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**Literature and
Civilization**

**The Female Voice Through Letters: Epistolarity in The Color Purple By
Alice Walker**

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Master in Literature and Civilization

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Dedications

I thank Allah for granting me strength to finish my thesis.

I dedicate my humble work to my family and my friends.

My loving parents, Samira and Azzouz for their endless love, encouragement and constant support.

To my only brother, Taha, who believes in me and to my kind and loving sisters, Anfal and Amani.

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Declarations

I do hereby declare that this dissertation entitled « The Female Voice Through Letters : Epistolarity in The Color Purple by Alice Walker » is the result of my research as a partial for the Master's Degree in English Literature and Civilization under the supervision of Mrs.Chenini Amri Boutheina, Faculty of Letters and Languages , English Language Division, Mohamed KHIDER University, Biskra, Algeria. I also declare that appropriate references or acknowledgments to the work of other researchers are made where necessary.

Abstract

The Color Purple is an African-American novel written by the prominent woman writer Alice Walker. The novel portrays the life and experiences of a black female in a patriarchal and racist American society during the twentieth-century using the Epistolary technique . The protagonist of the novel shows progress and emancipation from a weak , dependent girl to a strong independent woman who speaks for herself. *The Color Purple* traces the protagonist's realization of her own voice, identity , and consciousness. The protagonist's letters helped her discover her real identity and her power to control her own life. This paper attempts to study and examine the emancipation of the black woman and finding her voice from Feminist and Psychoanalytical perspectives. The Feminist theory is used to highlight the stereotypical image of black woman in a racist , patriarchal society which is represented through the main character. Psychoanalytical approach is used to examine the realization of ones self that is represented through the emancipation of the main character with emphasis on the power of writing letters that helps the protagonist to discover her identity in the light of the womanist ideology.

Keywords : Epistolary technique ,Feminist theory, Patriarchy, Psychanalysis, Womanist ideology.

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General Introduction

In the Southern American Society, wifhood and motherhood were regarded as the only professions women could hold. The American Society as many other societies was a patriarchal society in which women were more like properties or servants for men. Up until the late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century, women in most nations started to demand their when Feminism started to glow and many women started to write literary works . Moreover, Women exerted power and influence through the early modern letter writing which was a literary vehicle that helped in expressing feelings and thoughts. It was first know with Richardson's Pamela (1740) and Clarissa(1748) , and the techninque enables the author to present multiple points of view on the same event. Alice Walker revived this technique in her famous novel *The Color Purple* 1982 .

Alice Malsenior Walker is one of the greatest African American novelists and poets and she was the first black woman to win the Pultizer Prize and the National Book Award 1983 for her famous novel the *Color Purple* 1982. She was born on February 9, 1944 and she was the eighth child to African American sharecroppers family. She was blinded in one eye while playing wih her brother in her childhood and because of that incident , Walker aliented herself. However, the incident was in her favor as she discovered her passion of writing and she built ip herself and her career while growing up to make her name one of the well-known names as an American writer, novelist, poet, and an activist. Walker was the first black female writer to win the Pultizer Prize and the National Book Award 1983 for her novel *The Color Purple* 1982.

Walker's most famous novel the *Color Purple* 1982 tells the story of the black female protagonist Celie who resembes most of the black females and their experiences in the American-South society, Georgia. The novel embodied the hard life and the double burden

that black women faced in a racist and patriarchal society. The novel tackles multiple problems and issues. *The Color Purple* is written with the epistolary style and discusses the emancipation of the protagonist from a silent and weak girl to a strong independent woman who works on and for herself.

In regard to the aims of the dissertation, it intends to tackle *The Color Purple* and how it represented the double burden that black female experienced focusing on the changes of the novel's protagonist Celie and her emancipation. The novel is considered as a feminist work and that is why the dissertation focuses on the feminism approach as it helps to study the work better. Walker is known for her hard work for the right of black women and her work reflects those realities as it shows how capable are women to do as much as men. Moreover, the novel is an epistolary work that helps to dig deep into the main character's personality; therefore, the psychoanalytical approach and Freud's theory of personality helps in discussing and understanding the characters more.

Furthermore, the data collection of the study is achieved throughout a profound reading and examination of the available relevant primary and secondary sources, including books, articles and dissertations. The citation of these sources relies on the eighth edition of the MLA style.

This dissertation focuses on the black women's ability to change and construct an identity and a voice through writing letters shedding the light on the following questions:

-How is the black female represented via epistolary in *The Color Purple*?

- How does Walker portray black women in her novel *The Color Purple*?

-how is Walker's womanist ideology conveyed in *The Color Purple* via epistolary?

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter of the dissertation presents the theoretical framework ; it introduces the feminist theory and how it reflected women writings with an emphasis on their background. Whereas the second chapter focuses on Walker's novel *The Color Purple* in context studying its main themes, setting, male domination and analysing the work as an African American work and as an epistolary novel. The last chapter of the paper focuses on the psychoanalysis of the novel's protagonist and its personality and change.

Chapter One: A Theoretical Framework

1.1. Introduction

This present chapter traces the major features that characterised the feminist theory and how it was impacted and reflected in the literary works and productions of women who wrote about women's experiences. The chapter starts with defining feminism and the main feminist theories. Furthermore, it sheds the light on the history of feminism and its three major waves.

The first chapter of this paper discusses the female literary tradition focusing mainly on black women writings and how women portrayed their experiences in their literary works. Moreover, It tackles the relation of racism and feminism and the double burden of women of color in US societies specifically , discussing black representatives and then talking about racism . Last but not least, the chapter ends by giving a short background on the concept of womanism and its link to feminism.

1.2. Feminism and the Feminist Theory

Numerous writers, scholars, and thinkers have defined the term "feminism" according to their category of the society because feminism was not for the elite only but rather for the whole societies. Therefore, there multiple definitions of Feminism according to the one's background and life experiences and those definitions can be accepted in regard to the circumstances they were produced.

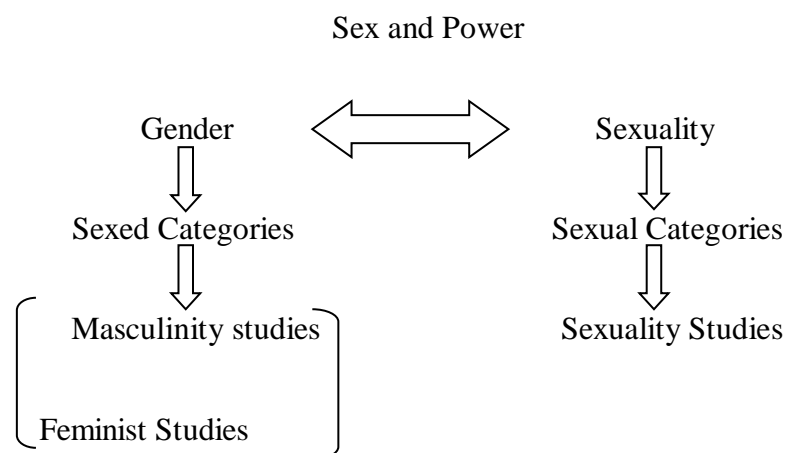
Feminism is the ideology or theoretical commitment to women's liberation movements. It refers to political, cultural and economic movements that aimed to establish greater rights and legal protection for women. Feminists believe in the importance of gender equality and stood against the gender hierarchy that was justified by natural differences between men and women. (Tanwar,7-8)

Feminist theory attempts to describe women's oppression, its causes and consequences, and to prescribe strategies for women liberation in a variety of fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis...etc. According to Jane Flax, feminist theory is related to action. Therefore, it has to be commitment to change the oppressed situation of women and the unjustly treatment in multiple societies. (4-5)

The feminist vision affected the ways in which contemporary thinkers and writers such as Beasley perceive the dynamics of society and power. If we consider the term "sex" closely, we find that it has a binary reference to hierarchical classes such as "male and female", which is also called "sexed regimes", and to categories like heterosexual and homosexual, often linked to what is called "sexual regimes. The term sex refers to the biological difference of being a male or female; even though, it is used interchangeably with gender or to refer to one's sexuality.(11)

The next figure shows the three major subfields of feminism and explains the field of gender/sexuality :

Figure : The gender/sexuality field and subfields:



(Beasley,2)

1.1.1. Gender and Feminism

People usually use the terms “gender” and “sex” interchangeably in referring to their sexes as being male or female. However, sex is manifested as either female or male; whereas gender describes the fact of being masculine or feminine. Feminism and gender are inextricably linked, since feminism is discussed and debated in regard to gender.

