

**Alice Walker as an Activist and Celebrator of Resistance in  
*Meridian* (1976) and *The Color Purple* (1982).**

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**Abstract**

Alice Walker (1944) ranks among the greatest American writers of the twentieth century. Through her novels *Meridian* and *the color Purple*, Alice outlines many issues concerning the effect of authoritarian thinking upon its often innocent victims, and the possibility of meaningful, productive resistance. Walker's texts aim at giving a voice to those who have no voice especially those poor, rural black women who are robbed of power and the right to make decisions about their own lives by a range of forces standing against them. These texts also aim at clarifying how Walker's female protagonists, Meridian and Celia try to free themselves from oppression, misery, fear and underestimation by men in the Patriarchal society.

Walker's heroines nevertheless articulate clear visions not just of the wrongs they face, but also of the hope and strength that cannot be quenched within them. In 1976, Walker's second novel, *Meridian*, was published. The novel dealt with activist workers in the South during the civil rights movement, and closely paralleled some of Walker's own experiences. In 1982, Walker published what has become her best-known work, *the color Purple*. The novel follows a young troubled black woman fighting her way through not just racist white culture but patriarchal black culture as well.

Walker has been described as an activist who is a defender not only of human rights but of all people. Walker through her effective style presents how African American women who have been treated as slaves, will rebel and achieve brighter future life.

**Key Words:** Alice Walker, Activism, Resistance, Women's struggle, Slave narrative.

## Introduction

Mary Donnelly claims that the process of identifying and celebrating resistance place a major role in Alice walker's works but the most important is to recognize the value of a person and respect for an identity. Resistance, humanism, spirituality, nature and womanism are the aspects that Walker discusses in her works. The strength of her work lies in the interweaving of her concerns, her absolute insistence that all persons and the natural world want and demand justice. She is a passionate and gifted advocate for their cases (15).

Walker provides a mystical view of nature with the sense of sublime; exceeding sensory perception and rational thought, nature becomes a force, a character in its own right. In 1952, Walker was accidentally wounded in the right eye by a shot from a gun fired by one of her brothers (Walker 2006 ). Because the family had no car, the Walkers could not take their daughter to a hospital for immediate treatment. By the time they reached a doctor a week later, she had become permanently blind in that eye. When a layer of scar tissue formed over her wounded eye, Alice became self-conscious and painfully shy. Stared at and sometimes taunted, she felt like an outcast and turned for solace to reading and to writing poetry. When she was 14, the scar tissue was removed. She later became the most-popular girl, as well as queen of her senior class, but she realized that her traumatic injury had some value: it had allowed her to begin "really to see people and things, really to notice relationships and to learn to be patient enough to care about how they turned out" (*World Authors* 1995-2000).

Such event had its effect on Alice's psychological state, she was a daring, courageous girl afraid of nothing but after such event, she lost confidence in herself becoming shy and trying to be alone. Her parents tried to take her to her grandmother but they did not realize that taking her away from home will really complicate the situation more . Evelyn C. White believed that Alice felt both abandoned and punished by her parents' decision to send her away from home....Ashamed of her appearance and unable to

understand why she was exiled, her brothers left to run free, Alice became increasingly despondent and withdrawn. She took refuge in the books she received from friends and relatives. She also began to write sad poems (39-40).

Her traumatic incident and injury had some value , it allowed her to begin really to see people and things, really to notice relationships and to learn to be patient enough to care about how they turned out. Walker whose grade had suffered during the six years she had the scar, did well in high school, and got a scholarship allowing her to attend Spelman College, an institution founded to educate young black women in the fall of 1961 (Donnelly 13).

#### 1. Walker's activities and celebrating Resistance in relation to *Meridian* and *The Color Purple*

Alice Walker prefers silence as a sign of rebellion and authenticity and as an activity to resist racial and sexual discrimination. She expresses this in her novel *Meridian* (1976). The heroine of the novel is obliged to undergo a process of change and transformation to oblige others to appreciate her identity. In the story , Meridian suffers from being married and pregnant in the early age of thirteen , she cannot endure these responsibilities of being mother at such age , being warned by her mother's negative comment on motherhood, she decides to leave her husband and choose education as a means to achieve success in her life and be a member in the civil Rights to defend the black citizens in general and the black women in particular.

