

Treatment of Women in Fiction: Special Reference to Alice Walker

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ABSTRACT

The male writers have dominated the African American literary discourses for the most of the century. Women of colour, like women of colour in white literature, were only given a minimal role in the construction of their own work, as well. Virginia Woolf, a world-renowned feminist, states in her novel: "A Room of One's Own" on the link between women and fiction: Imaginatively, she is of the greatest significance; practically, she is totally unimportant.

Alice Walker (1944) portrays herself as an "apologist and chronicler for black women" in her novels and poems, as well as in her essays and the classes she teaches, all of which are set in the United States. Given that the lives of black women and sexism in society at general, and specifically in black society in particular, are at the heart of her whole output, it is clear that her literary and theoretical writings are two sides of the same coin for her. Affirming her commitment to her cause, but finding it difficult to connect with mainstream (mostly white) feminism, she has chosen a distinctively separate black feminism, which she refers to as Womanism.

INTRODUCTION

Piece of writing is more than just a creator experience; it is also the means via which authors communicate their ideas to the reader. It might represent the author's point of view on a variety of trends that occur in her or his immediate environment. The items that are shown might be the social status of the individual, the interactions between members of society, or, in more straightforward examples, the connection between men and women. The relationship between the sexes is the subject of literary feminist critique, which is a kind of literary studies. Its goal is to uncover the implications of the engagement of both sexes (men and women) in literary production by digging into the past. Feminist literary critics are concerned with how women and men are depicted in literature, as well as how both write. As a result, in order to be a critic, we must first understand the nature of the interactions that exist between women and men. This critique gets more intriguing to complete since the issue of relationships between women and men is so near to our hearts and is so important in our everyday lives.

In the last several decades, gender issues have gained significant attention across a wide range of academic areas. Furthermore, a significant amount of contemporary literature has dealt with a topic that, among other things, underlines the expression and dissemination of a critical social issue: gender equality. In response to the social necessity to deconstruct old-fashioned, restricted, and patriarchal gender systems and reconstruct them from the ground up, there is an explosion of literature. Specifically, it is to improve what has to be done to improve the condition people in general, and particularly women, must take in order for today's society to make it a better society tomorrow. Justice for equality is a topic that affects everyone in some way. As a result, it is the responsibility of society to level the existing unevenness and put a stop to contemporary utopias; in this case, the present condition of gender disparity.

Various minority groups have attacked Western culture, and the Western canon in particular, over the years, claiming that it is biased towards white, upper- and upper-middle-class, male citizens. Some groups, such as African Americans and individuals who were once colonised by other countries, as well as women and homosexuals and lesbians have expressed their dissatisfaction with their status as second-class citizens. This study focuses on a specific subset of women, namely black women. Because they are "dual marginalised" as both black and female, these women not only question mainstream culture, but they also question the challenges to mainstream society posed by other minority groups (for example, Afro-Americans on the one hand and feminists on the other).

LITERATURE REVIEW

JamolaNarimanova (2021) The central issue of this research is how African-American women's suffering is depicted in Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. The goal of this research is to examine the novel using structural aspects as well as a feminist approach to

analysis. The author employs a qualitative method and a feminist viewpoint to analyse The Color Purple book. The novel The Color Purple by Alice Walker, released in 1982, is the subject of the research. Primary and secondary data sources make up the data sources. The novel The Color Purple serves as the major data source, while secondary data sources include other sources pertinent to the study, such as the author's biography and other relevant information. The data was gathered through library research. Descriptive analysis is a data analysis approach. The study's findings are presented in the following conclusions. First, the novel's structural analysis reveals that Alice Walker wishes to communicate her feelings about how African-American women are harmed by their culture, which is created by whites and black males. Second, based on the Feminist Approach, it is concluded that African-American women suffer in Alice Walker's work The Color Purple. Unfair treatment, according to Walker, will inevitably result in revolt. Third, this work depicts the societal construct that women who are suffering and experiencing agony in their lives may improve their lives.

