

## The Vivid Portrait of the Black Woman in Alice Walker's "The Color Purple "

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### **ABSTRACT**

Gender and racial discrimination, Patriarchy, marginality, injustice, double oppression, rape, sexual abuse, physical and psychological violence, dehumanizing conditions, and subjugation are the main problems that black women face in the American society in the early of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Alice Walker (1944), a famous contemporary African American writer deals with these themes in her controversial novel "The Color Purple" (1982). In this award-winning novel, Alice Walker is highly praised for her insightful and remarkable portraits of black people's life, especially for the experiences of black women in a sexist and racist society.

This study attempts to explain how the black female protagonist, Celie in Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" gradually liberates herself from fear, misery and oppression through the process of emancipation. The study is an attempt to address the problems of race and gender faced by African-American women, and it tries to explore and analyse the role of identity, gender, and racism as depicted by Walker in this novel. It traces the black woman's struggle for survival, gender and racial equality, selfhood, and identity. The study ends with notes and bibliography.

Alice Malsenior Walker is an African-American novelist, short story writer, poet, and activist. She wrote the critically acclaimed novel "The Color Purple" in 1982, for which she won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. She was born on February 9, 1944, in Eatonton, Georgia. Alice had seven older siblings, she was the youngest one. Her father, Willie Lee Walker, was a tenant farmer, and her

mother, Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker, worked as a maid and helped her husband on a farm. Her family lived in poor conditions.(1)

As a child, Alice was cheerful and self-confident. However, at the age of eight she met with an unfortunate accident while playing with her two older brothers. One of them shot with his gun, and hurt his little sister's eye. This accident led to losesight in her right eye, andleft a scar on it. This experience had a profound influence on her female psyche. She lost her joy of life, and was not sociable as she used to be. She started to consider herself as not attractive because of her injury. She was living in isolation and reading avidly. Then she started writing poems. Ironically, after a few years Alice Walker admitted, that this period of solitude caused that she became a writer.(2)Fortunately, at the age of fourteen, her beloved brother Bill encountered a doctor, who performed an operation on her eye and partially removed the scar. For young Alice Walker it was like a beginning of her new life.

Throughout her writings Alice Walker highlights the issues pertaining to the lives of the black women and the strong bond of sisterhood which empower these once weak women by regaining their identity, inner strength and individuality. "The Color Purple"vividly depicts sexism, racism, oppression and poverty in life of black women. The novel deals with the struggle of African-American women to gain recognition as individuals who have a self and identity of their own, by defying the exploitative and oppressive chains of a society dominated and constructed by male.(3)

Feminist scholars have defined the term patriarchy as "the rule of the father, including the rule of older men over younger men and of fathers over daughters, as well as husbands over wives". For Celie, the experience of the limitations that the patriarchal oppression has effected upon her is so strong that she compares it to a jail.(4)

"The Color Purple"can be classified as awomanist novel which means, in Walker's definition of the term, that it has to do with "a black feminist or feminist of colour". In Celie's case, the novel depicts a black woman's development from a poor and marginalised position into a greater extent of independence.(5)Alice walker was an activist during the social events in the civil rightsdemonstrations in the 1960's. Her feminism and ideas concerning the issues ofAfrican American women are seen in her literary works notably her Pulitzer Prizewinning novel The Color Purple.(6)

The Color Purpleis the story of a young African American woman in the 1930's who lives in the conservative pastoral community of Georgia in the South of the United States. Celie is tortured, raped and emotionally abused for almost thirty years of her life before she finally regainsherself and her world.(7)In Abel's terms The Color

Purple is, "...unquestionably a novel with a social message, but the larger issues in it concern a woman's personal struggle for freedom, and how she accomplishes this in a society where women are looked upon as inferior".(8)The novel depicts the life of a black girl, Celie who despite poverty, illiteracy, physical and mental exploitation transcends her plight through self awareness to gain respectable place in the American society. Celie first writes letters to God to help her to survive the spiritual, emotional and physical abuse she suffers at the hands of her stepfather, Alphonso and later on her husband, Mr. \_\_\_\_ (Albert).