Lynn Pifer claims that Meridian Hill suffers for her community's patriarchal institutions urge her to repress her individuality and not to speak out inappropriately. But when she finds that she cannot conform to authorized notions of appropriate speech, her only rebellious recourse is silence. Because of her refusal to participate in authorized discourse. Meridian fails to fit with a succession of social groups- she begins a process of personal transformation when she sets out alone to fight her own battles through personal struggle and civil rights work (qtd in Bloom 51).

Walker posits Meridian's struggle for personal transformation as an alternative to the political movements of the 1960s, particularly those that merely reproduced existing power structures. As Karen Stein writes:

... The novel points out that the civil rights Movement often reflected the oppressiveness of patriarchal capitalism. Activists merely turned political rhetoric to their own ends while continuing to repress spontaneous individuality. To overcome this destructiveness, Walker reaches for a new definition of revolutions. Her hope for a just society inheres not merely in political change, but in personal transformations(13).

Since the revolutionary institution also requires from those who join it to perform an authorized speech, Meridian declares that she would both die and kill for the revolution. When she silently considers whether she could kill another human being, the group becomes hostile towards her and finally excludes her. Walker realizes that would-be revolutionaries must avoid reproducing the power structures that they combat. Killing, for Meridian as well as for Walker, is an act of tyranny, even if one kills in the fight against tyranny(Pifer qtd in Bloom 52). Meridian's life is shaped by those moments when she remains silent although those around her demand her speech. She could not publicly repent, despite her mother's urgings; she could not utter the patriotic speech she was assigned in high school; and she could not proclaim that she would kill for the revolution when her comrades expected her to. She is tormented by her peers' hissing, "Why don't you say something?" ( M28), and by the memory of her mother pleading, "Say it now, Meridian . . ." (M29). Meridian's silence short-circuits the response expected by patriarchal discourse. Her refusal to speak negates the existing order's ability to use her as a ventriloquist's doll, a mindless vehicle that would spout the ideological line. But Meridian's strategy does not prevent her from feeling guilt both for not conforming to the standards of her family and friends, and for not being able to speak out effectively against these standards.

Meridian lives on her own, separated from her family and the cadre that has rejected her. Alone, she performs spontaneous and symbolic acts of rebellion, such as carrying a drowned black child's corpse to the mayor's

office to protest the town officials' neglect of drainage ditches in black neighborhoods. She accomplishes more than the would-be revolutionaries, who move on to live yuppie lifestyles. Stein writes, "Walker's novel affirms that it is not by taking life that true revolution will come about, but through respect for life and authentic living of life . . . gained only through each individual's slow, painful confrontation of self " (140). Only Meridian, who struggles with questions that other characters gloss over, completes this personal transformation. Her confrontations with her personal history, family history, and racial history shape the way she chooses to live. Meridian's struggle for personal transformation echoes June Jordan's definition of her duties as a feminist :

I must undertake to love myself and to respect myself as though my very life depends upon self-love and self-respect . . . and . . . I am entering my soul into a struggle that will most certainly transform the experience of all the peoples of the earth, as no other movement can, . . . because the movement into self-love, self-respect, and self determination is . . . now galvanizing . . . the unarguable majority of human beings everywhere. (qtd. in Hernton 58)

Meridian feels guilty for failing to respond verbally to many views related to the activity of the revolutionaries. One of Meridian's most difficult struggles is to forgive herself for her perceived failings. If she can learn to love and respect herself, she can see her moments of silence as legitimate acts of rebellion against a system that would deny her individuality. Otherwise, she can only view her silences as examples of the times she has failed her family and friends (53).

Alice Walker aims at revealing the authenticity of her heroines , she uses certain ways to convince the reader . In *Meridian* for instance, she keeps her heroine silent to show such aspect of authenticity .Joseph A. Brown clarifies how Walker reveals the mysterious way of Meridian's behavior, she is so silent and proceeds her way as being silent (qtd in Bloom 21). In fact, even Meridian's mother does not understand why she behaves in this strange way, she is not affected by her mother while she goes with confidence in her path of reaching wisdom, she feels guilty:

Meridian was conscious of a feeling of guilt, even as a child. Yet she didn't know of what she might be guilty, when she tried to express her feelings to her mother, her mother would only ask: 'Have you stolen

anything? With her own daughter she certainly said things she herself did not believe. She refused help and seemed, to Meridian, never to understand. But all along she understood perfectly.<sup>4</sup>

Meridian Hill is never known, but not because it is an authorial voice other than her own that tells her story. Meridian remains a mystery because she fashions herself not into an authentic witness, but into the very presence of God, a presence that defies all telling.

