



A critical study of women oppression on Alice Walker's major novels

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Abstract

Literature has always included depictions of women from different periods and cultures. They frequently portrayed themselves as weaker and less capable than they were. They thought they couldn't make it independently and finish their work without help. He believes that women are beautiful and submissive and incapable of independent thought. The majority of the women in Alice Walker's novel are portrayed as innately disinterested in romantic relationships because they are never allowed to express their emotions.

Moreover, they do not know how to celebrate their diminished self-worth. In numerous ways, black women are marginalized, and even within their community, they are underrepresented. Women of African descent who have been socially, physically, and sexually dominated and oppressed strive for independence.

Most black women continue to be treated as enslaved people, and they seek a new meaning of the word 'woman.' When black women reached adulthood, their primary body parts were sold as enslaved people to free them. In this paper, efforts are made to subjugate and conceal black women and repress, enslave, and discriminate based on their gender and differences. It examines the historical subjugation of black women and their self-realization, awakening, and eventual self-emancipation. Alice Walker, an African-American author, is participating in a meeting for the liberation of black women. She encourages black women to recognize the bond they share with other women who, throughout history, have paved the way for them by exhibiting an independent and unyielding spirit. This essay's primary objective is to provide solutions to alleviate the suffering experienced by black women.

Keywords: emancipation, awakening, self-realization, oppression, discrimination

Introduction

Feminism is a theory concerning women's equality that holds that men and women should have equal shares in society, politics, the economy, and property. The fight for women's equality, which had been going on since the late 18th century, was boosted by establishing women's rights. These put forth the concept that women should have the same rights as men and set the stage for further development of this idea.

The term "feminism" refers to various social, political, artistic, and sexual equality movements. These movements include the Movement for Civil Rights. This protects women from being subjected to patriarchy and serves as a shield for women's equality in civil, economic, and sexual rights. The brave voice and accessible picture of the dark ladies are stifled in a society that depends on the chivalry of the shady ladies. The production of conventional fiction requires influence, and the majority of white power, along with some of the more sinister aspects of management, has traditionally been held by men. Women observed a graphic depiction of violence and interpreted it as evidence of men's pleasure in such activities. They even depicted women as weaker and inferior sex, passive objects that could not think for themselves and always depended on men for their needs.

The common belief among men was that women could not support themselves independently. They invariably referred to themselves as the inferior sex or the second sex because of the pressure exerted by society. Through the fictional female characters in their books, the female authors try to make sense of the predicament women find themselves in today's society.

Critical Analysis of Walker's Novels

The characters of African women who struggle against an oppressive society are portrayed in the works of Alice Walker, a subject that Walker frequently addressed in public throughout her life. She voiced her concern over various issues, including women's legal rights in marriage and education.

She is a modern writer who captures the very ideals that spring from the hearts and souls of African women living in today's society. She admired Hurston's pride in black people, the way she followed her path, and the black people's perception of Hurston as a complex and undiminished being. However, some women dare to articulate their beliefs and then take action in accordance with those beliefs rather than cowering in submission to the intimidation of those in positions of authority. The short story "Everyday Use" is significant because it brings to light many of Walker's ideas and concerns. It clarifies what she means when she refers to her "heritage" as a particular aspect of black culture, specifically the art of quilting.

It is a fundamental work because it exemplifies the central idea of Walker's Womanism, which is that women may have to concede to one another to forge their own identities. It honors the unyielding spirit and creative contributions of black women artists. Her images of her mother tending to flowers in the sharecropper's shack where she was forced to live and creating art from that effort became emblematic of the black woman's quest for empowerment and control of her destiny. Her mother was compelled to endure these conditions. Africa is a developing nation that maintains various cultures, ideologies, and traditional norms pertaining to women.