Feminism, along with Masculinity Studies, is one of two subfields that may be classified under the umbrella word "gender." As a result, we must first define Feminism. The social process of categorizing persons and social actions along the lines of sexed identities is referred to as "gender." The process of gendering typically entails the establishment of hierarchies between the divides it enacts (Beasley, Gender 11).

According to Beasley, Gender in Western civilization refers to a binary split (into two categories) of human beings and social behaviors, which can even be seen as antagonistic. This is shown by the term "the opposing sex." The two groups are not only considered separate and antagonistic; they are also placed in a hierarchy, with one being characterized as positive and the other as negative (Beasley, Gender11). Cranny Francis, for example, examines the meanings of the words "buddy" and "sissy" derived from brother and sister, and how everyone wants to be a buddy but no one wants to be a sissy. Similarly, the masculine category of "bachelor" is in a considerably better situation than its feminine counterpart "spinster".(11-12)

Prior to the 1960s, it was limited to the concepts of "masculine" and "feminine". Many authors nowadays confine gender to the social categories of "men" and "women," while others view it in terms of social interactions and relations

between these two groups. There are two types. Beasley maintains that this approach sees gender as a structural factor rather than a distinguishing feature. Some writers go above and beyond distinction. Despite the views of some, I urge for the abolition of the concept of gender entirely.(13)

1.1.2. Critical History of Feminism

Feminism has a critical history that began with a dialectical observation of the norm, or what was believed to be the only truth. Feminism is more than just a description of how the world works, it goes beyond that to the point of skepticism. This argument begins with the question of whether the world should be the way it is. Feminism mainly discusses misogyny and the supremacy and centrality of men. There is widespread agreement that there are three waves of contemporary feminism; however, there is no agreement on how to classify these three waves or what to do with women's movements prior to the late nineteenth century. A new silhouette on the horizon is assuming the shape of a fourth wave of feminism, making the landscape even more difficult to navigate. (Rampton)

1.1.2.1. First Wave Feminism:

The late-nineteenth-century wave was not the first emergence of feminist principles, but it was the first genuine political movement in the Western world. Around 200 ladies gathered at a chapel in 1848. They drafted 12 resolutions requesting particular rights, such as the ability to vote. Early feminists were also concerned with reproductive rights. After years of feminist campaigning, Congress ultimately ratified the 19th amendment, granting women the right to vote, in 1920. This was over 30 years after New Zealand became the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote. (par1)

The purpose of first-wave feminism was straightforward: to make society accept that women are human beings, not property. While the founders of the first wave of feminism were abolitionists, their concentration was on the rights of white women. This omission would plague feminism for many years(par2).

Beasley argued that women were considered illogical beings, and they were not allowed to vote, hold property once married, or have legal authority over their children or bodies.

1.1.2.2.Second Wave Feminism

The second wave feminist took place in the 1960s and 70s and it was inspired by the Civil Rights Movement. This wave was harshly denounced by numerous global ideologies, including the Liberal, Marxist, and Socialist Feminists, as well as the Radical Feminists. Beasley, Tong, Bryson, and colleagues point out that there are several testimonies of these various varieties of feminism, which clarifies how they have been classified .Second wave writers were harsher in their criticism of the Liberal 'universal' standard than their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century counterparts, they did not abandon all concepts of a universal norm. In this sense, these second-wave philosophers are still considered as providing a 'Emancipatory' or Modernist perspective. To clarify crucial parts of feminist thought that will subsequently be relevant to the analysis of Modernist themes in the Sexuality and Masculinity Studies subfields, it is first necessary to establish certain qualities of a Modernist frame of reference(Beasley,19).

Beasley argued that second-wave feminists depend on a universalized form of analysis to identify the systems of domination and oppression in society. This universal form of reasoning seeks the truth about power and attempts to demolish

macro-power institutions that oppress women and other oppressed groups (Beasley, Gender, 19). Moreover, Power is defined as domination and repression; it is a power over rather than a power to. It is a negative and downward force that restrains and confines. Second-wave feminists schematize this negative power in terms like "patriarchy" and "compulsory heterosexuality." (20)

1.1.2.3. Third Wave Feminism

The third wave of feminism emerged in the mid-1990s and has continued to this day. It fought for the rights of women and to give them respect and recognition in society. Third wave feminists tend to be more pluralistic about sexuality and personal expressions. In an interview with the feminist Naomi Wolf, she talked about third wave feminists and how they differ from second wave feminists in wanting new style in their feminism. She believed that this wave feminists are more alert than some second wave feminists were to issues of class and race and how they are tend to be more engaged with being willing to use power like using the media (Naomi Wolf). To sum up, third wave feminism tackled topics related to individualism and diversity and wanted to reformulate the concept of feminism.

1.3. The Female literary Tradition:

According to Eagleton, Carby, and other critics, the women's movement created the female literary heritage and resurrected classical literature that chronicled female views and imaginations. Feminist movements provided women a voice and gave a new idea of what it means to be a woman (Amri, 15)

In her book *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, Mary Eagleton shed the light on the importance of the feminist movements:

It is the women's movement, part of the other

movements of our time for a fully human life,
 that has brought this forum into being; kindling
 a renewed , in most instances a first-time,
 interest in the writings and writers of our sex.

Linked with the old, resurrected classics on
 women, this movement in three years has
 accumulated vast new mass of testimony, of a
 new comprehension as to what it is to be female.

Inequities, restrictions, penalties, denials,
 lynchings have been painstakingly and painfully
 documented: damaging differences in
 circumstances and treatment from that of males
 attested to; and limitations, harms, a sense of
 wrong voiced.

(Eagleton,1)

Most of the feminist critics from Britain and United states concentrated on the issue of silencing women writers and eliminating them from the literary history during 1970s. Feminist critics of that period were interested in resurrecting the neglected works of women authors and establishing a climate that would support modern women authors and show what it takes to be a female. Literary criticism focused more on male writings which urged feminist critics to demand recognition and attention on female authors and works and find a female tradition. (Eagleton, 31)

Furthermore, feminist writers have questioned various political and social issues throughout history because societies were mainly patriarchal societies. Women have struggled a lot and faced multiple problems in expressing themselves , talking about their experiences, and fighting for their equal rights. Those challenges that

women faced encouraged them to recreate a new style and tried to make their own literary tradition that would help in making their voices heard in an unequal society ; when feminist movements began to be global and more generalised.

Feminism fought for women's equal rights; however, it was mainly for white women and excluded black women. After the American Civil War a new style of literature was born that is The Black American Literature which tackles subjects such as racism and slavery. The era after the Civil War therefore, witnessed a rise in black women writing and many black women wrote about the double burden that they faced in a patriarchal and a racist society. (34)

Despite the fact that black women were barred from white women's groups, they believed that unity of black and white women was required to gain their ultimate goals. Black suffragist Fannie Barrier Williams addressed the World Congress of Representative Women and noted clearly that black women were as seriously devoted as any other women to the women's rights cause. (Amri Boutheina,27).

1.4. The Feminist Movements in the US: Feminism and Racism

1.4.1. Beginnings and Black representations

The Seneca Falls Declaration was considered to be the most important document of American women's movements. The Declaration affirmed the equal rights of women in politics, family, education, jobs, morals, and religion. After the meeting , some resolutions were mad and the most notably was the one which confirms that: “ All laws which prevent women from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of men, are contrary to the great precept of nature, and therefore of no force or authority”

(Shneir,81). Despite the apparent disdain of the white audience, black women and men were also present at the gathering.

Frederick Douglass(1817-1895) may be considered as the greatest African American abolitionist and orator of the 19th century. He was born as a slave and freed prior to the Seneca Falls in which he became a frequent member. Douglass wrote in his autobiography : “when the true history of the antislavery cause shall be written, women will occupy a large space in its pages, for the cause of the slave has been peculiarly woman’s cause.”(Schneir,83). He was one of those who fought for the women’s rights and was seen as women’s rights man in which he said: “ I am glad to say that I have never been ashamed to be thus designated.”(83). He criticised abusively from the Americans organs of opinions because of his thoughts; yet, he continued to participate in women’s meeting and fighting for their rights.

