

AESTHETICS OF THE TRIUMPHANT TONE OF THE BLACK WOMAN IN ALICE WALKER'S THE COLOR PURPLE

¹Dr. Muslim Abbas Eidan Al-Ta'an, ² Assist.Lect. Shaimaa Hadi Radhi

¹ Lecturer in English Department,

Faculty of Languages and Translation, University of KUFA, Iraq

² Thi-Qar Directorate of Education.

¹ dr.muslimeidan@yahoo.com

Abstract — The current paper deals with Alice Walker's well-known novel *The Color Purple*. Obviously, Walker's book, as a narrative discourse, presents aesthetically various themes like woman abuse, oppression, racism, sexism and male dominance in a patriarchal community. In particular, the study is an attempt to explore how the writer ignites and rises the spark of the rebellious spirit inside the oppressed black woman who is doubly humiliated and marginalized as black and female. In Walker's perspective, both in life and literature, the rising female consciousness of the womanist character contributes to alter her passivity to activity and make her human action indicative of energetic and aesthetic triumphant voice instead of humiliating silence and that is an aesthetic action by itself. The writer, therefore, tries to introduce an image of a powerful woman with a strong back identity in face of aggressive and oppressive obstacles. Furthermore, the study could trace a special type of aesthetic mechanism by means of which Walker could portray the protagonist as a triumphant character and worthwhile woman with all her female traits. We'll focus, however, on how the protagonist as a female being gets consciousness about herself, identity, plight, position, and every aspect of her life in a racist and patriarchal community. We'll point out that the purpose of the author is to show how by such consciousness, whether it is personal or aesthetic, the protagonist can shift from a victim to a victorious woman.

Index Terms — Alice Walker, womanism, *The Color Purple*, female consciousness, aesthetics, epistolary mechanism.

I. INTRODUCTION

At the early decade of the twentieth century, American-African people in general and black women in particular had been severely humiliated, "doubly marginalized" (Ward and Herndl, 1997:741) and oppressed to a great extent by the white community. Black women, especially in the southern territory, were passing by hard times of suffering due to the aggressive and oppressive practices done against them at home and outside. They have been denied as humans particularly in a patriarchal community in which male is superior and female is

inferior. Those women's voice is muted for a long time passing from slavery yoke to oppression by their males who are of the same color and skin. So racism, class and gender are key elements that govern the patriarchal mind in a male-oriented world. From this point of bitterness and suffering, many black women writers came to be defenders of their mothers, sisters or daughters' rights to live as human beings, to be free, to decide their fate and rise their voice against all types of oppression.

In the early sixties, the African-American Zora Neale Hurston, Jude Jordan, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Rita Dove and Alice Walker were Civil Rights activists and writers [Those black women writers devote their literary works to depict and serve black woman's condition in a patriarchal community. They aesthetically picture the lives of female slaves who have endured the bitterness of "sexual oppression, systematized rape, forced breeding, and responsibility for domestic tasks" more than black men (Smith, 1983:39). We think that those black writers are always apt to "project women in their fiction whose process of development show[s] a rejection of the constraining demands of a former order and as such [they] promote female consciousness", to use the words of Monica S. Udoette (2014:75). What distinguishes Alice Walker from the other black women writers mentioned above is her aesthetic ability to promote the black female consciousness both in theory and practice. Udoette argues that "exploration of female consciousness in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* will follow the Womanist criteria rather than the radical feminist approach" (75).

Walker put her feminist philosophy in life and literature in what she aesthetically came to coin as "Womanism". Her significant book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1984) is a collection of essays by means of which she has embodied her own womanist theory about the central role of female consciousness that helps the black woman transcend the aggressive and oppressive barriers put in her way. In *The Color Purple*, we'll follow the consciousness that the protagonist Celie needs in her constant quest for a high-toned triumph over her personal weakness and the passive racist and patriarchal power.