The term "women" is most commonly used for women of African American descent. The time was first used in the essay titled "In Search of Mother Land," written by Alice Walker. Generally, women and motherhood are most commonly used by women from African-American communities. Mariama Ba writes a letter in her book so long that "As a black African, she ought to have been able to integrate herself without much of a struggle into a black African society." This is because Senegal and the Ivory Coast were both under the control of the same colonial power. However, Africa is a complicated and divided continent. The protagonist transforms psychologically, which paves the way for the reader to understand her character. The ensuing problem is the Civil Rights movement for African American women.

It ignored that they faced discrimination on multiple fronts, including racism, sexism, and classism. Despite tears streaming down her cheeks, she does everything with dedication and involvement. Meridian is given the directive to consider, as a starting point, the racist and misogynistic climate of the 1950s. On topics such as her sexual ignorance or sexist traditions, she is not compelled to address them. Throughout her investigation of the events preceding and occurring during the common right, she reveals to the reader various connections between bigotry and sexism, as well as the implications these attitudes have for the individual and society.

Walker uses these novels to advance the cause of the civil rights movement. Many of the younger activists who participated in the early stages of the movement eventually became disillusioned and withdrew from public life. When rioters destroyed the entire section of American cities being replaced, television played a vital role in focusing young people's attention so they could face the antagonists bravely. Self-awareness comes to Ruth due to her upbringing, which includes the influence of her parents and the television coverage of the civil rights movement. The final words spoken by Grange to Ruth are, "he has no chance, but she does." These words have some bearing on the events that transpire in the book. The conclusion of the book focuses on what happens to Ruth in the end, as well as an elderly man who has transformed his own life and demonstrated that personal growth is within an individual's reach. The author conveys the depth of several generations through the various characters. Walker has decided to abstain from determining the future, even though the past has produced Ruth and Meridian. She comes to understand and define who she is as an individual. Remember the people from *The Purple Color* when you're playing *My Family's House*. The author of the novel under study is the same as the novel that won the author the award for best novel, *The Color Purple*. Reading this book will bring the reader's ancestors back to mind, just as it does for the novel's protagonist. This reflects their parents' memories and those of their family's wives, aunts, and other female relatives. When they reflect on their history, they are reminded of their ancestors' struggles, misery, injustice, defeat, achievements, emancipation, and enlistment in the military, all of which inspired them to continue in today's society.

Walker is adamant that African American women should be aware of their ancestors' past life. She also claims that if black women fail to acknowledge or fear the knowledge of their previous lives, they won't be able to fight or overcome their suppression. They are at risk of being continuously treated as enslaved by the white-dominated society. Readers can discover who they are as unique individuals after reading Walker's novels. The author's primary responsibility is to include the history of the past in their works so that black people can recall how those people fought for their rights against discrimination against individuals and gender. This allows black people to learn from the struggles of the past. The writer needs to concentrate on the past's religious and cultural life because it can potentially change our lives today. The current generation of black people benefits from the knowledge and insight their ancestors provided in developing their spirituality and achieving wholeness. The fiction written by Walker contributes to a renaissance of African cultural history, women's spiritual life and position, and their transformation and elevation. He asserts that playing *Temple of my Family* reawakens one's memory of the past and historical connections with others. In the book "When God was a woman," Merlin Stone writes.

"The handling of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawaks), the silent embrace of conquest and assassination in the name of progress is only one dimension of a specific historical strategy in which the history has informed states, conquerors, negotiators, and rulers." "The handling of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawaks), the silent embrace of conquest and assassination in the name of progress is only one dimension of an In addition, any other member of *My Family* who has a role *The Carlotta's Temple* should not forget its long and illustrious past. Walker tries to illustrate the significance of the connection between self-realization, interdependence, and relationships between people. Arveyda facilitates the development of a mother-daughter bond between Carlotta and herself. When Miss Lissie talks about her past, she recalls specific details, and in the process, she jogs her memory. She can sense her manifestation by inhabiting a variety of bodies. She knows she can look back at her previous life in Africa; she considered chimpanzees her cousins in the wilderness. Walker is attempting to make the point that there was an interaction between humans and animals in the past, whereas in the present, there are divisions and differences among people. There is a disparity in the race, gender, and economic status, and even people who are part of the human network have been gathered and separated from one another.