It is for others to give witness to the deeds of Meridian. She weaves her own veil, and Walker writes of Meridian's life in such a way as to force the reader (through Truman Held, Lynne, and the various townspeople who are touched by her power) to seek the truth of Meridian in her silence (Brown qtd in Bloom 21).

One of the issues in which Alice Walker concentrates in her novels is mysticism . Mary Donnelly claims that Alice Walker's mother, Minnie Tallulah Walker (born Grant), was a stay-at-home mother and an avid gardener and quilter. These activities can be found throughout her daughter's work, whether it is through an appreciation of the mystical qualities of nature or a solid appreciation of quilting (11). As Walker noted: "I just feel really good and protected and blessed . . . when I am under quilts made by my mother. . . . It's the same tradition as painting or carving. . . . The power is partly about grounding yourself in something that is humble . . . something you can see take form through your own effort" (Freeman, cited in White 57).

*Meridian did not look to the right or to the left. She passed the people watching her as if she didn't know it was on her account they were there. As she approached the tank the blast of its engine starting sent clouds of pigeons fluttering, with the sound of rapid, distant shelling, through the air, and the muzzle of the tank swung tantalizingly side to side—as if to tease her—before it settled directly toward her chest. . . . And then, when she reached the tank she stepped lightly, deliberately, right in front of it, rapped smartly on its carapace—as if knocking on a door— then raised her arm again (M21-22).*

Without thinking (a state that is common to him), Truman Held sees the reality that Meridian has become. This incident appears at the beginning of

the novel, in the episode entitled "The Last Return." At the end of the novel, when this incident is once again the focus of the narrative, Meridian writes one last poem:

*there is water in the world for us  
brought by our friends  
though the rock of mother and god  
vanishes into sand  
and we, cast out alone  
to heal  
and re-create  
ourselves. (M213)*

Meridian, due to her decision which was to attend the college, join the Civil Rights Movement, keeping silent as a form of rebellion and resisting her husband who imposes patriarchal law on her, led her to transform herself. Then her Comrade Truman Held who was her friend and lover and has been arrested several times with her betrayed Meridian and chooses a white woman to marry led her to neglect and forget all these sad incidents and attract towards her authenticity. The optimistic end of Meridian gives hope to women to stick to and respect their own identity and achieve wholeness.

## 2. Trauma and the Neo-Slave Narrative in *The Color Purple*

Many critics during the Twentieth century era, especially the civil rights era, notice the rebirth of certain narrative tradition form, this literary form has inspired twentieth century black writers' imagination and creativity. Bernard Bell states that the new form of slave narrative induced these writers to "experiment with modern forms of slave narratives", which led to the birth of the neo-slave narrative' (245). This generic transformation, according to Beaulieu, is "one of the most powerful developments in the twentieth-century American literature" (4 qtd in Marta Tysik 17). Slaves cherished their folk culture by telling folk tales, by singing, and dancing. Women especially took to artistic expression, for example quilting. The protagonist of *The Color Purple*- Celie- lives in oppressive conditions in her own household and initially her method of sustenance is writing to God. Then she begins to make a quilt: "Me and Sofia work on the quilt. Got it frame up on the porch. Shug Avery donate her old yellow dress for scrap,

and I work in a piece every chance I get"(TCP 61). This quilt-making can be interpreted as a subconscious attempt to piece herself together and endure her joyless lot. She does not plan an escape or any personal uprising, as many slaves had in the past (Tysik 18).