Rafraf, Shakil (2021) The Color Purple by Alice Walker and The Pakistani Bride by Bapsi Sidhwa both address concerns of female subjugation. Despite the fact that the two protagonists in this article are from different religions, nations, skin colours, and familial backgrounds, they encounter similar obstacles. The characters share a common feminist yearning for independence from an oppressive patriarchal society, as well as a strong desire for personal freedom to live their lives with dignity and as unique individuals. Men are perceived as the rulers in patriarchal societies, while women are portrayed as the governed. Women are obliged to live under their ruler's tyranny, as shown in the literature. The purpose of the paper is to compare the two heroines' commonalities in order to investigate women's plight. The purpose of this study is to look at the prevalent gender challenges that women encounter throughout the world. The research dives into the prominent themes of women oppression, such as women abuse, male domination, domestic violence, and racial and gender discrimination, in this setting. Women's oppression, domestic violence, gender discrimination, mental and physical abuse are all topics covered in this article. Many authors have been concerned about themes such as female oppression, violence against women, and gender inequities. Gender inequality is one of the world's most pressing issues. The Color Purple, Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, and Bapsi Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride both deal with similar themes. Despite the fact that the characters of both stories come from various religions, nations, skin colours, and families, they encounter the same hardships. Walker focuses on topics that affect the lives of black women. Both in America and Africa, the story realistically exposes sexism, racism, oppression, poverty, and struggle. The story depicts black women's battle to be recognised as people with a distinct personality and identity. Bapsi Sidhwa, on the other hand, has shown the pitiful state of women in patriarchal society. Zaitoon's narrative is a vivid depiction of women's subordination, particularly in Pakistani society. Women are oppressed under the guise of religion and societal conventions created by males in order to control them. The purpose of this article is to bring attention to women's oppression and gender issues across the world. Alice Walker is an author and activist from the United States. In 1982, she received the National Book Award for literature and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her best-known work The Color Purple.

Yang, Xinyu (2021) In the twentieth century, Alice Walker, a notable American black woman poet, novelist, and prose writer, introduced "womanism," a term distinct from "feminist," to literature and sociology. Everyday Use is one of her short tales included in the 1973 collection In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women. It tells the story of the "quilts" causing a rift between the mother and her two daughters. This thesis examines the living conditions of black women and the triple oppression they face, with the goal of exploring the spiritual world of black women and demonstrating Walker's identification with black woman cultures through an examination of the three heroines' characterization and the metaphoric meaning of "quilts."

Joby, John (2021) The "Womanist Existentialism" disquisition is a study of Alice Walker's work The Color Purple. This dissertation examines the Womanist novel The Color Purple through the lens of Existentialist Womanism. Alice Walker introduces a more powerful 'ism', Womanism, as well as a microscopic technique to studying the difficulties of the segregated

segment (Black Women). She dubs the new school 'Womanism,' owing to the exclusion of black women, even among feminists. Existential Womanism is a new compound word coined to assess her tremendous work, which alone is capable of transcending the meanings of Feminism and Womanism. The dissertation's first chapter examines the basic ideas of Existentialism and defines in detail the many notions associated with it. It also explores how Celei, the novel's protagonist, develops her identity. The second chapter, titled "Walkerian Womanism," examines Womanism's central assumption, namely, "black Feminism or feminism of colour." It is a support or excitement for women's rights, accomplishments, and so forth. The third chapter, 'Positing Womanist Existentialism,' delves into the definition and compounding of the word 'Existential Womanism,' as well as the implications of an Existential Womanist interpretation of *The Color Purple*. This chapter also describes the Existentialist view of life, which holds that humans have no intrinsic essence and must build their own worth and purpose in a world that is essentially ludicrous.

WOMANIST INCEPTION: THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND AND MERIDIAN

The *Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Alice Walker's first novel, was released in 1970 and is tinged with Womanism, some less and some more. Alice Walker sought to play it safe by using a traditional male protagonist, whose conversion to Womanism is one of the main issues of her first attempt. She wanted to take use of this chance in her first novel to emphasise the distinct characteristics of this Black shade of Womanism, as well as the critical role of Black males in it. Her main concerns in the novel are women's outrageous, daring, and wilful behaviour, a woman who loves other women and men sexually or non-sexually, a woman who is dedicated to the survival and wholeness of all humans, male and female. It also sheds light on the characters' concepts of inclusivity, sympathy, forgiveness, and motherhood or Womanist maternity. In an interview with John O'Brien, she stated unequivocally:

I'm preoccupied with the spiritual survival of my people as a whole. But, above all, I'm dedicated to investigating the oppressions, insanities, loyalties, and successes of black women. (197)

The novel's premise chronicles the fear experienced by one poor sharecropper black family over the course of sixty years. The Copeland family has a history of domestic violence, with Grange Copeland abusing his wife, Margaret, and neglecting his son, Brownfield, because he feels emasculated in a place where he owes his entire life to the white master. He feels terrible because he can't protect his wife from Shipley, his white boss, or provide a better life for his son. As a result, he feels confined by his family and seeks refuge in the company of Josie, a prostitute. Margaret, on the other hand, pursues lovers, abusing herself in response to Grange's cruelty. Margaret poisons herself and her young, innocent, illegitimate baby after her husband abandoned them and moved to the north to pay up his debt.