"The Color Purple" depicts in an epistolary manner thirty years of a struggle in the life of Celie, a poor Southern black woman who is victimized physically and emotionally both by her stepfather and her husband, Albert. While in her teens, Celie is repeatedly raped by her stepfather, who sells her two children she bore of him. Celie is eventually placed into a loveless marriage with Albert, a widower who for the next three decades subjects her to beatings and psychological torment. Celie writes letters describing her ordeal to God and to her sister, Nettie, who escapes a similar fate by serving as a missionary in Africa. However, in the company of Albert's mistress Shug Avery, a charismatic singer, Celie gains self-esteem and the courage to leave her marriage. Shug is even responsible for Celie's reunion with her children sold by her stepfather, Alphonso and with Nettie at the end of the novel. Celie begins her journey from powerlessness to the state of full empowerment and from self-abnegation to self-recognition.(9)

The experiences of the black female protagonist, Celie are presented through her letters to God. Through her letters to God Celie the fourteen year old girl narrates her first experience of sexism. Her stepfather is sexually abusing her. The horrifying on account of the sexual abuse portrayed on the first page of the novel that shows adominant culture which sees women as mere objects for sexual gratification. Her stepfather denies her right for education, rapes her repeatedly and shatters her confidence. Walker emphasizes the predicament of the black women through the portrayal of Celie.(10)

Walker's novel "The Color Purple" begins with the scene of rape. Celie, the protagonist of the novel, is a black girl of fourteen years old. She is raped by her stepfather, Alphonso whom she believes her father. She cannot tell this trauma anybody.(11)Because she doesn't trust anybody, she can only tell her sufferings to her God. It's only to him she can share every single feeling in her heart and every single moment happened in her life.(12)As she writes:

"Dear God,

I'm fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl. May be you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me.

Last spring after little Lucious come I heard them fussing. He was pulling on her arm. She say it too soon, Fonso, I ain't well. Finally he leave her alone. A week go by, he pulling on her arm again. She say Naw, I ain't gonna. Can't you see I'm already half dead, an all of these children.

She went to visit her sister doctor r over Macon. Left me to see after the others. He never had a kind word to say to me. Just say You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't. First he put his thing up against my hip and ..... When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and used to it.

But I don't never get used to it. And now I feel sick every time I be the one to cook. My mama she fuss at me an look at me. She happy, cause she good to her now. But too sick to last long."(13)

The rape scene of the novel "...is based on Walker's great-great-grandmother, who was raped and impregnated at age 11 by her master Walker's great-great-grandfather"(14). As seen, this abuse is related to a real event and it is written by the writer to demonstrate what a black female live. This event reveals the portrayal of black family. The writer suggests that "...child-rape, incest..."(15) is an undeniable fact of most blacks' lives. The reason of significance of the Celie's rape scene is that there is not a race issue. Celie is black and her stepfather is black, as well. This incident displays that being a member of a black family is dangerous for a female. These facts are the representatives of a black female's life. Celie is demonstrated "...the black woman as oppressed ..." (16)

Not only Celie's initial sexual experience in the form of rape committed by her stepfather, but also sex continued to be a means of oppression in her marriage as well. After her marriage with Mr. \_\_ (Albert), she suffers more and more because she does not only takes care of her husband, but also of her husband's children. At the very beginning, Celie cannot make too much sense of her experiences. She is rather the passive victim of her environment: "But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive"(17), "I don't say anything. I stay where I'm told. But I am alive"(18). Moreover, it seems that she can bear all the sorrows inflicted upon her. When she talks to her sister Nettie, before leaving from her husband's home, she says, "it worse than that, I think. If I was buried, I wouldn't have to work. But I just

say, Never mine, never mine, long as I can spell G-o-d I got somebody along".(19)This mere act of addressing God suggests Celie's alienation, loneliness, and marginality.