The outstanding thing in the neo-slave narrative style is its oral feature. Rushdy maintains that neo-slave narratives were characterized by "the use and celebration of 'oral' modes of representation" (533). Orality was a feature dating back to the times of slavery where many tales were told and re-told in the slave cabins. Because it was inherent in the slave culture, slave writers attempted to instill this verbal quality into their written narratives and oral performances – tools of the antislavery crusade. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. argues, the "black speaking subject" strove for more than two centuries "to find his or her voice," and this ambition and hope for some articulateness constitutes the "most central trope" in the African-American literary tradition (Signifying 239). According to Butler- Evans, in *The Color Purple* Walker employs this trope of orality and weaves it into the narrative strategy (163). This "interjection of verbal discourse" manifests itself in Cellie's precious and unique gift- she possesses a lively command of black English, which has been a hallmark of the African-American oral tradition and its vivid expression (163). Butler- Evans argues that Celie's first person narration does not attest to the fact that she is writing, but that she is in fact speaking or, as gates asserts, "she writes her speaking voice and that of everyone who speaks to her" (TCP 243). Celie's language is marked by black English grammar, colloquialisms, characteristic spelling, ordinary speech-like qualities of sentences, and is more reminiscent of informal dialogue than of a written form (Butler-Evans 163-164). Gates remarks that we as readers have an impression of "overhearing people speak," for Celie's written narration is "identical in diction and idiom to the supposedly spoken words that pepper has letters" (Signifying 249).

These critics' views convey an outstanding information for the reader that during narration, the speaker remembers his past and feels terrible due to the agonizing experiences he undergoes. As Walker once said in an interview, Celie is vaguely reminiscent of her grandmother raped by her white master, so an echo of an "ancestral presence" was transferred into *The Color Purple*.

One of the benefits of narrating the miseries of the past is a means to control history and get rid of the traumatic experiences of the past. In her essay "mother's Milk and Sister's Blood: trauma and the Neo slave narrative," Naomi Morgenstern analyzes Deborah McDowell's view of the theory of trauma and how it is related to compulsion of remembering,



retelling and rewriting the experience of slavery, resulting in such literary forms as the neo-slave narrative, "the twentieth-century novel about slavery" (Morgenstern 101).

Marta Tysik presents views of different critics about the neo-slave narrative style. In addition to Morgenstern, Timothy Cox writes about Trauma and how to recover from traumatic past experiences. On the other hand, McDowell presupposes that repeating the stories of the past is an effort to claim control over history or as Cox puts it "to recover the past and to recover from it" (Cox 2). Morgenstern suggests that the neo-slave narrative "marks the undesirable return of an unforgettable past" (102). Tysik maintains that it is not irrational to assert that Alice Walker, as a black American conscious of her people's past, has carried the burden of post memory all her life and vented its fragmented aspects into her writing, which is haunted by denigrated images of black women (21). *The Color Purple*, is an attempt to quilt the fragments of history together, to show enslavement as it is carried on in the twentieth-century environment. Walker admits that "all history is current; all injustice continues on some level" (qtd. in Davis, T.26) and informs her writing with issues of twentieth-century personal struggle for freedom of all kinds (30).

Morgenstern adds that if the neo-slave narratives are "fictional testimonial literature" evoking the painful memory of slavery (105), then *The Color Purple* can also be viewed as such. The protagonist Celie is not haunted with the memory of past ordeals of her people, but she faces her own enslavement and her own traumas. The first sign of slavery is obligatory work, and familial responsibilities. Davis, A states that Slave women were seen as "profitable labor-units" (5). Celie plays all the roles assigned to black female slaves: She labors in the field, kitchen, and in the washroom: "she can work like a man" (TCP 9). She also nurses someone else's children. Her life as a family slave is a chain of degrading experiences, unhappiness and hard work. Celie had been raped by her stepfather, she had two children but her stepfather sold them then Celie is sold to a widower with four children. "She ugly. He say. But she ain't no stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she ain't gonna make you feed it or cloth it" (TCP 9). Celie is sold to her husband just like a thing not a person:

*He say, Let me see her again. Pa call me.(...) Like it wasn't  
Nothing. Mr.--- want another look at you. I go stand in the doo  
The sun shine in my eyes. He's still up on his horse. He look me*

*up and down.*

Neo-slave narratives come to life out of growing need to share an ancestral tale of slavery, to pass it on to the next generations. Moreover, Walker attested to that tradition by rewriting her grandmother's traumatic experience. She adapted the form of the slave narrative and produced a legitimate, one-of-a-kind contemporary neo-slave narrative (qtd in Tysik 22).