Another main figure that was considered to be the mother of black feminism was the inspiring black woman Sejourner Truth(1795-1883). She participated in women’s convention in Ohio 1851 where she was unwelcomed; however, no one could say a word when she appeared in the meeting because they were afraid of the way she looks and the scars she had in her body. She took the chance to talk and her words were attracted by Cage and recorded her memorable words: “ I could work as much and eat as much as man-when I could get it- and I bear the lash as well! Aint’I a Woman?”

Truth exposes the inconsistencies inherent in the use and meaning of the term woman, as well as the political, economic, and cultural assumptions that underpin its use in *ain’t I a woman?*. Truth's inquiry may be heard over a century later in Simone de Beauvoir's challenge to assumptions that the meaning of femininity is self-evident. In her seminal and classic work *The Second Sex* 1949. (Elkholy, par 8).

1.4.2. Feminism and Racism:

Mainstream feminist thought has been chastised for focusing on the needs of white women while disregarding or presuming that the needs of women of colour are the same. Therefore, black women faced a double-edged sword having two issues against them. Black women faced a double burden because of patriarchal society and a racist one.

Black women have been always told that they were lesser than white women and they were silenced and had no right to speak themselves. They were oppressed due to main three reasons: racism, gender, and class. The harsh experiences, oppression, and struggles black women went through made them call for a new kind of feminism that protect black women because feminism before was for white women only.

Racism was taught to American women as a kind of white dominance, and sexism as a form of male supremacy. They were trained to believe in white domination as racial imperialism and patriarchy as sexual imperialism. American women, ironically, were educated to tolerate and perpetuate the exact evil that devalues them. As a result, regardless of their socioeconomic status or education, American women have been subjected to ongoing sexist and racist indoctrination.

In her book *Ain't I a Woman?* Bell Hooks states that that the American woman's lack of understanding in this area is due to the severity of her victimization, not a lack of vitality. The majority of American women were taught that racism was a terrible and regrettable human attitude that could be changed by marches, nonviolent speeches, bonding between black and white people, and altering the laws. Educational institutions did little to help students see racism as a political ideology and a human tragedy. (Truth,140)

During 1970s and as a response to the Civil Right Movements and mainstream feminism that marginalised black women, a new style of feminism had emerged that is called Black Feminism.

Nonetheless, Sejourner became the first woman to draw attention to the black slave woman at the annual convention of the Women's Rights Movement in Akron, Ohio, in 1852. She was the perfect illustration of how women might be equal to men at work. Truth responded to a man who argued that man and woman can not be equal and said: "...Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me- and ain't I a woman?"(15).

Truth's words and activities are early manifestations of the black feminist tradition. Black feminism is an intellectual, artistic, philosophical, and activist practice grounded in black women's lived experiences. Furthermore, black women were excluded from white women organisation and they formed their own ones in which they chose specific names such as : The Colored Women's League, National Federation of Afro-American women, and The National Association for Colored Women. However, they believed that it was necessary for white and black women to be united in order to achieve their ultimate goals and move forward.

Black women were interested in the cause of slavery whereas white women were interested in women's liberation. White women were racist who wanted to gain their own aims. Bell Hooks assumes that the black activist Josephine ST. Pierre Ruffin who engaged herself with white women's organizations but later she calls for making organization that deal with their own issues because she figured out that ""black women could not depend on racist white women to encourage them to fully participate in the women's reform movement" (163).

1.5. Feminism Vs Womanism

The term Womanism was coined by the African American Alice Walker in her short story *Coming Apart* and later appeared in her 1983 book *In Search for Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist prose* to address the experience of women of color. Walker describes womanist as a woman who appreciates women's culture and their ability of exchanging and showing emotions and that womanism is the wholeness for both female and male groups because it is universalist. According to the womanist scholar Layli Maparyan Philips, womanism seeks to stablish the equilibrium between people and nature, and reconcile human existence with the spiritual dimension.(Philips,2006)

The male element is also included, as many researchers believe that in order to improve women's situation, males must be included. They make up a substantial proportion of policymakers and political office holders. This relates to the incorporation of gender into development programs. Many men and women believe that womanism is a more inclusive gender paradigm than feminism.(Becker,45)

The feminist movement focused mostly on sexism-based oppression. However, white middle-class feminists neglected the more severe oppression based on racism and classism experienced by black women. Because of this ignorance and ethnocentrism, black women defined womanism as a more aggressive battle against injustice and discrimination. In other words, although feminism professed to work for the liberation of all women from sexist oppression, it failed to account for the unique characteristics of Black females and men of color. In practice, feminism focused on the concerns of middle-class white women in Britain and America while appearing as a worldwide movement for women's freedom.(Ebunoluwa,230)

For instance, in the U.S especially in the South, white ladies built their inner self and ego by abusing black women who were at the bottom of the social ladder. Refusal of white women to recognize the fundamental rights of black women can be found in numerous slave declarations such as Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Wilson. Sejourner truth questioned such policies of white women and demanded equal rights for all women in her most famous speech “Ain’t I a Woman?”. (Izgarjan- Markov, 306)

Some authors and scholars use the concepts “womanism” and “black feminism” interchangeably because of the similarities they shared in terms of black women experiences and heroines of foremothers. However, womanism is more generalised and wider because it tackles issues of both men and women of color and deals with the preoccupations of men and women. Alice Walker developed four definitions of the term "womanist" in her essay collection, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, published in 1983. According to her first definition, womanist is a black feminisit or a feminist of color. Therefore, Alice Walker herself uses the terms “womanist” and “black feminist” interchangeably in a basic level.(Hill Collins,9)

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter worked in introducing basic elements that would help in the rest chapters of this paper. It contains the important elements of feminism and feminist theory. Starting with defining feminism and giving an overview on its history presenting the three major waves which help in understanding the aims and goals of feminism in each period of time . Also, giving a background on the relation between gender and feminism .In addition, it included the female literary tradition and tackling black women writing and their experiences in racist, sexist societies. Last but not least, the realtion between racism and feminism is presented , starting by giving an overview on the its beginning and the main black representatives. The chapter ends with defining the concept of womanism and how it differs from feminism.

Chapter Two: The Color Purple in Context

2.1.Introduction

This chapter of the dissertation attempts to place the novel the *Color Purple* in context. It tries to analyze its primary themes , settings, characters, as well as addressing it as both afro-American work and an epistolary book.

This chapter starts by a short biography of the author Alice Walker and talking about the novel CP in general. After that, it talks about the setting of the work tackling both American south and Africa in the 20th century. Also, it traces some of the major themes of the novel including womanism, racism and slavery, religion and spirituality , and sexual awakening. Moreover, the present chapter tackles the domination of males in African-american societies in general and in the novel and how is the female resistance of this domination represented by Alice Walker in the novel. Furthermore, it gives a background on the Harlem Renaissance and also talks about Zora Neal Hurston and her influence on Alice Walker and her writings. At last, it discusses the novel both as an African-American work and as epistolary work.

2.2.The Author’s Biography:

Alice Malsenior Walker was born in 1944 as the eighth child to an African-American sharecroppers family. Walker faced an incident in her childhood that had changed her life completely. While playing with her brother he shot her in the right in which she became blinded. That event had changed Walker’s psychology and she turned from being a social person to an introvert and withdrew from the world . In an interview that was published in *Alice Walker: Critical Perspective, Past Present* (1993) ; she told John O’Brien “ For a long time, I thought I was very ugly and disfigured.” “This made me shy and timid , and I often reacted to insults and slights that were not intended.” (The Biography, 2014,2021).

However, that incident made Walker discover her writing talent and develop her skills. After her isolation from the world, she fled to writing in which she started writing at an early age. She graduated from a southern high school as the brightest mind and she attended the Spelman College in Atlanta with the help of a scholarship. Walker switched to Sarah Lawrence College in New York. She published her first short story at the same year that she graduated (1965). (Lauret, 3)

Walker proved herself as one of the best novelists, poets, and activists. She became the first black woman writer to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award for Fiction 1983 because of her most famous work *The Color Purple* (1982). This work secured her reputation and made her noticed among a lot of critics as according to Renee Tawa in the *Los Angeles Times* "...is one of the country's best-selling writers of literary fiction".

Nonetheless, Walker is a feminist and an outspoken figure for human rights and activist in the civil rights movement 1960s (Wollf, 20). Her feminism and ideas about the African American struggles can be clearly found in her literary works. She has received critical and popular recognition as a major African American novelist.