Though many previous studies dealing with *The Color Purple* are significantly various, we claim that our study is going to be different in terms of thematic, stylistic and

aesthetic treatment. The importance of our work lies in tackling aesthetically how the notion of female consciousness plays a crucial role in developing the character of the main protagonist, Celie, and makes her so strong and confident in encountering all the forms of racism, oppression and injustice both in family and society. Moreover, we are going to apply the mechanism of aesthetic mirrors in reading the central topic of the present study focusing on the main narrative details of the very novel. In other words, our study will tackle the sensitive and thematic areas of thinking by means of writing, using black spoken language, community of sisterhood, spiritual or physical journey, education and economical independence on the part of the central protagonist and all the major womanist characters who support her in defeating all the oppressive and aggressive practices she has faced in the course of her life.

Furthermore, we 'll go through a short biography of Walker's life and literature with a brief summary of the novel as well. Then we 'll focus on Walker's womanist viewpoints in relation to the crucial situations faced by the major womanist characters in that work and their key role in developing the female consciousness of the black woman in general and the protagonist in particular. It is important, too, to shed the light on the aesthetic mechanism of epistolary as a vehicle of an inner light which liberates the black woman from the manacles of the prison of darkness. Finally, we 'll conclude our paper with findings of the study.

II. ALICE WALKER: PERSONAL AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

Alice Walker was born on February 9, 1944 in the southern American Georgia. She was the eighth youngest child in a poor family of African roots. Her southern environment witnessed a violent racism which impressed her life and literature to a great extent. Also, the poverty of her family left a deep impression on her life as a black woman and writer.

Throughout a game of 'cowboys and Indians' with her brother, Walker's right eye was injured severely by a gun bullet and was blinded. This episode caused her a long suffering as she lost her vision in that eye. This incident does not leave her blind only; yet it "turns the young Alice into a timid and reclusive child", to use the words of Elisabeth Torfs (2008:2). It is clear that the aesthetic impact of her solitary environment makes her "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, 1984:245). Aesthetically and philosophically, such things raise her own female consciousness and makes her aware of her womanist demands individually and collectively. In 1961, Walker graduated from a high school and, then, she got a scholarship to complete her study throughout joining Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. The 1960s witnessed many civil rights demonstrations. The two years, 1961-1962, she had already spent in that college could be considered as productive and influential as they were "marked by an awakening to intellectual and social issues" (Alice Walker in Dictionary of Literary Biography, 1980:350).

As a young civil rights activist, Walker has emancipated the principles set by Dr. Martin Luther King.

In addition to her early right-eyed blindness, Walker in her life experienced heavy trauma due to abortion, depression, divorce, death of the ones she really loved, and further incidents which had an impact upon her own identity as a black woman and writer. In spite of all those traumatic episodes, Walker never gave up. In the worst moments and hard conditions of her life, she confidently assures herself: "Just be Alice. Being is sufficient. Being is all. The cheerful. Sunny self you are missing will return" (Walker, 2011:34). Such poetics of style, whether in her poetic or narrative discourse, is one of the controversial elements of aesthetics of her womanist voice. As readers, we feel that the personal career of Walker's life is fertile and productive as she embodies her female consciousness in feeding the protagonists of her novels and the voices of her poems with confidence and patience in order to end the state of being a silenced and humiliated victim by gender racism and patriarchal community.

During the seventies, Walker has started her own career both as a writer and teacher. As a talented author, she tries her hand at short stories, novels, poetry and essays. The thematic setting of her works is full of themes like racism, sexism and the aesthetic debate over the image of the artist which mirrors the affinity between art and life. The process of the quest towards a healthy balance of voice of a black womanist spirit and female consciousness in order to explore confidently a realm of self-identity. She is so interested in developing the consciousness of her narrative characters by focusing on many environmental issues that work as threads through her literary canon. As readers and human beings, Walker's narrative discourse can show us a real image of "the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of black women" (Walker, 1984:250). South, as an aesthetic and physical place, plays a key role in her fictions, short stories and poems as she relates the personal biographies of her womanist characters to a wide scope of political, social, moral and psychological issues.