At the beginning of the novel, Mr. \_\_\_ doesn't want to marry Celie, he wants to get married with Nettie, but her stepfather doesn't let him to take her, because she is still young and too fresh for him, taking care of his household. Thus, he lets him to take Celie who is not virgin anymore. Besides, he wants Nettie for himself. Therefore, he lets him to take Celie by offering some cows to be with her. At first, Mr. \_\_\_ takes more time, about three months to think of marrying Celie. Mr. \_\_\_ marries Celie not because of her goodness: hard working, discipline, and caring attitude but he seems more interested in getting her cows if she takes Celie to be his wife.(20)

It is due to Shug Avery's influence that Celie leaves Mr. \_\_\_, her husband, and becomes an economically and socially empowered woman. "I am happy, I got love, I got work, I got money, friends, and time. And you alive and be home soon".(21)By the end of the novel at this point; it could be interpreted exclusively on the ground of feminist ideology in which, Celie can strongly fight back against her husband by saying, "You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman...",". When she decides to go to Memphis. In this very moment Celie's consciousness starts growing, she remarks "I'm pore. I'm black; I may be ugly and can't cook. But I am here"(22). In Memphis she does her business of sewing pants. She is a very successful woman, enjoying her newly gained position as an independent wage earner in Memphis, far from her native community. Then finally, she returns to her family and she is able to change Mr. \_\_\_'s perception, and establishes a normal human relationship with him.

In "The Color Purple", women bonding and sisterhood play an important role in Celie's emancipation process. Ranging from her sister Nettie to her daughter in law Sofia and to her husband's mistress Shug, Celie is able to transform her life and free herself both physically and spiritually with the help of these women. Female ties take many forms: some are motherly or sisterly, some are in the form of mentor and pupil, some are sexual, and some are simply friendships. Sofia claims that her ability to fight comes from her strong relationships with her sisters. Nettie's relationship with Celie anchors her through years of living in the unfamiliar culture of Africa. Most important, Celie's ties to Shug bring about Celie's gradual redemption and her attainment of a sense of self.

In her writings, Walker always emphasizes the importance of sisterhood in black women's emancipation. She sees the possibility of empowerment for black women if they create a community of sisters that can alter the present-day unnatural definitions of woman and man. Smith finds that the unifying bond between black

women is through their friendships, their love, and their shared oppression that they collectively gain the strength to separate themselves from the bondage of their past and piece together a free and equal existence for themselves and for those they love.(23)

The character of Shug Avery, a dynamic singer whose real name is Lillie but is called Shug, is a transforming force in Celie's life. Womanist consciousness is clearly seen in the relationship between Celie and Shug. Walker's idea of womanism is ingrained in this novel. For her the term involves, "in bonding of women as a continuation of the struggle for self-definition and affirmation that is the essence of African American means." She portrays a galaxy of black women who love other women as being "whole" or "round women" and have concern in a culture that oppresses entire black community. Women in this novel- Celie, Shug, Nettie, Sofia- stress the sense of solidarity and sharing, the sense of community, that brings about blossoming in self and society. They demonstrate consciousness of their continuous exploitation and slavery due to colour and gender.(24)

In the novel, we have many examples of sisterhood that link women with each other. The very first signs of sisterhood can be seen in Celie and Nettie. The two sisters live within a family where affection is totally absent. With a violent rapist father and a sick mother, Nettie is able to provide Celie with moral comfort. When Nettie notices that Celie is frequently beaten by her husband, she urges her to fight him. She also urges her to fight against Mr. \_\_\_'s children by showing them a good lesson and letting them know —who is the upper hand.(25) To Celie, Nettie has always been like a teacher. She helps her sister with reading, spelling and everything she thinks Celie needs to know. Celie, in her turn, is of great help and support to Nettie. In absence of parental affection, Celie plays not only the role of a sister but also the role of a substitute mother. Celie offers herself to her stepfather preventing thus Nettie from being abused. When the two sisters are later separated from each other, this affectionate sisterhood continues to tie both sisters providing them a hope of survival during the harshest living moments of their existence.