2.3. The Color Purple As an African-American Work

African American literature has become an inevitable part of American literature and Culture. It is the frame of literature produced within America through African descents and it began with the works of such late 18th century writers as Philips Wheatley. It flourished since the Harlem Renaissance 1920s and it was highly varied.

In order to understand African American literature's origin, it is necessary to acknowledge the main problem of the 18th - 19th century which was race and tensions of

color. That problem paved the way for African- Americans to use writing to find and establish a place for themselves in that racist American community. (Mr.Sobhi,5)

In addition, African American was influenced by the great African diasporic heritage (Yash, par1.2, 2014) and started with Africans who were depressed, oppressed, and those who cried for help and wrote just to get their voices heard and to be seen in a fair way as the whites. African-American literature consists of novels, poetry, and plays that depict the state of race as a whole. One of the best African- American novelists and writers is Alice Walker and her novel *The Color Purple* is a great example that reflects the African-American society in the American south. (6)

The racial issue has been essential to traditional African American writing. Even though, slavery was abolished a century ago in America, black people still face discrimination in the present days. Unlike black males, black females faced both racial and sexual discrimination or in other words black women faced a double burden. But most of the writers and especially male writers did not write about the both problems, they described the racial prejudice only.

Alice Walker in her novel traced both racial and sexual problems which made her work special by being a feminist and afro-American work in the same time. First of all, the story tackles the main themes in afro-american literature that is racism in which is quite clear in the inferiority of blacks in the superior white society. For example, Sofia was taken to jail because of the mayor and his wife –whites- as “ Mayor look at Sofia, push his wife out of the way. Stick out his chest. Girl, what you say to miss Millie? I say, hell no” (CP, 86), the way he talked to the black woman as if it was an honor to be a housemaid for a white lady which Sofia did not like.

The Novel reflects the issues of salvation, disgrace, and silence as they manifest in the lives of early twentieth-century black women in the American south.(S.Lewis,160). It narrates the story of a young African American woman in the 1930s in Georgia, America . The protagonist Celie is tormented , raped , and emotionally abused for nearly thirty years before coming to grips with herself and her surroundings. Celie, was fourteen at the beginning of the work, was born into a hostile , racist, and sexist neighbourhood and suffers a fate that was common for a young woman of color at that period of American history .

Moreover, the controversial novel shows the struggles of black women's independence and the way they lived in a racist and patriarchal society facing a double burden. Celie tries to survive in such society and her personality changes through the story because of people she meets and events that happen. (Harries)

Generally,as any society , the Afro-American society in the south was a patriarchal society in which women were more like property than humans and being a women was like a crime. Men are supposed to be strong showing no emotions and being fearless and they had the right to treat their women they way they wanted, beating them, abusing theme, and even rapping them. In the novel, Walker gave an example of an emotional man who could not control his wife nor could say a word in front of his father Mr.----. However, he cried in Celie's arms and confessed his feelings for Sofia which is unusual. Many of his behaviours challenged gender stereotypes. (Zafar,4-5)

2.3.1.Recognizing Spaces Through The Letters

The *Color Purple* is centred around the horrible lives of blacks and suffering of black females , especially the main character's life Celie . The novel takes its main stage in rural Georgia during the 1985s , a southern state that was well-known for

slave trade in America around the first half of the twentieth century , twenty or thirty years prior to the second world war which changed the human history like never before. Furthermore, it can be clearly noticed that the author's choice of the setting and place was not random but rather it was on purpose. Most of the events mentioned in the story throughout Celie's letters could not have been mentioned if it was not the south because of the ways characters react and interact. In other words, Walker in her work tried to reflect 20th century America and basically the way blacks suffered from sexism, racism and such conflicts that ran out of control even after the bolishment of slavery.(Akiratee, para1, 2014).

Georgia is the first place that is can be noticed in her letters to God in the beginning of the novel where the protagonist lived her abused childhood. At her home, Celie gets her first experience of rape by her stepfather whom she thought he is her biological father and loses hope and trust in her family, especially after her mother's death. Feeling lost and had no hope or acceptance to her family she started to write letters to God.

On the other hand, the supremacy of the whites was widespread in the south and black had no rights such as right to read, right, or even being free as it is mentioned in one of Celie's letters when she talks about Sofia and the mayor and his wife who underestimated Sofia for being black and asked her to be the mayor's wife maid. (CP)

Celie had no opportunity to fight back or get education and the only thing she and most of blacks could do is farming. Moving from her hometown and marrying Mr.____ did not change anything in Celie's life . Celie was still oppressed, abused and silent because of being a woman up until the come of Shug in which Celie's personality

started to change. Yet, the pathetic conditions of the Afro-Americans in the south were ignored to the point of brutality.

In addition, Africa is the other significant place mentioned in the story where the protagonist's sister Nettie wrote to her sister about it. Nettie went to Africa with missionaries and got to experience the outside world. Celie knows from her sister's letters that there is place where blacks lived and no matter where they are or where they lived, they are suffering and only they can help themselves. After reading the letters, Celie knows that no one could help her but herself. In other words, by comparing the setting, Walker tried to convey a message through her main character that no one could help you but your own self.

In general, spaces, places, and history of the story's period are quite clear in the novel due to the letters of both Celie and Nettie. The letters helped in recognizing not only spaces but black people's lives both in American South and in Africa.

2.3.2.The Burden of Black Women in her Letters:

The *Color Purple* discusses large number of life aspects, social conditions that the author tried to shed the light on and include in her work. The main aspects that Walker reflected in her work the *Color Purple* is the burden that black people in general and black females mainly faced at that period of time.

2.3.2.1Racism and Slavery:

Racism is defined as the notion that other people of one race are superior to people of other races. In the *Color Purple*, it is defined as a white antagonist against a helpless black person. Most of the characters of the story are frequently subjected to some type of mistreatment. Moreover, Walker in her novel clarifies that "the Bright

Skin” , which is regarded as the best skin, gives much of trouble. (Ramaysree,3). Furthermore, *The Color Purple* has a lot to say about racism and slavery in the United States. For instance, Celie is terribly despondent at the start of the novel, nearly to the point of defeat. She sees nothing in her race to be proud of as an afro-American female living in the pre-Civil rights south, the time period of the Jim Crow laws and racial segregation. She was in a way like a slave as in the book it is said “ I can let you have Celie”(9) as if she was a kind of an object not a human being.(4)

2.3.2.2.Womanism in the color purple

Alice Walker coined the term womanism because she believed it talked about women beyond their color. *The Color Purple* is regarded as a feminist novel about a strong black female character. It depicts the reality that black women experienced both racial and sexual presecution in the twentieth-century America.(Shi,654)

Furthermore, The story fully expresses the ideological connotation and provides a realistic depiction of black women's battle for liberation and equality. It contends that the soul of Walker's Womanism is love and salvation, which finds significant expression in her works. Walker believes that the key to improving women's conditions is seeking oneself, emancipating one's thoughts, caring for and supporting one another. Women's self-esteem and self-love can influence men and encourage them to change their minds and appreciate women. That is how she presented her protagonist Celie after the coming of the chaeacter of Shug Avery who helped in improving Celie’s personality and finding her identity by loving herself. Walker believed that this is the real power of her ideology of womanism which clearly presented in the work *The Color Purple*.(655)

2.3.2.3.Religion and Spirituality:

Religion had a great impact on The South American culture. Religion to Alice Walker was beyond human understanding and that can be seen in her novel the *Color Purple*. After reading the book , people always compare Celie to Alice and walker's vision of God is reflected or shown through Celie (R.Kesha par1). Walker represents in her work the idea of religion as church- based Christianity, which although situated in a black community in Georgia, has teachings essentially defined by white values. Walker states in the novel's preface that her religious evolution inspired *The Color Purple*, since religion and spirituality are key elements in the story.(A.Musir, 258,2018)

The protagonist of the novel Celie writes letters to God in which the novel begins with “Dear God”(11) and ends with a letter addressed to “ Dear God, Dear Stars, Dear Trees, Dear Sky, Dear Peoples, Dear Everything, Dear God” (249). This captures the link between the *Color Purple* and religion and spirituality.