This form of narrative style aims at creating a new voice by reawakening the old one. So Alice Walker by referring to her grandmother creates a new voice. She recognizes her literary and cultural heritage, she "celebrates her people" and manifests "a deeply-rooted consciousness of her role as an artist in a socially and politically complex World" (Davis, T.32). As a black writer, she is aware of her people's folk tradition and pays attention to her ancestors by conceiving a neo-slave narrative that features a twentieth-century female character, who though lived under the psychological and social "slavery" imposed on her by the patriarchs of her clan-is capable of re-affirming and re-claiming herself. Alice Walker by manipulating the neo-slave narrative form creates new voice of black people, defends her color especially women and obtains freedom.

### *3. Identity, Self recognition and Womanism in The Color Purple*

Alice Walker in her novel *The Color Purple* (1982) which won the Pulitzer prize in Fiction has written:

*"I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook(...) But I'm here" -Walker (210)*

Ogunyemi claims that In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century American black people were not equal to the white community. Especially women were facing oppression from various parts of society. They were not only confronting the problems of racism and class differences, but were also suffering from the consequences of sexism in their patriarchal culture (1985).

This novel portrays the living conditions of the black women in the United States before the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. The philosopher Charles Taylor argues in his essay "*The Politics of Recognition*" that the term recognition is a philosophical concept and the key condition of becoming.

Becoming is vital for the foundation of human beings and the development of their identity. Taylor believes that "recognition allows one to be confirmed in oneself and one's personality .It is the key element for further development. If you are not recognized by others you feel oppressed and consequently your development can slow to stop the active process of becoming (Taylor, 1994).

Alice Walker's *The color Purple*, discusses notions of becoming and identity development. It is about the heroine Celie's development from being an oppressed , uneducated and weak being to becoming someone else who is independent free and powerful( Pernille et al 8).

In Pernille's view ,the concept of womanism was first coined by Walker. Her own background plays a crucial role in the process of the development of womanism. Walker herself experienced class issues, racism as well as oppression from various levels of society. In order to analyze her novel *The Color Purple* it is important to understand the concept of womanism as it occurs throughout the novel. Characters in the novel are influenced by the rising consciousness of identity and womanhood. The term womanism was first mentioned in Walker's short story "Coming Apart" published in 1979. It is the story about the various influences on marriage in the black community. Walker writes: "The wife has never considered herself feminist-though she is, of course, a 'womanist' ". A " 'womanist' is a feminist, only more common " (Phillips xix). The idea of womanism was developed in the later years with the publication of her collection of essays "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" in 1983. Womanism is rooted in black and colored women's experiences of the everyday life and aims to eradicate oppression and to unify all people. Walker gave life to a new way for women to talk about their relationships, social changes, and their struggle against oppression from all sides of society. Walker wanted women to quest their rights for their integration within full humanity (Phillips xx). Walker states that womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender (2005 xii).

To understand womanism one must first determine the differences between feminism and womanism. In general, people perceive womanism as an alternative to feminism, but it is not only a version of feminism (Phillips xxi). The main difference between these two philosophies is that feminism focuses on gender issues whereas womanism focuses to a higher degree on racial issues. Feminist literature is perceived as being "protest literature" (Ogunyemi 64) against sexism and the patriarchal power in

society and is addressed to both sexes. Feminism does not only concern women and women issues, but also formulates a feminist ideology.

White middle class women writers who seek a change in the perception of their identity are often considered feminists whereas black women authors are more likely womanists. Womanists distinguish themselves from white feminists not only due to their race, gender and class, but also because they suffered from the consequences of oppression from the black community, which the white women were never exposed to (Ogunyemi 64).

White women were oppressed not only by their husbands but also by the dominant white male society. Besides these patriarchal issues black women faced oppression from various aspects in society such as the white patriarchal culture. Furthermore, black women were as well exposed to oppression regarding race, sex and class issues by white men (67). Womanism, like feminism, has a political view on equality and power structure in society. Unlike feminists, the womanists want equality in society to be split among races and sexes. To do that, it is necessary for the womanist to empower and believe in the black man even though she is oppressed by him. She recognizes that the black man faces oppression from all levels as well, and that makes them equal which enables her to empower him (68-69).