Sofia Butler, Celie's step-son's wife, is another woman who becomes a good model for Celie. She is a fat woman with big legs. She grows up in a family of men and learns that only by fighting can she survive. —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 a family of men.(26) Unlike Sofia, Celie does not fight and keeps silent when she suffers from family violence. Sofia refuses to accept this unfair social rule. She, with her determination, will not be humbled by anyone in her life, whether they are black or white. She does not hesitate to say —hell no to the mayor's wife's offer that Sofia goes to work as her maid, and knocks the mayor

down after he slapped her. Sofia, with her rebellious spirit, exerts a critical effect on Celie's awakening.

Another woman who helps Celie in getting free is the blues singer Shug Avery. However, the female bonding that ties these two women is totally different from the one with Nettie or Sofia. In fact, if Nettie is considered as the hope that sustains Celie alive and Sofia the rebellious spirit that encourages Celie to fight, Shug is seen as the affectionate mother and sexual mentor for Celie. Shug Avery is at first a friend to Celie, eventually a lover, but has always a subtly guiding "mothering" influence that enables Celie to evolve into an independent, self-actualized woman, no longer accepting the conditions that have enslaved her.

Celie has always been deprived of maternal affection and Shug, like a mother, protects Celie from the beatings of her husband Albert. She stays at Albert's house and does not leave until she becomes sure that he will not even think about beating Celie again. Shug becomes the angel by Celie's side that helps her pave the first steps towards independence: "I won't leave, she says, until I know Albert won't even think about beating you."<sup>(27)</sup> Celie first sees her when Albert takes her home. Actually, at that time, Shug is nearly sick to death. Then Celie has devoted her attention to nursing Shug until she recovers. Shug is touched by her tenderness and care, hence creating a-Miss Celie's song- to express her gratitude to Celie. For the first time, Celie is aware of being respectable, —first time somebody made something and name it after me.<sup>(28)</sup>

Celie has been the subject of repeated rapes and beatings; therefore, she has no desire to get to know her body. The only concept that Celie has of her own body is that she is ugly. To protect herself, she has had to eradicate her body as well as her soul. However, in order to emancipate, a woman should know herself not only emotionally but also physically. The importance of regaining the control of one's own body for asserting one's self is outlined by Daniel Ross in these terms:

"One of the primary projects of modern feminism has been to restore women's bodies. Because the female body is the most exploited target of male aggression, women have learned to fear or even hate their bodies. Consequently, women often think of their bodies as torn or fragmented, a pattern evident in Walker's Celie. 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 for women a reminder of her degradation and her consignment to an inferior status".<sup>(29)</sup> With Shug's encouragement, Celie views

her own sexual organ in a mirror for the first time and shouts: —It mine It was the first time that she develops an interest to her body and enjoys its beauty.

Celie, in her last letter to God, begins with Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear everything. Dear God, this succession of addresses reveals that the notion of God in her mind has changed. Celie has new conception of God, He is everything and everything is God and this opens her eyes to the outside world, and thus revives her. She realizes that the new God exists in her, as a spiritual power and an inner support to her. Celie's final letter to God states that, despite her old age, "I think this the youngest us ever felt."<sup>(30)</sup>

In the novel, Celie's poverty is shocking. When she is a teen age girl, she is almost naked — why don't you look decent? Put on something. But what I'm sposed to put on? I don't have nothing.<sup>(31)</sup> Celie has nothing under her name. Celie, as a black woman without any formal education, has talent in making pants. With the help of Shug, Celie leaves for Memphis and begins to learn how to earn money by making pants. She accepts Shug's advice and opens her own clothing company-Folkspants Unlimited Company. Sofia also does not hesitate to help Celie in her new business. It is thus quite evident that sisterhood is of great importance for Celie's emancipation. With the support of Nettie , Sofia and Shug, Celie is able to accept her body, free herself spiritually and economically and therefore gets her independence.