She initially imagines God as an impersonal, authoritative, and reliable figure with whom she can share herself , despite the fact that she believes him as an old white man. This image of God as being white man changes throughout the story as the events develop. Celie with Shug's words starts to believe that God is with her no matter what and he will listen to her and be with her and he is more than she could imagine. (259)

2.3.2.4.Sexual Awakening

Women of color faced a double burden during the twentieth-century (and after the abolition of slavery) as they experienced both sexism and racial discrimination. Black women were sexually abused by white men and men of color because of the

racist and patriarchal society they lived in. Alice Walker presents sexuality and sexual abuse in her work *The Color Purple* through her female characters. (Cavkaytar,4)

The protagonist Celie faced a terrible sexual life, her father raped her many times and took her newborn babies from her he constantly told her that she was the ugliest girl and she had the worst smile until she believed so. After she got married, her husband used her as a sexual tool for his own pleasure. Therefore, she develops intolerance toward men. She had lost her self-esteem as a result of men's continuous rejection (Dlnya,117). Celie hated her body because of what she experienced; however, a turning point happened when Shug Avery entered her life and changed her thinking about her sexuality. Throughout the story and after Celie and Shug's relationship develops, Shug admits her love for Celie and kisses her. Celie is taken aback at first, but she kisses Shug back. They keep doing this until they fall asleep in each other's arms. Shug is clearly the reason for Celie's self-awareness of her physical appearance. Celie reveals that she never loved sex since she was exploited by men to meet their needs rather than for mutual enjoyment. Because of their bad heterosexual life history, Celie and Shug's gay connection was unexpected, yet seemed natural to both of them. Celie was not a lesbian by birth, but she became a lesbian as a result of her life experiences (117). After that, Celie started to see her body as beautiful and that she is not a tool but a wonderful human being and loved the fact that she is a woman.

2.4. Male Domination in *The Color Purple*

Walker's tale is set in a black rural South society that is exceedingly patriarchal. The majority of the black male characters rule women violently and oppressively. They are not only physically aggressive, but also sexually and emotionally abusive, making the women they live with feel afraid, useless, and inferior. In other words, the fact that a group of human beings is regarded as less valued and hence capable of being dominated by a supposedly

superior group is shared by racism, slavery, and female oppression. The notion of a connection between a dominant and obedient individual underpins the relationship between master and slave, as well as some of the interactions between male and female characters in the work (Zafar, 3). This dominance is quite clear in the life of the protagonist Celie whose experienced sexual abuse by her father followed by a loveless marriage in which she is treated as an object to her husband. Furthermore, black people believed that beating women would make them submissive and Walker presents that in her novel when Celie write letter to god talking about her father's beating "...he beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in church. I may have got something in my eye but I didn't wink. I don't even look at mens. That's the truth..." (CP 15) . The previous quotation reveals both the fact that men beat women for no reason and that women are scared of men and do not even have the courage to look at them.

Walker reflects the American south patriarchal society as it was during the twentieth-century and the life of black people and manily the experiences of black females in such society. She declared, in an interview with Democracy Now, that in her work *The Color Purple* she tried to tackle issues of the racism and violence against black women in a patriarchal society (Walker,2012). For example, in the *Color Purple* in one of Nettie's letters to Celie she talks about the Olinka people and men's dominance over women "...among the Olinka, the husband has life and death power over the wife. If he accuses one of his wives of witchcraft or infidelity , she can be killed." (*The Color Purple*,153)

a) Alphonso(Pa): Celie and Nettie's stepfather whom they thought was their real father. He married their mother after their real father was lynched. Celie has an incident she cannot comprehend at the age of fourteen, which abruptly ends her carefree existence. She is raped by Fonso whom she believes to be her father. Alphonso lays hands on his stepdaughter as a result of his wife's unwillingness to

fulfill her conjugal obligations as a result of her recent childbirth. He did not get enough by raping her, he also took her new born babies from her and threatened her to keep silent. After he got sick of Celie , he moved to Nettie; however, she was lucky and was not raped or abused as much as Celie. Since the beginning of the story until his death, Alphonso's character remains the same as being an evil, abused man (Zafar,4).

b) Mr____(Albert): Celie's husband who married her as a kind of trade with Alphonso , Fonso tells Mr.____ "...I can let you have Celie..." as if she is an object not human. Albert, who is known to Celie as Mr.____ only, he sees her as his property and believes that he has the right to do whatever he wants with her. He uses her to fulfil his sexual desires and needs and he beats her whenever he feels like beating her. Celie has no voice and courage to face her husband and her hard sexual experience she sees since her childhood continuous , she says in one of her letters to God " it all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself Celie you are a tree." (CP). Albert's dominance is in his nature and grew old with him and he wants to make his son Harpo as him by telling him that he should beat his wife to obey him.(4)

c) Harpo: Mr.Albert's eldest son who plays a major role in the novel. He represents the limits put on males (as well as women) by Southern Black society to act and express themselves in 'normal' ways. Walker gives Harpo feminine character features, making him most at home in the kitchen or doing domestic activities like caring for his children and nursing his ailing father, despite the fact that he is expected to be physically aggressive and relationally dominating. Unlike his father, his relationship with his wife is based on love. (5)

2.5.Females's Resistance in the Color Purple:

Female characters of the novel are colored women who experience harsh life and face with resistance:

- a) **Celie:** The protagonist of the novel *The Color Purple* who shows emancipation and who makes a turning point in the story. Her resistance is not clear in the beginning of the story but in the contrary, Celie has no voice and courage: « But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive ». However, she changes throughout the story because of many factors and she realized that she should have an identity and a voice. When she regained consciousness, she knew she needed to fight back against male dominance. Celie wants to break away from the "system" that has bound her under masculine rule. She recognizes that having an identity is essential for living a successful life.(Padhi,4)
- b) **Shug Avery :** one of the major female characters who helps in Celie's change. An arrogant, wealthy, and strong independent black woman. She is the best example of black female challenging the patriarchal Southern society traditions. Shug refuses to be dominated by anyone and she has the courage to speak herself. From the beginning of the story, Shug is presented as a successful black woman who works for herself and allow no one to underestimate her and she is Celie's heroine. She helps Celie to see the beauty of her body and to believe that God is everywhere. In other words, being a strong black female influenced the protagonist to get rid of her weakness and fight for her rights especially after they leave together. (Padhi,4)
- c) **Nettie :** Celie's sister. Nettie's background is essential in *The Color Purple* because it symbolizes one of the novel's primary themes: the connection of the black African to the black African-American experience. She constantly writes

letters to her sister and she is the one who brings Celie's legitimate children to live all together by the end of the story. Nettie is a good example of a courageous black woman who saved herself by running away from the hard life to be a missionary in Africa. (5)

- d) Sofia :** Harpo's wife. Sofia is a powerful black female character who is determined to confirm her independence by challenging traditional notions of a woman's position in African-American culture. Despite remaining in the domestic domain, she becomes the head of the house. Her husband Harpo tries to beat her because of what was called traditions and norms, but she stands for herself and beats him back (Zafar,5). Walker expresses the fact that women could stand for themselves and fight back when they want to even in a male dominance society and her characters are the greatest example.

2.6.The Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance was an African-American cultural and intellectual movement that lasted from the 1920s through the 1930s. During the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance was a cultural period in which African-Americans honored their ancestry via music, art, literature, and politics as well as social movements. It is also known as the New Negro Movement because black individuals in Harlem create their own identities (Silku, 2).

Harlem is living in the "New Negro" era. This phrase evolved to represent the search for self-identity and the desire to move beyond the prejudices left over from the age of slavery. Critics such as Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois challenged artists and writers across the United States to investigate issues of African American life and culture and to look beyond caricature and stereotype in their works. Artists were also urged to look

towards African art for inspiration. Many artists decided to study overseas, where they were exposed to different currents of European modernism. (13)

Moreover, The Harlem Renaissance was an urge, a response, an identity movement, and a transforming epiphany all rolled into one. It produced notable music and works of art, as well as a substantial corpus of literature and poetry. The literary luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance were defying American literary traditions by inventing new ways of expressing and stylizing previously unexplored ideas. They were having difficulty finding their new voices and announcing their increased creative vigor. Jean Toomer, Jessie Faust, Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston are the main figures of the Harlem Renaissance. (Gueorguiev,2021)

The Harlem Renaissance's activists, writers, poets talked about and reflected the experiences of black people in America. However, Hurston's works and writings focussed more on the experiences of black women and their developments and involvement in the society and she is one of the best 20th century African-American writers whom Walker felt a profound connection to Hurston and believed she was her Grandmother in terms of ideologies, thoughts, and writings. (Kerr,2018)

2.7.Zora Neale Hurston : Their Eyes Were Watching God

Zora Neale Hurston is an African-American outstanding figure and one of the founding members of the Harlem Renaissance. She was a well-known anthropologist, writer, and folklorist whose works' represented black life in the American South and she discussed the experiences of black females. (Kerr, 2018)

Hurston was born on January 7, 1891, in Notasulga, Alabama. In the 1920s, she moved to New York City, Harlem neighbourhood where she became a member of the Harlem

Renaissance and made friendship with Hughes. Eventhough Hurston is known as one of the greatest African-American writer, her fame was after her death and due to the efforts of Alice Walker. In one of her interviews, Walker claimed that she feels connection to Hurston and she thinks that she is her niece (Walker, 1975) .

