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Dynamics of Gender, Race and Religion in Walker Percy's Novel "The Color Purple"

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Abstract

Walker's main preoccupation throughout her work has been the depiction of black women, with the objective of giving voice to the voiceless, to those who are oppressed on both at racial and a gender level. The causes of Afro-American women's suffering are multifaceted, including race, gender, and Religion. However, these women's struggles continue to go unnoticed. The current article investigates the gender, religion, and racial interactions in Alice Walker's work, as well as the representation of Black women. Her work is evaluated from a comparative standpoint in order to highlight the predicament of Afro-American women and to explore for probable convergence in the emancipated portrayal of their contrasting personalities. Thematic stress and characterization of the protagonists in the selected work show that oppression of black women can only be resisted if they recognize their own strength, such as through sisterhood relationships or refusal to submit to repressive situations. On the surface, the author has created contrasting pictures of black women – Celie, who is victimized because of her poverty, race, and gender, and is exploited by men, eventually resorting to filicide. On a deeper level, however, the author criticizes black women for their lack of courage in standing up to oppressors.

Keywords: Gender, Race, Dynamics Oppression, Religion.

"The Color Purple" tells the story of Celie who is Walker's quintessential heroine in many ways, her journey from oppression to fury to acceptance and healing. Walker has frequently been chastised for her representation of black men, which many believe is inaccurate. This claim contains some truth: Almost every major male character in The Color Purple, particularly Mr. Alphonso and Harpo, have significant concerns with regard to women as anything other than their property, to be utilized in the manner that they deem fit by themselves. The Color Purple, especially Mr. Alphonso, and Harpo, has considerable issues concerning to women who are considered as a private property, exploited in the manner they consider appropriate. Alphonso who is married to a woman who is mentally ill and has two kids. He was

married to succession of significantly younger women following her demise. After being disappointed in his early love for Shug Avery, Mr. punishes Julia and later Celie for not being Shug. Harpo who forsakes his candid feelings for Sofia on the pretext of gender hierarchy. Controlling her seems more imperative to him than loving her. Mr. Harpo, on the other hand, ultimately realize that their actions alienate the women they adore and, in their own ways, reform. Celie feels significantly more at ease around women than she is around men. "I'm not even interested in menswear." But I look at women because I'm not afraid of them" (5). Despite this, she is viciously raped by her stepfather and is having two children for him, the second of whom renders her childless. She is also married to a man she has never met and does not love. "Take off their pants, I say, and guys look like frogs to me," Celie states late in the novel when Mr. wonders if she dislikes him because he is male. "As far as I'm concerned, frogs are what they stay no matter how you kiss 'em"(254)." Nonetheless, their position as "frogs" would not preclude her from liking them if they were nice to her. The men instead in "The Color Purple" appear to be hell-bent on making the women who work for them pay for society's wrongs by imposing stringent gender divisions, frequently with violence. Their sexual cravings are intense, and they are frequently directed in inappropriate ways. They also appear incapable of allowing the women to make decisions about themselves. Samuel, a very generous and affectionate towards his adopted children, his wife as well as Nettie although, when it is his stand, he abnegates to interfere to protect Celie). "Sofia's boyfriend Buster Broadnax, who says "my job is to love her and take her where she want to go.(82),"and Jack, Odessa husband who is a perfect model of permanence and fatherly love Celie feels that while making a pair of pants for the Jack, must be soft and strong with many pockets for his toys, cozy adequate for him to go to save a child in threat, but also

"something he can lay back in when he holds Odessa in front of the fire" (213)."