There is a remarkable theme of black women's liberation through three feminine activities (Letter Writing, Singing Blues Music, Needle Work) used by black women as their means to escape from oppressions and how they all contribute to the liberation of black women in Walker's *The Color Purple*. This novel is written in an unusual narrative structure through the epistolary, or letter writing form. The entire novel is determined, advanced and resolved through ninety letters written from Celie to God, from Nettie to Celie, and finally from Celie to Nettie.

The use of this epistolary form can be considered very effective in the novel as the way used by black women to express their feelings towards the oppressions over them. According to Josephine Donovan, letter writing has long been seen as a convention used mostly by women. She describes it as a "semi-private" genre used primarily by women because of their inferior education and because of the fact that such writings were not expected to be published.<sup>(32)</sup> Since it is considered as a private space, letter writing is then used to give voice to the ideas and desires of women

that had been denied in other forums. In Walker's *The Color Purple*, letters are used by black women to break the silence that is normally imposed upon them.

Although it is only a one-way communication, letter writing here can be taken as a form of self-expression that provides Celie the only opportunity to express how she really feels about each situation. Since this ability is crucial in developing one's sense of self, Celie's letters to God can then be seen as her foundational step toward liberation. In this case, Elizabeth Fifer argues that Celie participates in the creation of meaning for herself through language. Without language, silence would have ensured madness or, as in her mother's case, an early death.(33)

Apart from letter writing, Alice Walker suggests another way in which black women could freely express themselves through the singing of blues music. Blues generally refers to a kind of music originated in the communities of the former African American slaves during the nineteenth century in Southern United States. The blues lyrics are often intensely personal, frequently containing sexual references and often dealing with the pain of betrayal, desertion, and unrequited love. Sometimes they might talk about unhappy situations such as being jobless, hungry, broke, away from home, lonely, or downhearted because of an unfaithful lover.(34) It is therefore possible to conclude that the blues is actually another self-expression form among African Americans.

Like letter writing, needlework, such as sewing and weaving has long been associated with women. In Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, however, needlework plays a very significant role in the story as a way black women use to release themselves from the oppressive system. According to Judy Anne Johnson Breneman, the African American quilt has a long history. It could be traced back to the slavery period when many African American women were brought to America to work for spinning, sewing and quilting in their master's household. When these African Americans became very good at quilting, they used their free time to make scrap quilts for their family.(35) Quilt making, however, is not only presented in Alice Walker's novel as the way to express the creative energy among African Americans, but also a means for black women to form solidarity to resist oppression.

Celie's chooses the traditionally exclusive women's art of sewing to remain separated from the world of violence and abuse created by men. By sewing pants for men and women Celie narrows down the gap between the sexes. Although she initially refuses the idea of wearing pants because she is not a man, Sug convinces her that pants are not only for men and that they are also useful for women: "Why not? Say Shug. You do all the work around here. It's a scandal, the way you look

out there plowing in a dress. How you keep from falling over it or getting the plow caught in it is beyond me".(36)

Walker' works give voice to those who cannot speak, usually rural, simple and poor black women. Those women have been deprived from the right to decide and choose by their religious leaders, the harsh economy, racism, which is embedded in the laws, and the men they choose or find themselves forced to spend their lives with. The heroines of Alice Walker represent clearly not only the ways they undergo the struggle but also the power, hope and courage which cannot be taken from them. In this context Marry Donnelly notes that: "this process of identifying and celebrating resistance plays a central role in Walker's larger project: recognizing the value and individuality of each person, the distinct patterns of experience and soul that mark each person as individual".(37)