Walker's narrative works are as follows: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), *Meridian* (1976), *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult* (1996), *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1998), *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart* (2004). *The Color Purple* is a ninety-one letters novel. Those letters have been written by the protagonist Celie and addressed to God then to her sister Nettie. Celie is a black girl of fourteen years old. She is abused and raped by her stepfather, Alfonso. Then, he marries her off a widower who has children. After marriage, her life is miserable because her husband Mr. Albert mistreats, beats and abuses her. In spite of all misery of her life, Celie stands strong against the oppressions of patriarchal and racial society. She resists all types of oppression as far as she can to make her victory come true. So Alice Walker's "The Color Purple, apparently, symbolizes a womanist spirit, dare, determined and whole", to use the words of the academic researcher Anna Golubeva (2009:10).

III. ALICE WALKER'S THEORY OF 'WOMANISM' AND FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS

Breaking woman's silence demands an aesthetic energy on the part of the writer who struggles to find out a womanist voice that could break all manacles of the oppressive and aggressive power of a male-oriented world. Dickson- Carr argues that through literature by and about women "the silence has been broken, giving voice to the infinite complexities of African-American women's lives, including women's roles as leaders, creators of culture, mothers, lovers, among many others" (2005:2).

Alice Walker is the most popular one of those black women writers as she characterizes herself theoretically and practically as "apologist and chronicler for black women", to use the words of Mary Helen Washington (1993:39). Walker is not satisfied with the feminism tradition which is white because it does not mean black women at all; however, it "teaches white women that they are capable whereas my [Black] tradition assumes I'm capable" (Bradley, 1984:36). Walker finds black feminism disabled to represent all African women's experiences. She is committed "to have words that describe things correctly [and] black feminist does not do that"(36). Aesthetically, Walker needs to create "a word that is organic, that really comes out of the culture, that really expresses the spirit that we seek in black women" (36). For Walker, a theory of womanism should come into being. In 1984, she presents her theory in a form of a 'womanist prose' in a book called *In Search of our Mother's Garden*. Patricia Hill Collins (1996:10) claims that the term 'womanish' is taken "from the southern black folk expression of mothers to children". Walker herself asserts that "womanish" is the opposite of "girlish, frivolous, irresponsible" (1984:xi). In an important interview with John-O' Brien, Walker declares that she is "committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women" (1973:192).

Walker's theory evaluates women's "love for other women", and particularly their love for everything that distinguishes them as females in addition to "women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength" (Walker, 1984:xi). According to her philosophy of womanism, black women are no longer victims of male lust, and as a group, they should be resilient in order to make their triumph come true. So black woman should celebrate her black consciousness by freeing herself from the yoke of male domination. It alters the weakness into strength and shows the characteristics of black females that other people cannot see. Furthermore, Walker's womanist philosophy is bare of the aggressive tendency towards males. According to Collins, "womanism seemingly supplies a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking black male" (1996:11). Also, Walker encourages the collective effort on the part of black women that can empower their black sisters. Sakshi Singh's view about Walker's narrative discourse is that one can find that the "oppressed black women tread on a path towards liberty, autonomy and empowerment by associating with each other as

friends, sisters and lovers" (2015:294). Moreover, Walker's theory has the characteristic of wholeness and universality, and it does not separate the survival of the black woman from that of the whole mankind. Focusing on such significant aspect, Amanda J. Davis has argued that:

Walker draws her reader's attention to the importance of women's intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual wholeness, and she stresses the need to create a global community where all members of society are encouraged to survive and survive whole (2004:33).

So theory of 'Womanism' celebrates the concept of wholeness and self-recognition by means of which one can touch in "the positive, integrative endings of Womanist novels" (Ogunyemi, 1985:72).