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However, all of these characters are minor: These sensitive moments are not allowed by the strong masculine characters. In the novel, sexual intercourse is frequently depicted as rape and abuse: "Celie informs Shug that Mr. just "does his business, gets off, and goes to sleep," to which Shug responds, "Why Miss Celie!" "You make it sound like he's urinating on you." "That's how it feels, Celie responds (77)". Similarly, Harpo's attitude impacts their sex life when he is most desperate to assert his authority over Sofia. "Once he's on top of me, I'm thinking about how that's where he wants to be all the time" (65). The dearth of fairness in such relationships clearly has an impact on how the spouses behave. Instead, Walker appears to argue that what women require is an understanding of their own bodies, as well as somebody to be treated tenderly and instill them about topics other than having children. Celie benefits from Shug's awareness of herself more than anything else. Shug's placidness, her assertion to Celie about sexuality being lovely and wonderful, all contribute to Celie's restoration to comprehensiveness. Walker is chastised for proposing that lesbianism is a solution to male-female conflicts; nevertheless, this accusation is unfounded, at least in Celie's instance. Walker, on the other hand, proposes a new model for male-female relationships. The principal male characters, with the exception of the unrepentant Alphonso, finally learn to let go of his urge to have control on the women in their lives and recognizing their equality. Celie sinks into filth and lunacy after summoning the guts to walk out on Mr. , but is liberated by his son Harpo. Harpo regains wife by rebuffing to comply to typical manly norms and tending his father back to health after having lost Sofia and then Squeak. "Well, one night I stepped up to tell Harpo something— and the two of them were just laying there on the bed sound asleep," Sofia explains to Celie, Harpo with his father in his arms. After that, I begin to feel for Harpo again." "Harpo forced him write you the rest of your sister's letters," "Sofia says when Celie wonders how Mr. was restored to sanity. Following that, he began to recover. She says, "You know how meanness kills" (223–224)". Mr. can only be returned to his former self after he stops punishing Celie. Celie and Mr. form the most firm and confident friendship in the story, the one that proposes the utmost hope for societal harmony, he confesses to her.

"You used to remind me of a bird. Way back when you first come and live with me. You were so skinny, Lord, he say. And the least little thing happen, you

looked about to fly away. You saw that, I say. I saw it, he said, just too big a fool to let myself care. (253)"

Celie identifies the change in Mr. , and recompenses him with her friendship:

"After all the evil he done, I know you wonder why I don't hate him. I don't hate him for two reasons. One, he love Shug. And two, Shug use to love him. Plus, look like he trying to make something out himself. I don't mean just that he work and he clean up after himself and he appreciate some of the things God was playful enough to make. I mean when you talk to him now he really listen, and one time, out of nowhere in the conversation us was having, he said Celie, I'm satisfied this is the first time I ever lived on earth as natural man. It feels like a new experience. (260)"

Mr.'s character is elevated by this often-overlooked passage. He is revealed to be a complicated and sensitive individual in his own right, rather than a one-dimensional culprit punishing the sympathetic victim. Celie loses himself when he quits being a victim, but he resurfaces as "natural man," considering the world and him with respect and love. Walker clearly implies that once that relationship is established, gender parity and harmony will follow.

Religion

The representation of religion seems Walker's key themes in "The Color Purple". God has a significant role in his book, as the most of the letters were addressed to him. When Mr. 's unfaithfulness with of letters Nettie's is publicized, Celie loses her faith completely, sparking one of Walker's most direct refashioning of the traditional notion of religion. "He large and elderly and tall and gray bearded and white, "Celie have faith God is a white man. He dresses in robes and walks around barefoot." "Ain't no way to read the bible and not think God white," Shug agrees. I lost interest when I discovered I had imagined God to be white and male. You're enraged because he doesn't appear to hear your petitions. Humph! "Does the mayor pay attention to what people of color have to say?" (pp. 194–195). Rather than an impersonal, judging creator, Shug promotes a religious ideal based on the notion that God existence is through and through people as well as things: "I believe God is everything, say Shug" (195)."

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"She say, My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being a part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and I cried and I run all around the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happen, you can't miss it. It sort of like you know what, she say, grinning and rubbing high up on my thigh." Shug I say "Oh, she say. God love all them feelings That's some of the best stuff God did. And when you know God loves 'em, you enjoys 'em a lot more. You can just relax, go with everything that's going, and praise God by doing what you like.(196)"

"I think it drives God off when you walk past the color purple in a field somewhere and don't see it," Shug says after openly linking God to sexuality.(196), highlighting the novel's prominence of this major issue.