Walker explains these issues in *The Color Purple* when the female protagonist Celie liberates herself from oppression. Pawar claims that African –American literature is designed with a mission to make their consciousness known to the world. Its aim is to change social, political, economic aspect of society.... The life of African American is largely mirrored in its literature. The totality of people's experiences has been well reflected in its literature. Nathan Huggins discusses that for most blacks, there has never been any doubt that their identity is embedded in the general American history, and that they will never know themselves until they mine and refine that history themselves (VII). Alice Walker portrayed the oppressive situations of black people especially women in her novel. She has portrayed sexism, racism and poverty as well. It deals with women's struggle to gain acceptance from society and being recognized as individuals who have a self-identity of their own. Lindsey Tucker on Alice's novel believes that for the black woman writer, the search for voice-the rescue of

her subjectivity from the sometimes subtle, yet always pervasive, dictates the dominant white male culture is even more problematic. Alice Walker, aware of black women as particularly muted group, has addressed herself in much of her work to the problem of the black woman as creator (81).

#### 4. Rape and Incest as features of Oppression in *The Color purple and Meridian*

Walker's novel *The Color Purple* begins with the scene of rape. When the protagonist of the novel, "...Celie is 14...stepfather, whom she believes (because nobody talks about the lynched) is her father, begins to rape her..." (Walker 1996 50) She cannot tell this trauma anybody. At first, her stepfather starts to do this when her mother is not at home. Then he says "...you better shut up and git used to it" (Walker 1985 3). Celie's expressions show how difficult position she stays. "But I don't never git used to it. And now I feel sick used to it. I be the one to cook. My mama she fuss at me an look at me. She happy, cause he good to her now. But too sick to last long" (3).

The rape scene of the novel "...is based on Walker's great-great-grandmother, who was raped and impregnated at age 11 by her master Walker's great-great-grandfather" (Winchell 85). As seen, this abuse is related to a real event and it is written by the writer to demonstrate how a black female live. This event reveals "...the portrayal of black family..." (86) The writer suggests that "...child-rape, incest..." (Birch 222) is an undeniable fact of most blacks' lives.

The reason of significance of the Celie's rape scene is that there is not a race issue. Celie is black and her stepfather is black, as well. This incident displays that being a member of a black family is dangerous for a female. These facts are the representatives of a black female's life. Celie is demonstrated "...the black woman as oppressed ..." (Evans, 163, qtd in Tanritanir & Aydemir 3).

Walker continues presenting such terrible images about her heroine Celie after being raped, beaten, humiliated and sexually abused by her stepfather and threatened her to be silent:

*He never had a kine word to say to. me. Just sayyou gonna do what your mammy wouldn't. First he put his thing up*

*against my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold my titties. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that 2 hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it (TCP 2).*

Celie's stepfather impregnates her twice and he sold her two children without telling Celie about them. One day a widower of three children asked for Nettie's hand but Alphonso instead of agreeing he presents Celie to marry Mr- the widower.

*Well, He say, real slow, I can't let you have Nettie. She too young. Don't know nothing but what you tell her. Sides, I want her to git some more schooling. Make a schoolteacher out of her .But I can let you have Celie. She the oldest anyway. She ought to marry first. She ain't fresh tho, but I spect you know that. She spoiled. Twice. But you don't need a fresh woman no how. I got a fresh one in there myself and she sick all the time(TCP 8-9).*

At last Celie is obliged to marry Mr- and bear all the terrible ways Mr and his four children had treated her:

*He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don't never hardly beat them. He say, Celie, git the belt. The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man (TCP 23).*

Celie promises herself to be strong and starts writing letters to God and to her sister Nettie. Though she keeps silent , but her strength is increased with her silence as a sign of rebellion. Alice Walker presents other female characters who were stronger than Celie and had impact on her like Shug Avery and Sofia. Celie starts to develop her identity and changes her oppressive state by getting rid of racism and sexism:

*One day when Shug come home, ^I say, You know, I love doing this, but I got to git out and make a living pretty soon. Look like*

*this just holding me back. She laugh. Let's us put a few advertisements in the paper, she say. And let's us raise your prices a hefty notch. And let's us just go ahead and give you this dining room for your factory and git you some more women in here to cut and sew, while you sit back and design. You making your living, Celie, she say. Girl, you on (221)*

Celie's world was one of fear, despair, insecurity and loneliness, with no ray of hope or sunshine. Walker tells the story in the form of letters. Celie's attitude about herself and about God is clearly visible through the letters which she writes to God to help her to survive the spiritual emotional and physical abuse she suffers at the hands of her step father .