The *Color Purple*, written by Alice Walker, a prominent African-American woman novelist, and narrating the dilemma of a repressed black woman, was published in 1982 and won the American Book Award for Fiction and Pulitzer Prize in 1983. In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker paints a sociohistorical portrait of the rural South in the 20th century, for which she has received widespread acclaim for her "womanist" stance. In a patriarchal social structure, women's cries for autonomy and equality have gone unheard, and continue to go unheard. Feminism seeks to dismantle this stereotypical and hazy image of women. Unquestionably, the vast majority of Alice Walker's novels revolve around female characters. In her very first novel, she attempted to reveal Celie's psyche. Alice Walker's writings demonstrate a broad range of skill and concern. It paves a clear path and evaluates the extent to which her roots in issues such as social activism, cultural representation, and the self. Her major novels provide in-depth readings, highlighting the pointed focus of her various writing aspects, such as women's independence and selfhood, resistance and settlement in human relationships, various patterns of narration, linguistic devices, etc.

In her novel, Alice Walker demonstrates that racism influences every aspect of black life in the South. As Walker demonstrates, many women did not complete their education and instead married at a young age. In the novel, Walker also depicted the troubled lives of numerous black southern women. This paper is an attempt to contextualise Walker as a feminist and evaluate her novel in light of fundamental feminism. As a social movement, feminism focuses on eliminating gender differences and promoting women's rights, happiness, and status in society. Feminism investigated patriarchy, stereotyping, objectification, sexual objectification, and oppression. As a life philosophy, feminism seeks to identify and alter the subtle and deeply rooted causes of women's dominance. Feminist Literary Theory recognises a fundamental continuity between text and world as interpreted through social and cultural production. Women are an essential component of society. The economic and social contribution of women is well known. Feminism is a serious effort to address the subordinate position of women in an endocentric world or the sex and gender-based discrimination that women experience. In her first novel, *The Color Purple*, she attempts to reveal Celie's inner psyche. A black woman named Celie tells the story in *The Color Purple* with openness and sincerity. At the age of fourteen, fourteen-year-old Celie was being raped by her stepfather. She was then married off to a man whom she neither loved nor desired. While living with him, she had to care for his children from a previous marriage and endure his beatings because he requires a hard worker on his farm. After experiencing the trauma, Celie appears to become overly concerned with the ethical implications of what she has done thus far and what she would have done but did not. Freud observes that bad luck—that is, external frustration—increases the power of the conscience in the super-ego significantly. As long as things are going well for a man, his conscience is lenient and he allows his ego to do whatever it wants; however, when misfortune strikes, he searches his soul, acknowledges his sinfulness, increases his conscience's demands, imposes abstinences on himself, and punishes himself.

Alice Walker has painted a picture of black women's marginalisation at the hands of their husband. Alice Walker is the first African-American author to compose a novel in the form of letters. She imbues a reputable literary form with the tone of a poor African-American woman and allows an uneducated black Southern woman to speak for herself. It is the process by which Celie writes herself into existence and awareness. Walker is a devoted author who rejects the concept of "Art for Art's Sake." Finally, Walker illustrates the struggle of black women living in the South, who must contend with racism and sexism, among other obstacles, such as raising children and maintaining a clean home. The title of Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*, encapsulates her fundamental worldview. Celie's existence is devoid of all hues. It is so difficult, and her spirit is so repressed, that she hardly notices the beauty of the world.

In the beginning of the novel, Celie lacks the power and will to resist the childhood-imposed brutality. She is only capable of surviving and persevering. As soon as she becomes pregnant, she writes to God, "I'm huge." I cannot move quickly enough. When I return from the well, the water is already warm. By the time I prepare the tray, the food will be cold. By the time I get the children ready for school, it will be time for dinner. (3)

A contemporary Black feminist statement defines the relationship between racial struggles and feminist issues, while simultaneously highlighting the differences between white and black feminism. Together with black men, we struggle against racism, and with black men, we struggle against sexism (Einstein 363).