Sree believes that enslavement and racism were not only a source of misfortune for black women, but also the road to salvation. Alice Walker's novel demonstrates Sree's belief as we can see how Celie came to establish herself as a free woman out of her miserable experiences of the "double jeopardy" of racism and sexism. As a writer, Alice Walker believes, as Sree observed, that all the wounds can be healed by positioning women in the core of the literary texts as a remedy to the negative effects of race and gender hierarchy. Throughout her work, Walker establishes strong links and affinities between her female characters. Sree thinks that these links are established to "mountain continuity in confronting and overcoming oppression in their lives, yet Walker is frank in depicting the often devastating circumstances of the "twin afflictions" of racism and sexism".(38)

In his essay *Celie in the Looking Glass*, Daniel Ross(39) believes that the turning point in the novel is Celie's proclamation of her existence and freedom from her husband when she said: "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly, and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here".(40) This declaration is remarkable because she has been subject to an inhuman form of male domination and control. The male control is shown through Celie's fear and inability to speak. So, instead of expressing her emotions and views to another person in the form of natural and basic communication between human beings, Celie writes letters to God. The first few words of the novel reveal Celie's fear of speaking: "you better not tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy".(41) Celie's language and use of words exist in the majority of the novel without an audience in much the same way she exists without a definition of herself, identity, or value. Having the bravery to speak is a major theme in *The Color Purple*. The novel asserts that a hollow self cannot produce speech as shown in the first pages of the novel through the hollowness in Celie' self.

"The Color Purple" is a journey of discovery, before discovering speech Celie has to make another basic discovery. It is the discovery of the desire for selfhood, for the others, and for a place in the world that would support her existence and maintain it. The journey of discovery for Celie starts with the re-appreciation of her stolen and brutally treated body, first by her stepfather and later her own husband Albert. Celie's repossession of her body encouraged her to look for herself and assert that in speech. In the process of discovering her body and repossessing it, she learns how to love herself and the others and to address her letters to another "body", Nettie. Here, she replaced the disembodied God with a real person with whom she can share her stories like normal people do. Ross argues that: "the crucial scene... in initiating this process is the mirror scene. In this scene Celie first comes to terms with her own body, thus changing her life forever".(42)

In the mirror scene Celie looks at herself and comes to the realization that she is not as ugly as she thought when Shug, her female friend who encourages her make this discovery, says: "it a lot prettier than you thought, ain't it?".(43) Celie's acceptance of her body represents the beginning of a long quest for selfhood and knowledge of one's being. Next, she discovers her identity through her friendships with other women: Shug, Nettie, Sofia and Marry Agnes "with her newfound identity, Celie is able to break free from the masculine prohibition against speech and to join a community of women, thus freeing herself from dependence on and subjection to male brutality".(44) By using language Celie replaces aggressive intentions of cutting and killing because she needs none of that when she finally builds up the courage to declare her independence from a shocked Albert who watches her in disbelief saying: " you, a lowdown dog is what's wrong, I say. It's time to leave you and enter into the creation. And you dead body just the welcome mat I need [...] You took my sister Nettie away from me, I say. And she was the only person love me in the world".(45)

Moral power is prevailing theme in "The Color Purple". Walker explores this theme to show its importance in empowering the weak. In his book, Gerald J. Postena postulates that:

"Moral power [...] is the power of the weaker party in a relationship of domination to impose costs on the stronger party's oppressive actions, costs that are significant enough to force the stronger to take seriously the moral claims of the weaker. The exercise of moral power differs from the exercise of economic power or physical violence not so much in the means it uses as in its aims and intentions. The aim of the exercise of moral power is not just to wring

concessions from the stronger, but to bring him to his moral senses, to move him to pay attention to the evidence already available to him that the weaker party has rights which he is violating".(46)

The Color Purple received great praise and censure from black and white, male and female reviewers, literary critics, and general readers. Andrea Ford says in the Detroit Free Press, "Walker has succeeded in creating a jewel of a novel".(50) Peter S. Prescott joins Ford's opinion declaring in a *Newsweek* review "I want to say, that The Color Purple is an American novel of permanent importance, that rare sort of book which diversion in the fields of dread".(51)

