizon was limited. As a reaction to that they were prepared to humiliate women, because that was what they saw from their dads and mothers. As part of her womanism, Walker addresses such issues, putting a great emphasis on the need to end this attitude. Instead, of seeing a polarity and an antagonism between men and women, whites and blacks, Walker is using her novel to urge for a deeper integration of the two sexes while stressing the importance of black females in particular and all females in general.

Walker believes in the ability of nurturing other women's kids. She adores the mothering idea among the black society. She likes that bond which leads women to take care of each other. Feminists show surprise by the ability of black women to raise and to take care of other women's kids. At the end, black people show deep

relationships that lead them to stand by each other at the bad times. In addition to this Walker believes in Black's Womanhood. Because of her belief in the strong bond between women, Walker was criticized by feminists and other detractors who argued that she was encouraging sexual relations between women at the expense of the more natural heterosexual relationships. Walker responded to these accusations by claiming that she was fighting for the unity of blacks whether men or women, and then she wanted black women to have black women. She also maintained that the bond between women is much stronger since they are from the same gender and they are capable of understanding each other. After all, she added the relationship doesn't have to be sexual; it can be spiritual.

Walker is one of the Afro-American writers who write to document their experiences. Afro-American writers express their heritage as Africans who came to America. They always remind people of their history. They always highlight the African- historical background. In all the works that are written by black writers the symbols that they use are linked to their culture. They use the Blues, the songs, the rap, the gospel in church and the colors they wear to strengthen the idea of belonging. Even their language doesn't belong to the white's language. When whites relate this to the backwardness of Africa, Afro-American writers urge blacks to be proud of their culture and its productions. However, this does not mean that black American writers want to isolate themselves completely from the overall American culture. The fact that these writers want first to ensure the preservation of their African culture before they can join the so-called melting pot or the salad bowl. Maintaining one's cultural background and heritage, they would say, it is the first step towards having an overall national culture.

Womanism and Feminism fight the sexism in their societies. But womanism advances the struggle by fighting the sexism from the black community itself. Both movements reveal the truth about the male's role. They fight the patriarchy in the society. Whites suffer from that patriarchy only, while blacks suffer from more serious problems relating to familial sexism. For instance, the male family members of a black family who are supposed to be the protectors of female members are the one who pose the most serious source of danger. Celie's dad raps her, takes away her kids, forces her to marry a man whom she doesn't love and then takes all her property. Unfortunately, Celie's mother doesn't protect her even though she knows about the raping. On the other hand, feminists fight the sexism from outside the family circle. Females are the victims of their patriarchal societies.

Strangely enough, when the blacks speak about the racism that white people impose on them, they practice a different kind of racism which is inter-racial racism. They tend to distinguish between the black dark skin and the black light skin. They consider the light skin as being more beautiful than the dark one. They also distinguish between the African facial features and the Afro-American facial features. Often, some of them at least, describe the African facial features as ugly. If the nose is wide they call it the African nose. They disgrace the African beauty in favor of the European beauty. This is the kind of attitude that Walker condemns in her novel. Walker asks women to love themselves for what they are. She says that every woman is beautiful in her own way. Colors don't make beauty. White and black are only colors that have nothing to do with beauty. They can't be a scale for measuring the level of beauty. Celie doesn't think she is beautiful, but as soon as she accepts herself, she starts to be aware of her beauty. She finds the color of her body is attractive, and even special.

Feminism has been attacked for being a movement that serves the interest of the upper class. They are rich, they don't have to work to gain the money to survive and help family. On the other hand, womanism presents poverty as one of the main issues that deserves to be tackled. Poverty in the black society is widely spread. Women have to work to provide the family with its basic needs. Most of the blacks live in poor neighborhoods where they can't find the basic needs of life. This of course, leads to their anger and disappointment. On the other hand, whites don't have to work blacks do. Even their work is different. Black people work in jobs that need physical powers and most of the time they are low paid workers.

Walker seems to be committed to the survival of all people, whether they are African oriented or not and whether they are blacks or whites. The womanism she is advocating is more universal and more inclusive than feminism. It is concerned with human beings in general. Walker highlights the need to respect and love all the human oppositions; men or women, homosexual or heterosexual, rich or poor. Feminism, on the other hand, tends to be more restrictive in its general outlook. It concerned, first and foremost, with white women's issues and secondly it generally views men from a predominately antagonistic perspective. It is no wonder; therefore, that such a writer as Walker opts for womanism rather than feminism. Briefly said, womanism offers a better virtue for addressing social issues of different kinds.

Feminism's main goal is to fight the patriarchy. It refuses to define women as the opposite of men. It is like acknowledging them by what they lack rather than by what they have. They raise many issues that women face in the society. For example, women do the same job that men do but earn less money. Women also don't have the privileges that men have. In general, men receive better social services and public insurance than women. The civil rights which include property, political rights and

occupational status for women are not equal. Feminism calls for equality with men. It aims to change the world by promoting women's equality.

Feminism claims that the two established stereotypes as "bad girl" and "good girl" are products of the traditional gender roles. The patriarchal society wants women to believe in women's role as submissive. Women have to nurture and to take care of their children. If the woman follows the traditional gender role, she is a good girl but if she doesn't, then she is a bad girl. Feminists ask women to activate their positions in their society. They must not be the "other", the neglected party in the society. They want women to be free from the society's chains. Women should be free to practice their wills just like men.

Both womanism and feminism work for guaranteeing a better life for women. They both present everything they have in order to free women from the oppression practiced by them. They are aware of the importance of women in the society. They know that changing starts with the individuals. They realize the sufferings that women undergo only because they are women. They urge women to express themselves and speak out their experiences to find their voices, their selves and their strength. They are sure of the ability of women to stand up and end the traditional gender roles in the patriarchal society. They reject the sources of power that imposed on women to increase women's misery. Women don't find satisfaction in these powers instead; they tried to create their own. They teach women how to be content, the only person that they can depend on to help them is themselves. The existence of a man or another woman in someone's life will not bring the happiness until the person feels comfortable with himself.

This thesis has dealt with feminism and womanism in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Previous studies have covered a great part of feminism in the novel. However,

womanism in this novel has not received the due critical attention it deserves. Although the thesis has tried to focus on womanism, still the subject is in need of further investigation. The researcher finds it appropriate to remind researchers who may wish to write more on this novel that the theme of womanism is a major theme in this novel and that more research can be done on this subject.

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