Issues about Color also plays central role in Walker's novel, even in black community, the degree of blackness shapes the behaviors of people. In *The Color Purple*, the mistress of the protagonist's husband is a good representative of color of skin. Even though she has a dark black skin, "She is the woman in control of her life" (Walker 1996 52). She is more different than Celie. "She is gorgeous and knows it, with only positive thoughts about her very black skin—since during this period the black and lighter-skinned black woman had about the same chance with black men" (52). Knowing the position in the black dominated society, Shug Avery acts independently and warns Celie not to be dependent on black males. Similarly, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s sister, Kate also advises Celie about fighting. "You got to fight them, Celie, she say. I can't do it for you. You got to fight them for yourself" (Walker 1985 21). Nevertheless, Celie is afraid of black males' brutality and states "I think about Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (21. ) After so many years, by the help of the black women, Sofia, Shug and Nettie she becomes brave and "...Celie frees herself from her husband's repressive control" (Gates, Jr. – Appiah16). The focus of the novel is "... black women's struggle for independences" (17). The efforts of the protagonist end in success (qtd in Tanritanir & Aydemir 439).

*Meridian* focuses especially on the protagonist of the novel, Meridian's involvement in the civil rights movement. In *Meridian*, Walker expresses "...inner struggle..."(Cooke 158) of especially a black woman, Meridian Hill. She suffers from struggle, violence, rape and racism in this novel. Concerning Violence In *Meridian*, Walker writes about "...the possibility of interracial love and communication, the vital and lethal strands in American and black experience, with violence and non-violence and self-hatred"

(Gates, Jr.- Appiah 9). Most significant themes of *Meridian* include "...the estrangement and violence that mark the relationships between Miss Walker's black men and women" (17). Moreover, "...the most difficult paradox that Walker has examined to date is the relationship between violence and revolution..." (Evans 466). The years of movement have witnessed the sharp strictness and violent sides of both government and society.

Even though being a Civil Right female worker depicts that *Meridian* will experience the hard conditions of the revolution, Walker implies that "...if Black women turn away from the women's movement, they turn away from women moving all over the world, not just in America"(467). In fact, being the writer of *Meridian*, Walker rejects "...the violent revolution..." (Birch 209) Likewise, the protagonist of the novel *Meridian* has "joined the movement against racism" (213) for stopping the violent attitudes towards people. Her devotion takes lots of things but she doesn't give up her decision. It is clear in *Meridian* that "...rigid and foolish force, on the one hand, and sanctimonious greed, on the other, stand as the only operative values in the society" (Cooke 162). In addition to this, the writer of *Meridian* Walker, "...examines the hatred and violence which result from the fear of difference" (Birch 214). The exact reason of the violence during movement is race.

## Conclusion

Alice Walker's novels emphasizes the importance of achieving equality between male and female in the family, the very reason of creating traumatic situations is due to discriminations done by parents. The novels convey didactic messages for all of us. Among them is the insistence on women's education as a means to preserve identity and avoid inferiority. After being oppressed by her parents, due to such discrimination between her and her brothers, Alice started to concentrate on her education to improve herself and get rid of traumatic moments that her parents had daily imposed on her. Being an activist later on, Walker attempts to preserve human's rights in general and women's rights in particular. Personal transformation and resistance, she suggests, have active roles to get rid of the impact of patriarchy in the society. Rebellion is one of the forms in these novels that encourage a change in women's identities,



silence is also a means through which the woman patiently chooses to create self transformation.