Thadious M. Davis, in his Dictionary of Literary Biography essay, comments: "Walker writes best of the social and personal drama in the lives of familiar people who struggle for survival of self in hostile environments. She has expressed a special concern with exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumph of black women.(52)

According to Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" - in addition to physical violence - there are many ways of abusing a woman through psychological violence. The first way of exerting psychological violence or oppression is verbally, which means that women are degraded and often described as unintelligent or sexual objects. The second one, isolating the woman from contacts with friends, relatives or important institutions of society, is a form of violence which prevents her from help and support. Thirdly, the woman is usually economically dependent on her husband. Moreover, the woman is usually frightened and threatened by the destructive relationship she lives within.

Women struggle everyday against discrimination: color, gender, illiteracy, violence, insecurity, and lack of equal opportunities. Celie is an example that represents any black woman's experience. Her experience is similar to that of many other black women. She had to bear the same type of discrimination. But, she finally finds her path towards her own self through the written language. Therefore, Celie is, above all, an individual searching for her place in society. In the same way, Alice Walker is also female Afro-American but, most of all, a writer searching for her place in literature.

The novel covers the journey of Celie from a neglected orphan child to a free self-confident woman. When her consciousness as a woman develops, Celie finds her identity as a woman that she has to step up on her own feet. Walker tries to convey a social and moral message through this novel. Her message is that women

must stand up against the unfair treatment they receive at the hands of men and that they must do this by helping one another. So, Walker always emphasizes the importance of sisterhood in black women's emancipation. In her novel, Alice Walker suggests another way in which women can escape from patriarchal oppression. Apart from the common theme of female's solidarity, black women can also find a way toward their liberation through some kinds of feminine activities.

Eventually, Alice Walker's epistolary novel, "The Color Purple", is one of the best literary works that vividly depict the sufferings of African-American women from patriarchy, sexism and racism. Walker does not limit herself in describing the sufferings of African American women but suggests to all women a path to follow in order to free themselves from the evils of patriarchy and sexism. Celie, the protagonist, is able to change her status of a sexually abused slave woman and free herself economically, physically and spiritually. Walker's novel is an example of hope as it provides the reader with a sense of optimism that the reader can experience when reading the novel. More importantly, the novel offers a model of inspiration for women's emancipation.

## **NOTES**

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الصورة الزاهية للمرأة السوداء  
في رواية " ارجواني اللون "  
للكاتبة : ألس وولكر

سالم كاظم عباس  
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جامعة ميسان

الخلاصة

التمييز العنصري ، النظام الأبوي ، التهميش ، الظلم ، الأضطهاد المزدوج ، الانتهاك الجنسي ، العنف الجسدي والنفسي ، الظروف الوحشية والاستعباد هي المشاكل الرئيسية التي واجهتها النساء السود في المجتمع الأمريكي في اوائل القرن العشرين . ألس وولكر كاتبة امريكية افريقية تناولت هذه الموضوعات في روايتها المثيرة للجدل " ارجواني اللون " (١٩٨٢) . في هذه الرواية التي حصدت الجوائز ، ألس وولكر نالت الاطراء الى حد بعيد لنهاذ بصيرتها في تصوير حياة الناس السود ، وخصوصاً تجارب النساء السود في مجتمع يمارس التمييز على اساس العرق والجنس .

تحاول هذه الدراسة ان توضح التحرر التدريجي لأمرأة سوداء - بطلة الرواية (سيلبي) - من الخوف والبؤس والاضطهاد من خلال عملية الانعتاق . ان الدراسة محاولة لتسليط الضوء على مشاكل العرق والجنس التي تواجهها النساء الامريكيات الافريقيات ، وتحاول ان تتحرى وتحلل دور الهوية والعرق والجنس كما صورتها الكاتبة في هذه الرواية ، كما تتعقب الدراسة صراع المرأة السوداء من اجل البقاء والمساواة وتحقيق الذات والهوية . تنتهي الدراسة بقائمة الهوامش والمصادر.