Walker read Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* few years after Zora's death and was influenced by the book and the author and that is clearly seen in her Pulitzer Prize work *The Color Purple*. Both works reflects the experiences of black female protagonists and their struggles to gain their rights in vernicullar english (Brickner,2020). In other words, the influence of Hurston on Walker is clear through her character Celie in the *Color Purple* 1982 which is close to Hurston's character Jenie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* 1937 and it is due to the efforts of Walker and her writings about Hurston ; *Looking For Zora* (Walker,1975).

Furthermore, Janie Crawford, the main heroine in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, achieves her independence and power with the death of her most-loved husband, Tea-Cake. Through the path of self-discovery of one African-American woman, this novel challenges systemic patriarchy. Walker thought Hurston's writing had principles and values that should be shared with a new generation of readers. In the 1970s, when social movements were re-envisioning the link between gender and race and looking for a feminine identity not determined by a patriarchal society, Hurston's books were ready for rediscovery. (Brickner)

Generally, Walker's writings mostly were inspired by the African-American writer Zora Hurston. She writes as if she is the metaphorical daughter of Hurston and other great African American female authors before her in her book of essays, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983).

2.8.The Color Purple as an Epistolary work:

2.8.1. Epistolary form of the Novel:

The concept “epistolary novel” refers to literary works composed in the form of letters or other documents. The adjectival form of the word epistle derived from the Latinized Greek meaning of letter. The letter as a written genre predates the novel , so as the novel began to appear in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, it was typical for authors to incorporate letters into their overall plot. That let readers to dig deep into the character’s and their own voices, bringing realism and psychological depth (Gottlieb).

The epistolary genre of novel flourished in eighteenth-century Europe, producing classics like: Montesquieu’s *Letters Persanes*, Richardson’s *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, Rousseau’s *La Nouvella Heloise*. Many artists from different origins and times have utilized the letter as an artistic vehicle. Nonetheless, for decades, the epistolary novel has been seen as historically constrained and antiquated, and according to Atlman a describable in terms of its rise and decline (Atlman,2).

Atlman ensures that: “ the epistolary novel is a hardy species that continues to produce lively strains in various parts of the worlds” (03). He contends that the epistolary novel differs in content and style in spite of the similarities between epistolary works of varying periods and authors which are hard to disregard.

To sum up, the epistolary novel or novel in letters is a kind of novel that is written in a series of letters to one or more characters of the same novel. The letters reflect the characters’ internal evolution and their sincere experiences. In other words, authors use such kind of literature to make the reader dig deeper into the psyches and personalities of his/her characters which help them better understand the work.

2.8.2. Epistolarity in the Color Purple:

Walker's novel *the Color Purple* is an epistolary novel which won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award for Fiction. The novel composed of ninety letters from the protagonist Celie to God, from Celie to her sister Nettie, and from Nettie to Celie.

The novel is about a poor black woman, Celie who lives in rural Georgia, near Eatonton where Walker was born. Walker used first person narration in the *Color Purple*; however, it appears in the letters only. Walker's use of epistolarity is to make readers understand the protagonist's personality better and to have an idea of the way of life of black people in the American South. In other words, readers can live and experience the struggles and hardships of black people of that period in a racist and patriarchal society. (Jorgenson)

The story of the novel *the Color Purple* has various meanings and themes and it implies the foremost sensitive issues of the nowadays world. The main figure of the novel represents all the black girls who are treated unfairly and abused by others and destroy all of her chances in life. (Zafar,4)

“ You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy” (CP,1), the beginning of the novel is a threat from Celie's father to her which motivated her to write the letters to express her feelings. She was ashamed by the fact that she was raped by her stepfather whom she believed was her real father and could not speak herself and tell nobody. This was the first reason that made Celie write letters instead of talking and expressing herself and feelings.

Furthermore, Celie is emotionally desensitized and sexually damaged, she is dark, undesirable, and she belongs to a society that was just escaping slavery and was still

subservient to others. Despite her class background , she is able to write ; yet, she does not master the standard English and that is clear in her letters. (Jorgensen,35).

Walker uses the epistolary form of the novel to emphasise the power of communication. Both Celie and her sister Nettie gain strength through writing letters , but only when they get responses to their letters because writing letters requires a willing audience. As we can see in the novel , Celie wrote letters to God but still she could not have self-confidence nor could speak herself , it was until she writes to her sister and receiving responses , she discovers her true self. The same for Nettie, before getting replies from Celie she felt lost.

In general, Walker's use of Celie's own voice through letter writing, allows her to present the history of blacks and especially black women in the rural South in a sympathetic and realistic way. Celie's simple narrative takes the reader into her own isolated world with language that reveals both pain and detached numbness.

2.9.Conclusion

The second chapter gives important to the author and her novel. It tackles the short biography of Alice Walker and the Color Purple in details and tackling the way places and spaces are recognized due to Celie's and Nettie's letters and it discusses the burden that black females faced in the 20th century such as racism, slavery, sexual awakening. Also, the chapter traces the male domination of that period of time and the female resistance and how did Walker represent them in her work The Color Purple 1982. Furthermore, it studies the novel as an African-American work and how it explored in Harlem due to the known Harlem Renaissance and the impact of one Zora Hurston, who is one of the founding members of the Harlem Renaissance, o, Walker and her works. Last but not

least, this chapter of the paper discusses the Epistolary form of a novel and the use of epistolarity by Walker in her novel and its impact on the work.

Third Chapter: The Feminist and Psychoanalytical Analysis of The Color Purple

3.1.Introduction

The last chapter of this dissertation discusses and analyses the Color Purple according to both psychology and feminism. The main character of the novel is a woman as it is known women are complicated species therefore understanding Celie's character requires a psychological analysis. The chapter will start by giving a short background on Freud's psychology and then analysing Celie's character according to his theory of personality. Also, we will discuss Celie's voice before and after the coming of Shug Avery.

The Color Purple is a feminist work which means a feminist analysis is required. The second element of this chapter is analysing the work in a feminine way. Discussing the stereotypical image of black women that Walker tried to present. Moving to tackling the new black female character and the emancipation of Celie. Ending it with the power of narrative and letters in expressing selfhood and finding an identity.

3.2.The Psychoanalysis of the Color Purple : Celie's Personality :

3.2.1.A Short Background for Freud's Psychological Theory:

Human beings are a complicated creatures and especially women and to better understand the novel's characters , mainly the protagonist and get into her psychology, one should first have an idea on Freud's psychology.

Sigmund Freud is considered to be the most influential intellectual legislator of his age . His creation of psychoanalysis was a theory of the human psyche. In spite of the repeated criticisms of Freud's work, its spell remained affective well after his passing and in fields far removed from psychology as it is narrowly defined.

The human mind , according to Freud , is split into two parts : the conscious and the unconscious mind. Everything that humans are aware of is included in the conscious mind and

the unconscious is a repository of sensations, thoughts, and memories that are outside of consciousness desires and recollections. The majority of the unconscious's contents are undesirable or unpleasant sensations. According to Freud, the unconscious mind of the person controls his behaviours and experiences in spite of the fact that the person is not aware of such influences. In other words the personality of the persons is influenced directly or indirectly by the unconsciousness mind and the key to a healthy personality is the balance between the id , ego, and superego of Freud's analysis. (Si,297,2017).

3.2.2.Celie's Personality According to Freud's Personality Theory:

Walker's the *Color Purple* opens with parental warning against speech. Celie's stepfather threatens her : “ *You better not never tell nobody but God, It'd kill your mammy.*” (CP,1).

The protagonist of the novel Celie is presented as an oppressed black woman who leads a miserable life at the beginnings of the story. At first, she was raped by her stepfather whom she thought was her real father , he abused her and warned her to remain silent and she could do nothing but accepting that as long as she was a young girl in her fourteen's only.(Cheung, 162,1988).