Alice Walker in these two novels has been under the impact of the experience of slavery due to the pressure of the United state of America during 1950s and 1960s . In a clear confessional style, Walker succeeds in conveying a black woman's suffering during such period. *The Color Purple*, *Meridian*, succeed in reflecting agonic moments in colored women's lives. The colored protagonists resist continuously to abolish gender discrimination, violence, racial attitudes and sexual abuse. Walker has dealt with such issues frankly, quite similar to what happened to her grandmother when she had been raped by her white master .She reveals facts about the miseries of black women like the protagonist of the novel *The Color Purple*, Celie, who at first cannot do anything to object the brutality of both black men and white men. However, in time by the help of her female friends, like Sofia and Shug Avery, she realizes the fact that she has the right to act as she wants. After so many years of racial oppression, sexual abuse and brutality, she encourages herself to object all the hard conditions of black woman's life. She starts to struggle for liberation from hands of men, both black and white. Also, in her novel *Meridian*, Walker portrays the struggles and suffers of a black woman, Meridian. Meridian aims to struggle for a free life. She longs for a society in which both blacks and whites have equal rights. During the acts, she and her friends are exposed to violence and punishment. However, they do not lose their hope for future. In *Meridian*, Walker urges these colored women to bear all kinds of sufferings and oppressions and be patient to win and be victorious in her message towards them. As Walker proved by both of her heroines that the road towards success and freedom is full of obstacles but it deserves such sacrifice. Different kinds of sufferings have been exposed like motherhood, violence, rape, and the most important reason that causes their pains, is racism, that is their color. They are discriminated by the white society which is not fair. They are seen as the objects that do not have any feelings. Walker creates a chance for women in general and black women specially to find their identity and survive in the hard atmosphere of racial society. However, some black women characters do not dare to object the discrimination and await their lives' endings. Walker's novels end optimistically with an open-ended narrative style to give glimpses of lights as signs of hope for women's freedom.

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**أليس ولكر كناشطة وداعية للمقاومة فى روايتها ميريديان (1976) واللون الأرجوانى (1982)**

**الباحث: أ.م.د. جوان عبدالله ابراهيم البناء**

**المستخلص**

الكاتبة الامريكية اليس ولكر (1944) هى واحدة من اهم الناشطات المعروفة باعمالها الادبية فى القرن العشرين. فهى تصور عدة مفاهيم خلال روايتها وتوضح تأثير السلطة على حياة الضحايا الأبرياء. تترك فى طياتها معانى المقاومة، وتهدف هذه النصوص الأدبية الى اعطاء صوت اللواتى حرمن من أصواتهن بسبب الفقر، ومنعن من حقوقهن وتقرير مصيرهن بسبب الظروف القاهرة.

الهدف الآخر هو توضيح مواقف النساء اللواتى حررن انفسهن من الأضطهاد والخوف والظلم والتعاسة فى مجتمع يقوده الرجال فقط. وهذا من خلال البطلتين (ميريديان وسيلي). وبالرغم من الظلم والاستبداد اللذين هدا حياة هؤلاء النساء، إلا أن القوة والأمل يشعلان نار قوتهن دون انطفاء.

إن رواية ميريديان ناقشت حياة النساء الناشطات والعاملات فى جنوب أمريكا خلال حركة الحقوق المدنية والتى عبرت بشكل واضح عن نشاطاتها الذاتية للكاتبة اليس ولكر نفسها.

اما روايتها (اللون الأرجوانى) التى تتحدث عن محاربة النساء الشابات السود فى امريكا ضد الثقافة الغربية للبيض وضد الرجال السود ايضا.

تم وصف الكاتبة بالناشطة باعتبار انها اعتقدت بان التعليم يحفز الانسان للعمل والنشاط المتوفرين لدى الجميع. فالكاتبة اليس هي ليست فقط محامية لحقوق الانسان والنساء بل لكل الناس و فئات المجتمع. فهي من خلال اسلوبها المؤثر نجحت في التعبير عن حياة النساء الأمريكيات اللواتي استخدمن وعوملن كعبيد وتمردن من اجل تحقيق مستقبل و حياة افضل واسمى .

يتكون البحث من مقدمة و اربعة مباحث.

المبحث الاول يناقش شخصية اليس ولكر كناشطة و روح المقاومة التي ابدتها خلال الروايتين.

المبحث الثاني يوضح الصدمة النفسية التي عانتها الكاتبة خلال اسلوبها السردى المميز بالعبد في رواية اللون الأرجواني, اما المبحث الثالث يبرز شخصية المرأة ووعيتها في اللون الأرجواني. المبحث الاخير يصف الاستبداد و الاضطهاد و معاناة المرأة بعد الاغتصاب . الجزء الاخير هو عبارة عن وصف لأهم استنتاجات الباحث.

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