Brownfield's wrath and vengeance for his father's rejection is powerfully shown in Alice Walker's novel. Brownfield, a sixteen-year-old boy who has been abandoned by his parents, initially follows in his father's footsteps and engages in sexual relations with prostitutes. Brownfield meets and falls in love with Mem, Josie's schoolteacher niece, while working at Dew Drop Inn. They marry out of passion and love, only to replicate Grange and Margaret's pattern of cruelty and depression. Despite Mem's efforts to improve her life and the lives of her daughters, Brownfield never misses an opportunity to humiliate her. He kills his new born albino son, a white infant who looks like his father, because he doesn't feel like a man. Mem terrified her husband with a gun in a moment of awful power, and as a result, she was slain by her husband. Ornette, Daphene, and Ruth, her three daughters, survive her death.

WHOLENESS AND STEPPING INTO THE REALM OF ONENESS

Alice Walker's novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), strikes at the heart of one of the most contentious subjects of the moment with exquisite power. She describes the circumstances, restrictive and demeaning roles of society that prevent black women from thinking, deciding, and living freely and bravely in it. Circumcision, womanhood celebrations, and scarification, all of which are popular in some black communities, require a complete loss of self from a black woman. In this work, Walker critically investigates and interrogates the

African practise of female genital mutilation. These are some of the customs that are still observed today. Alice Walker says:

It is estimated that between 90 and 100 million women and girls in African, Far Eastern, and Middle Eastern countries have had their genitalia mutilated today. The practise of 'female circumcision' is becoming more common in the United States and Europe, particularly among immigrants from countries where it is a cultural norm. (281)

CONCLUSION

Alice Walker is a notable character in contemporary African-American literature, an active civil rights activist, and a womanist who focuses on Womanist themes in the black community as well as interracial violence and injustice. The preceding debate has demonstrated how she speaks for all black women who have been victimised by slavery and racism. She has become the collective voice of all those who have been oppressed, mistreated, and exploited by speaking for black women. Alice Walker showed her intense opposition to men's cruelty to women throughout her creative career, as she fervently believed in the human ideals of liberty, equality, and feminism.

Walker's fiction, like that of any great artist, is marked by a tremendous deal of diversity and complexity, dealing with practically every facet and dimension of existence. She assesses the blacks' strengths and weaknesses clearly and completely, without obfuscating or glossing over any of them. She believes that personal and political transformations can lead to social revolution. Her principal interest is undoubtedly the empowerment of black women who are the most disenfranchised by race, caste, and class, but her concern for the "survival whole," the spiritual and physical survival of the entire human race, explains the holistic aspect of her womanist philosophy. "She takes people who look utterly irredeemable and then writes about their redemption," Gloria Steinem says of Walker's books, "that gives me faith in change and helps me to change too" (38).

The lives, sorrows, and traditions of black women have been overlooked not only by the canon, but also by fellow victims such as white women and black men. African American women have a long history of struggle, agony, and successes, and they have carried their struggle and tradition down from generation to generation. It has enabled them to cope with the pressures of being a black person in a white America and has helped them to become survivors. Alice Walker's novels vividly illustrate the path of black women's lives from birth to death, which is marked by physical and psychological abuse, sexual exploitation and oppression, and the denial of the choice to live a life of wholeness on their own terms. Walker has turned her critical eye to the black community's practises and traditions, which have been designed to keep women subordinate to men by denying them power over their own bodies and minds. Walker's works have ruthlessly highlighted several techniques used by men in her own community to keep women out of power. Woman's subjugation to oppression and exploitation, denial and dispossession at the hands of man in her family, community, and in the larger racist world is only one part of the complex storey of the black woman's sufferings and heroic struggles to break or transcend the shackles of her bondage and move toward liberation, expansion, and regeneration of herself.

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