When Celie's stepfather had had enough of her, he turned his attention to her sister Nettie. To protect her sister , the only one she truly loves, she sacrifices herself and marries Mr.____, whose first choice was Nettie. Celie married him at a young age and took care of his children and worked hard in his fields. In other words, he took her more as a maid than as a wife. The abused life Celie faced since her childhood influenced her personality in a negative way. (Si,297,2017)

In the most appropriate way , Celie's most noticeable personality is that she lacks “personality”. She is oppressed, depressed, silent , invisible in a patriarchal black community. Therefore, she has no self-confidence nor the ability to express her feelings, she is constantly

mute and does not speak a word for herself. Those kinds of feelings and fear in her personality grew with her since her childhood, as Freud's explained it, her unconscious mind controls her through such feelings and bad memories.

Moreover, Celie's misery life and her basic rights as a human can not be fulfilled. By letting the unconscious desires be repressed, she can not be a healthy person with a normal personality. She does not even get joy from her sexual life as she was only used by her stepfather and husband to fulfil their desires only. She even lost her passion towards life. (Ross, 70, 1988)

Overall, the way Celie lived her childhood and adolescence affected her entire life making her isolated from the society. However, her weak personality did not last the entire story but there were some internal and external factors that helped in the development of Celie's character from a poor, weak, abused woman to a strong independent woman. It was because of Shug Avery and Sofia, that her superego changes and it is that change that turns her life from being a miserable life to more brilliant and wonderful life. (Si, 297, 2017)

3.2.3. Celie's Voice Before and After the Coming of Shug Avery:

Shug Avery is one of the outstanding characters in the novel whom can be considered as one of the reasons for Celie's personality change. Shug is a Blues singer whose personality differs from the protagonist's Celie. Her first appearance within the novel is as an ill woman who arrives at her lover Albert's house to be nursed from a disease. At the beginning of her appearance, she seems to be a rich, successful black woman, yet an arrogant lady and even aggressive with her words. When readers first read about her, they would take a negative idea about her but in fact she could help Celie to discover her true self.

"I don't say nothing. I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive"(CP,29). This statement is one of many others which reveal the fact that Celie could never speak herself at the beginning of the story. She could survive her sexual harsh experience of both her stepfather Pa and her husband Mr.____ by remaining silent which makes her a passive victim of her own private environment. Moreover, in such a patriarchal society she could not find safety in her own family, Nettie was the only one who listened and whom she truly loves. She sacrificed and married Mr.____ to save her sister and do not let her experience the same thing she did and by that Celie went to a more miserable life. The fact that she was a maid who took care of Albert's children and worked hard both in the fields and the house, made her more isolated, lonely, alienated n marginalized from the society. (Kumar Padhi, 2, 2015)

Celie faced humiliation and marginalization since her childhood in a patriarchal household and a racist society which affected her life and silenced her voice. Furthermore, Ross believes that Celie had a severe oedipal struggle since her father was executed when she was only two years old, her mother was sick married again to "Pa" who abused Celie and raped her (Amri,84,2012). All the childhood circumstances were the reason for Celie's isolation and silenced voice. However, this personality of Celie did not last long , it changed throughout the story due to different internal and external factors and one of them is the female character Queen Honeybee.

Celie admired Shug Avery before even she sees her in person. She saw her on a photograph that was left by her husband Mr.____, a beautiful woman wrapped in furs and wearing high hills made her stand tall, it was since than that Celie has the desire to be with her and sees her. After a particular time, Celie had the opportunity to see Shug Avery in person and nursing her in her home. *" She look me over from head to foot. Then she cackle. Sound like a death rattle. You sure is ugly. She say, like she ain't believe it"*(CP ,50) those were the first words that Celie heard from Shug about her; yet, her thoughts of Shug did not change.

Their relationship at first was not that close, it was more like an ill person and a nurse. However, by the time passes and staying together for a long time and the fact that Shug receiving help and care from Celie, a change in their relationship begins to take place and they began to develop their friendship. Shug teaches Celie the value of life and how to appreciate it and she teaches her how to love.

“Us sleep like sisters” (The Color Purple,136) Celie states. This statement shows how was Celie affected by Shug’s love. She found someone who listens to her whom she can talk to. After Shug’s coming to her life, Celie learns how to laugh, play, and even enjoying life. In other words, she started experiencing new feelings which she never thought she could . Moreover, Shug Avery is like a mother to Celie because of her love and care which helped in Celie’s change to be a strong woman. (Ross)

By the development of their friendship, Celie opens up and talks to Shug about her story. However, it is until they discover Nettie’s letters which Albert hid , Celie knows much about herself and has the courage to form her narrative. Shug encourages Celie to write to her sister and to speak for herself.

Celie got stronger and found an identity and the courage to face her husband Albert. She decided to go with Shug and her husband acted like he did not care about her. He states: *“You’ll be back , he say. Nothing up North for nobody like you....You ugly, you skinny, you shape funny .You too scared to open your mouth to people.”* (The Color Purple,186) He underestimates her as any men in a patriarchal society would do to his “property” . Walker’s character declares her freedom with a little help from Shug *“Then I feel Shug shake me. Celie, she say. And I come tp myself.”* (The Color Purple,187) That was the turning point of Celie’s character when she asserts her rights of existence : *“I’m pore, I’m black, I may be*

ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here". (The Color Purple,187)

In general, Shug's love and strong personality as a black successful independent woman helped Celie to change. Her affection towards Celie was quite clear within the novel and because of her, readers could see the other side of Celie. To put it in another way, Celie's new identity and the fact that she has a voice to speak herself saying she exists and being an able independent woman by the end of the story was due to multiple factors such as writing letters to her sister Nettie and most importantly because of Shug Avery's influence and love which helped her to see life in another way.

3.3.The Feminist Analysis of The Novel:

Writers used to portray the black women as being marginalized , dehumanized, and more like properties to their men.

3.3.1.The Stereotypical Image of Black Woman:

Being part of two historically marginalized groups, black women stood out in a way that neither black males nor white women did. They were labeled with strange disparaging imagery that were the result of a long history of racism and sexism. In the Americas, black females faced a double burden in a patriarchal and a racist society , this fact is still can be seen until the present days. (Mgadmi, 40-55)

The stereotypical image of black female in the American South is presented in most of the African American writers and Alice Walker is one of those who wrote about it in her incredible work the *Color Purple* 1982. Female characters of the story are mostly marginalized , dehumanized, and do not have the basic rights of human beings.

First and for most, the novel's protagonist Celie is the first character to introduce the image of being a black female in such society. Walker shows her major character Celie from the

beginning of the story as being sexually abused child to a passive wife. Celie is an African-American woman who suffers oppression from patriarchal family and discrimination from the white folks (Padhi,1,2015). She does not feel safe in her house because of her stepfather and the fact that her mother was sick and could not help her. In fact, her mother was abused by her husband sexually even when she is sick as Celie states : “ 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...” (CP11). The way Celie’s mother is treated and how she is treated in a patriarchal family where they are more like properties than women, presents the fact that most of black females lived in such societies.

Also, women were beaten for and without a reason. As Celie was beaten by her father saying that she winked to a boy. “ He beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in church. I may have got something in my eye but I didn’t wink. I don’t even look at mens. That’s the truth. I look at women ; tho, cause I’m not scared of them” (CP15). The statement reveals the fact that women had great fear in them which prevent them to have simplest rights of humans.

Moreover, as it is known women at the past were more like men’s property and they could treat them the way they wanted for example a father could give his daughter to someone else for his own benefit. For instance, Celie’s father “Pa” made her to marry Mr.____ without her acceptance and they even talked about her as if she was a “thing” not human being. In one of her letters to God, Celie writes: “ ...But I can let you have Celie. She the oldest anyway. She ought to marry first.” (CP17) .

The protagonist live and grew old in a society that marginalized women and dehumanised them. So, she believed that it is the only life women like her could live, beaten, silenced, used, abused...etc. Beating women makes men believe that they had the upper hand as it stated by

Mr. ___ to Harpo: “ ...Wives is like children. You have to let'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating” (CP42).

In general, the Afro-American womanist Alice Walker tried to reflect the image of black females in her notable novel the *Color purple*. Addressing the fact that they were marginalized and humiliated; yet, she did not end with that but rather Walker introduced the power of black female and how they could be independent on their own, fighting for their own rights as the main character present her development throughout the story.