Walker recounts Celie's story through letters. Throughout the course of the narrative, Celie's struggle to find her, love, reassurance, independence, and the courage to fight for and defend her is depicted. The novel is written in the first person by Celie in the form of letters to God and her sister Nettie, as well as letters from Nettie to Celie. Through their letters, we gain an open and sincere understanding of their emotions, thoughts, and perception of reality. Celie begins writing letters to God after being instructed by her stepfather not to tell anyone else about the rape. Celie's letters to God, then to her sister Nettie, and finally Nettie's letters to Celie make up the entirety of the novel's text. Celie is completely alone after her children by her stepfather have been taken away and her sister Nettie has been forced to leave. Ultimately, she grows a society, a large family, which includes Shug, the mistress of her husband who becomes her close friend, and others. She maintains her independence through creativity and love after overcoming dominance. The children of Nettie and Celie eventually return home and rejoice in their reunion. As an epistolary novel, *The Color Purple* employs the narrative technique of sentimental epistolary novels from the eighteenth century. Walker uses letters in *The Color Purple* as a means of self-disclosure and as a rational process for Celie to comprehend herself and the world. The simple act of lecturing God suggests the protagonist's isolation and marginalisation:

As long as I can spell God, I'll be okay." (26).

The Color Purple, an epistolary novel by Alice Walker, is one of the best literary works that vividly depicts the sufferings of African-American women due to patriarchy, racism, and bigotry. In reality, Alice Walker's intention in writing this novel is not only to give black women a voice, but also to provide them with a path to liberation and independence. In *Sexual Politics* (1970), Kate Millett examines the term. 'Patriarchy' women's oppression: Sex is determined biologically, but gender is a psychological concept that refers to several identities that are culturally acquired.

Through letters, the novel's main character expresses her thoughts, feelings, and emotions. She is an omniscient narrator; consequently, the reader is a keen, direct observer of her mental development.

Her sister Nettie, her stepdaughter Sofia, and her close friend Shug are instrumental in her liberation. Celie has never experienced romantic love. She has only been harassed and abused, so it would be illogical for her to choose to have sex with a man given her history. Walker provides an excellent depiction of Celie's wandering awareness and the gradual disintegration of her understanding wisdom, Calm, as she approaches insanity. Through the image of an iguana, her psychic confusion reaches its peak, and she shrieks in terror, 'It's all I can do not to cry.' I make myself wood. I tell myself, "Celie, you are a tree." This is how I know that trees fear humans. (23)

As a result of repeated rapes by her stepfather, she is a stray and the fourteen-year-old mother of a son and a daughter. As the more unattractive of two sisters, she is literally sold to a widower who needs a woman to care for his two children and house. The children of Celie are soon placed with foster parents, a couple who become African missionaries. When the reader learns that the missionary couple is also bringing Celie's sister Nettie to Africa as a member of their household, the story takes a romantic turn.

She is more of a passive victim of her environment: "But I can't fight. All I know is how to stay alive" (Walker 26), "I don't speak. I remain where instructed. But I am still alive" (29).

Given Celie's violent instincts, a continuous deprivation of the body's sexual needs could be disastrous for her. A robust emotional and sexual life would have provided her with a sense of security and prevented her psyche from deteriorating. This view is supported by Freud's observation: Experience demonstrates that women, who are the actual vehicles of human sexual interest, are only partially endowed with the ability to sublimate their instincts, and who, when subjected to the disillusionments of marriage, develop severe neuroses that darken their lives permanently.

Alice Walker addresses the issue of a wife's adjustment to her husband's home. The vision embodied in her novels is that the solution to a problem is not to continually find fault in the husband's behaviour, but to maintain an optimistic outlook. She addresses the issue causing discord in families, as in each of them the wife is despondent with her husband.