Race

The Color Purple" has a few explicit talks on race. It is not as race is unimportant; it is simply that there aren't many prominent white characters; therefore there aren't many opportunities for black and white and culture to interact. Here Black culture is portrayed as a void system that merely touches on white culture when unconditionally necessarily as a violent source of power that is illogical and unreasoning. The circumstances following Sofia's incarceration provide the clearest example of interactions with white society. The mayor's wife gives a sarcastic encomium to Sofia during this exchange, and then enquires if she wishes to serve as her home maid. Obviously, the woman considers Sofia's offer to be a huge complement, and is taken aback by her retort: "Hell, no." When the mayor got involved and slaps Sofia for her arrogance, Sofia hits back.

"When I see Sofia, I don't know why she still alive" "They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out tween her teeth likea piece of rubber. She can't talk. And she just about the color of a eggplant. (86-87)"

Clearly, it was police enforcement, not the mayor, who was responsible for these consequences. It should go without saying that if Sofia is at the helm of supremacist society, ferocity is to be estimated in the future. In

addition, Celie considers Harpo responsible for Sofia's imprisonment, saying, "Had you not attempted to dominate over Sofia, the white folks would have never caught her" (200). "In spite of sincere concern for black people on the part of white people, they are unable to grasp the fundamental fact that black people are also human beings. Sofia informs Miss Millie that she is prepared to spend Christmas with her family, but that her "treat" will be driving Miss Millie round and spending a few hours with her children due to her poor driving abilities and racism against the black men (she refuses to let Jack, Odessa's husband, drive her home when her car becomes stuck), Although Eleanor Jane, Miss Millie's daughter, pretends to have the greatest compassion for Sofia, it appears as though her primary objective is to convince Sofia to honor both her husband and newborn with reverence. Her troubles are not her cares, and their connection has always been one of compulsion rather than warmth, Sofia must smack her across the face in order to persuade her that Sofia's problems are not her concerns. While Eleanor Jane, Henrietta and Sofia's youngest daughter, suffers from sickle-cell anemia, she undergoes a change and makes tremendous efforts to assist Harpo, who is suffering from the disease. Walker contends that, like gender disparities, racial divides can only be repaired when both parties perceive each other as equals in their own communities.

Conclusion

As the research demonstrates, all the impediments are stacked against Walker's female protagonists and her works address a variety of contemporary concerns. Her protagonists face oppression as a result of their gender, Religion and race. These variables combine to create a triangle trap around the societal realities of repressed black women. The analyzed work is narrative of women who have been abused by those who are supposed to help them. Walker says that black women in patriarchal societies can exercise agency and speak out against prejudices and collect inner power to combat subjugation, mistreatment, abuse, and inequity. Sisterhood solidarity may redirect black women's energies into defending themselves against men's authoritarian hierarchy and domination. They falsify new distinctiveness in the face of dehumanization and squalor by prevailing culture, as well as agony from patriarchal domination. She makes an attempt with the absolute minimal resources available to her to establish their legitimacy and combat all forms of injustice perpetrated on them. Self-determination triumphs over oppression in Walker's novel, . Despite the fact that

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Walker's development of consciousness in which black women learns to fight and struggle such masculine and repressive structures. This work would definitely motivate, or somewhat enflame, women in broad-spectrum and black women in particular, to deliberate judgmentally about them and make an effort in substantiating themselves generally and enthusiastically in a manner that resists the ubiquitous masculine system of subjugation and authoritarianism. What seems delivered afar the transcribed pages are supposed to strengthen the ability to transmute, to enforce an alteration on how black women should recognize their places in connection to the world about them. Two alternatives are provided - to let tyranny be the controlling factor of their lives as is evident about Hester.

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