3.3.2.The New Black Female Character of Celie:

As it is mentioned above, Alice Walker in her work the *Color Purple* 1982 introduced the black female image in the American South ; however, it presented basically the evolution of her black female protagonist Celie from being a sexually abused child and a passive wife to an emancipated women. (Padhi,1,2015)

Throught the story, Celie's character develops and she has the courage to fight for her freedom revealing the new black female character. That change in Celie begins when she starts writing letters to her sister Nettie. As she states : “ ...Now I know Nettie alive I begin to strut a little bit. Think, when she come home us leave here. Her and me and our two children.” . Celie gains courage and the desire to live when she knows Nettie was alive and she knew that her children alive and with Nettie.

When Celie got financially independent working for herself and doing something she truly wants, making pants, she found her true identity. Furthermore, Celie knew that she would be regarded as an independent woman if she becomes financially independent and she successfully became what she wanted with the help and encouragement of Shug Avery. (Padhi,4,2015)

Thereby, Celie has the power to stand alone and leave her abused husband who controlled her all over the years. Celie joined Shug Avery in her trip which was a great experience for her to find her identity, both as a woman and a useful member of her society(4).

Over all, from a weak , poor, humiliated girl, Celie's character evolved to be a strong independent woman as she could not imagine herself.

3.3.3.Power of Letters and Voice in the novel:

An important topic in the Color Purple is finding the courage to speak. Walker emphasises throughout the story that the ability to express ones thoughts and feelings is crucial to developing a sense of self.

The Color Purple is an Epistolary novel composed of ninety letters in which Celie keeps diaries of her private life and the people around her. Tucker indicates that the epistolary form is primarily employed by women and rarely by men. He claims that it is a semi-private genre that was originally used by wome due to their low educational levels and the fact that they were not expected to be published and read publicly (Amri, 89).

At the beginning, Celie is unable to resist those who abuse her. She remembers Fonso's warning "*You better not tell nobody but God*" about his abuse and she knew that the only way to survive is to remain silent and unseen. She feels like an object who has no power to assert herself. The only solution she could think of is writing letters. Walker asserts the power of narrative and speech to resist oppression and for finding a selfhood.

On the other hand, according to Schwartz, writing those letters might be seen as a link between Celie and her inner self, or her heart which has now discovered a weapon that can be used effectively to fight back. Schwartz goes on saying that writing to God is also writing to a part of herself until she finds the God she believes in (Schwartz).

The feminist author Walker used the letter form writing as a vehicle that helped readers to dig deep into the protagonist's character. More than that, writing letters are a tool of self-expression that allows the reader to know as much as possible about the characters and their feelings and experiences. (Berg Jorgenson,36)

Writing letters raised Celie's consciousness and allowed her to know her rights as a human being. It increased her self-love and self-hood and helped her to speak and let her voice to be heard and herself to be seen , first to "her" and to the society she lived in. Epistolarity and letter writing used by Walker encouraged her main character to speak for herself and fight for her rights. The power of narrative and of speech helped in discovering ones identity and the ability to express feelings. (47)

3.4. Conclusion

The dissertation's last chapter is a psychoanalytical and a feminist discussion of Walker's *The Color Purple*. The focus of the chapter is mainly on the protagonist Celie. Celie represents most of the black females in the American South during the 20th century and their experiences in a patriarchal, racist society. Celie goes into multiple hardships since her childhood until she isolates herself from the world and loses her identity. However, the story's main character develops her personality and finds her true self and a voice to speak for herself. The chapter gives a background on psychoanalysis which helps in analysing Celie's personality. Also, it tackles the emancipation of the protagonist from a weak girl to a woman with a heard voice.

General Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the influence of epistolarity on the black women's voice and how it helped females express themselves and demanding their rights referring to a special study of Alice Walker's the *Color Purple*. Walker revived the epistolary technique to express her womanist ideology through the black female characters of the novel the *Color Purple*.

Feminism and the Feminist movements have existed for centuries and grew up to fight for women's equal rights. However, it did not focus only on demanding white women's equal rights and excluding black females. Black females were labored and worked as slaves up until the twentieth-century and due to some memorable black female figures like Truth, that colored women started reclaiming for their equality and fair treatment. Black females started to realize their rights and they fought for it and participated in the feminist movements and became activists also. Furthermore, a new female writing came to existence especially after the Harlem Renaissance, that is the black female writing that tackles issues of black women and their double burden of racism and sexism.

Alice Walker is one of the prominent and memorable black female writers and activists who called for the rights of blacks in general and black females in particular. Walker believed that the term Womanism is more sufficient than Feminism as she said "Womanist is to Feminist as purple is to lavender". Unlike Feminism, womanism focuses on and fights against both sexism and racism. Walker's womanist ideology is reflected in her Pulitzer Prize book *The Color Purple* 1982 through reviving the epistolary technique.

Walker's *The Color Purple* reflects the reality that black females experienced in South America in the 20th century. The novel is written in a form of letters which was the protagonist's way to survive her misery. The main character was traumatized since her

miserable childhood experiences. Therefore, she lost her self-confidence, identity, and became silence and accepted and believed that it was her destiny to live that way. However, a turning point happens in the novel when Celie comes to realization of her worth and her capacities. The psychoanalytical theory helped in analyse Celie's personality and emancipation from a silent girl to a courageous woman who speaks for herself and demands her rights. Also, the feminist theory helped in analysing the female character power and ability to change.

The study focuses on the black female voice represented through epistolarity. Walker's reconstruction of the epistolary technique within her novel *The Color Purple* helped in conveying the reality of the black lives during the twentieth century in the American South. Eventhough, the story is set after the abolition of slavery, black women suffered a double burden included racism in a white society and patriarchy in manly society. Walker's protagonist Celie reflects the experiences of many black women of her ser time who faced sexual, verbal, and physical abuse and violence. Yet, have no one to talk to which makes her isolated , silence, and the only way to survive is to write letters to God. The letters conveyed Walker's womanist ideology because readers can sense the protagonist's experiences and emancipation from the beginning of the novel to the end of it.

On the other hand, Walker gives the main importance in her work to the power of black women who could change and realize that they are worthy, beautiful, powerful, and capable to work for themselves and speak for their rights just as the main character of the novel does throughout the story when she comes to her consciousness and finds her ture self and identity with the help of writing and due to the events she experiences. The epistolary form of the novel portrays black women's suffering in the American-South and their ability and capacity to change and look for their equal rights. In addition, writing letters helped the novel's

protagonist Celie to find the courage to speak and rise her voice and realize her worth to work for herself and demand her own rights as white women.

The current study is beneficial and relevant. It gives a chance to consider the black female voice expressed through letters in the light of Walker's *Color Purple*. It examines self-worth, consciousness realization and womanist ideology. The study of the work still depicts today's reality as we can still see racism against colored people and the spread of masculine and patriarchal societies. The researcher expects that the findings of this study would be included in future research on subjugated black female writings, epistolary style, and the self-consciousness and worth.

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ملخص

اللون الأرجواني رواية أفريقية أمريكية للكاتبة البارزة اليس ولكر. تصور الرواية حياة و تجارب امرأة سوداء في مجتمع أمريكي ذكوري عنصري و ذلك خلال القرن العشرين. أين تظهر بطلنة الرواية التقدم و التحرر من فتاة ضعيفة خاضعة الى امرأة قوية مستقلة تدافع عن نفسها. تتفق قصة اللون الأرجواني ادراك البطلنة لهويتها و صوتها و وعيها و كيف أن الرسائل التي تكتبها تساعدها في اكتشاف هويتها الحقيقية و قدرتها على التحكم في حياتها. تحاول هذه الأطروحة دراسة و فحص تحرر المرأة السوداء و ايجادها لهويتها من منظور نسوي و تحليل نفسي. حيث تستخدم النظرية النسوية لابرار الصورة النمطية للمرأة السوداء في مجتمع ابوي عنصري و يتم تمثيل ذلك من خلال الشخصية الرئيسية. كما يتم استخدام نهج التحليل النفسي لدراسة تحقيق الذات التي يتم تمثيلها من خلا تحرر الشخصية الرئيسية و استقلالها مع تأكيد فعالية و اهمية الرسائل التي ساعدتها على اكتشاف هويتها في ظل الايديولوجية النسوية لولكر.

الكلمات المفتاحية النظرية النسوية, النسوية, التحليل النفسية, ادب المراسلة, الهيمنة, الابوية (البطيركية).