Daniel Ross describes the significance of regaining control of one's body for self-affirmation as follows: One of the primary projects of modern feminism has been to restore women's bodies. Due to the fact that the female body is the primary target of male aggression, women have learned to fear or even despise their bodies. Consequently, women frequently view their bodies as torn or fragmented, as Celie demonstrates. To confront the body is to confront not only an individual's abuse, but also the abuse of women's bodies throughout history, as the external symbol of women's enslavement; this abuse represents forewomen a reminder of her debasement and relegation to a subordinate position. (Ross 70)

At the beginning of her journey, Nettie is dissatisfied with her own lack of knowledge, and by the end of it, her idealism regarding the role of missionaries has disintegrated.

Celie, I had no idea I was so ignorant. I knew so little about myself that it wouldn't have filled a thimble! Miss Beasley always stated that I was the most intelligent student she ever taught. However, I am grateful to her for teaching me to learn independently by reading, studying, and writing legibly. And for keeping my curiosity alive in some way (123-24).

The relationship between Shug and Celie is significant not only for Celie, but also for Shug, who, with Celie's assistance, is able to deconstruct the isolation caused by the black community's discrimination against a woman who can support herself as a bar singer.

It is not coincidental that Celie begins to consider herself in a broader context during this activity: First time I consider the world. What does the world have to do with anything? Then I imagine myself quilting between Shug Avery and Mr.. The three of us assembled. For the first time in my life, I feel perfectly normal" (61).

Her conversation with Mr. before departing for Memphis reveals a parallel expansion of consciousness. The novel depicts Celie's self-doubts, fears, shortcomings, and quiet indignation toward expression. Alice Walker is not only writing about Celie, who is attempting to escape her married life and struggle with the issue of self-disclosure, but also, through Celie, about those women whose voices have been stifled, those who have been enslaved by recalcitrant culture and tradition, those who have been compelled to follow so-called patriarchal codes and conducts, and those who have been deprived of the opportunity to enjoy their lives. In response to her husband's remark, she said, "You're black, you're porous, you're ugly, and you're a woman." In her remark, Celie adds a brief but significant statement to the string of adjectives being used to describe her: "I'm pore. I am black; I may be unattractive and incapable of cooking. But I am here" (187).

Significantly, the novel's female characters Celie, Nettie, Shug, Sofia, and Mary Agnes developed a close sisterhood. Nettie, Sofia, and Shug, three of the main characters in *The Color Purple*, transcend the strict southern definitions of Black womanhood. In the novel *The Color Purple*, Walker appears to accurately depict

the rural, black South. Each character's description of the land and the labour required to cultivate crops illustrates the strong work ethic instilled in black southerners after the Civil War.

Throughout the novel, she demonstrates the uneducated nature of blacks through their conversation by employing improper grammar and spelling. Finally, Walker illustrates the struggle of black women living in the South, who must contend with racism and sexism, among other obstacles, such as raising children and maintaining a clean home. Therefore, Walker is able to present the dark shade in a colourful world, allowing the reader to create an almost exact mental image of the South, regardless of whether or not he or she has ever visited the region.

Conclusion

This article attempts to provide a critical analysis of black feminism and the oppression of women. In a number of different ways, the author's female characters have been negatively affected by the patriarchal society. This article brings to a close Alice Walker's books by describing a woman's descent into poverty and hypocrisy as a means of surviving male oppression and betrayal. Infidelity is discussed, both within families and within society. Alice Walker, who is also a poet and an activist, is making an effort to raise awareness within the organization through her writings. She endeavors to preserve the memory of the past in the hopes that others will learn from their mistakes and work together to establish equality. It is not fair to say that black women from middle-class backgrounds play an equal role in today's world.

She is attempting to convey the message that one should not try to repress or eradicate memory but rather integrate it and infuse it with creativity consciously. The recollections of Miss Lisse's previous lives provide helpful, albeit fictitious, methods for exemplifying the historical context of dark womanhood in a century dominated by solitary characters.

She is well aware that once she has reached a state of satisfaction, she will return a few more times.

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