Since the tone of triumph is intentionally a matter of human and aesthetic experience, we can see that most of the endings of Walker's protagonists are victorious. In other words, Walker tries to make the female voice dominant by means of developing the consciousness of her womanist characters. Thus, the female consciousness is the centre of her narrative canon (Simon, 2001:260). Journey, whether it is a physical or aesthetic experience, plays a key role in the thematic setting of the narrative discourse written by Alice Walker. The female journey, in her literary works, is aesthetically and technically constructed on a firm base of female consciousness. We think that the conscious feminist character in the works of black women writers in general and those of Walker in particular is committed to be in a state of being "part of an evolutionary spiral, moving from victimization to consciousness", to use E. Deborah McDowell's words (1980:174). So in the present study, we are going to analyze aesthetically the central topic of the triumphant tone of the black woman in relation to the philosophy of female consciousness within the writer's womanist perspective.

The female consciousness, as a key concept, could be read as an overall awareness on the part of the black women. It is definitely a black female idea about woman herself. According to the definition of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, consciousness is "waking state of mind, the state of being awake, thinking and knowing what is happening around you" (1960:224). De Lauretis sees that "consciousness is grounded in personal history, and self and identity are understood within particular cultural contexts" (1986:8). Consciousness, on the part of black woman, is a matter of self-definition. We think that it is the job which is done by herself only. A thinker like John Locke, for instance, argues that personal identity or self is founded on consciousness (1689:388). The black writer Audre Lorde acknowledges that "it is axiomatic that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves we will be defined by our others-for their use and to our detriment" (1988:45). Female consciousness, therefore, is crucial for facing the patriarchal obstacles, defeating the humiliating passivity of being silenced. Black woman is doubly marginalized and humiliated by racism and male dominance. It is true that female consciousness could be a sharp weapon of a

self-power helpful in freeing black woman from the chains of personal oppression and social injustice. Lorde, as a black feminist, debates over the connection between racism and male-oriented environment saying: "when I say I am black feminist, I mean I recognized that my power as well as my primary oppression come as a result of both blackness as well my womanness, and therefore my struggles on both these fronts are inseparable" (248).

IV. AESTHETIC MIRRORS OF THE PROGRESS OF THE FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE COLOR PURPLE

A. Aesthetic Mirror of Epistolary Mechanism: Thinking through Writing and Using Spoken Language

Many English and American writers, to a great extent, employed the mechanism of epistolary in their narrative discourse. To some writers, It's a matter of writing technique done for characters' communication. We think that this attempt is absolutely an aesthetic action by itself. In her award-winning novel, *The Color Purple*, the black American writer Alice Walker has used such a mechanism in order to aesthetically "explore [and reflect] the momentous issues that are hidden in the letters and the development of the protagonist character of the novel", to use Aneeqa Zafar's words(2015:5).

Writing itself, as an artistic and creative action, is committed to frame the human consciousness. So it could be both an instrument of thinking and an aesthetic mirror that reflects the sensitive details of the daily human experience. Walker, in harmony with other modern black writers, plays an essential role in manifesting the voice which is fighting silence or the state of being voiceless. Walker uses such a mechanism of writing not only "about issues...concerned with a single human being", but she aesthetically tries her best to give the personal situation a collective and universal clothing(5). According to Walker's aesthetic philosophy, human pain is one. Her major protagonists, Celie and her sister Nettie could mirror narratively and aesthetically the image of "the domestic violence which includes both physical and mental abuse, racialism and patriarchy" (5) practiced severely against black woman in particular and women in general. Focusing on such social problems, Walker raises the female consciousness of her major womanist characters when "she talks about how these suppressed[and oppressed] people of society overcome these[racist and social] evils and start[an aesthetic] journey towards freedom" (5). Stylistically and thematically, Walker tries to make her womanist protagonists achieve the triumph of the human voice over oppression and all forms of the woman's humiliating silence. Her narrative characters, tracing the rules of her womanist philosophy, intend to "use writing to combat oppression by remaining committed to the act of writing as it sustains their link" in a unified and ideal womanist community (Udoette, 2014:77).

Concerning the narrative language and its central role in promoting the thematic setting of the events and female consciousness of the characters. It is significant, therefore, to deal with epistolary form as a crucial element in "pointing out that what makes *The Color Purple* unique is the language", as Dr. Monica Udoette (77) put it. Here, Walker plays aesthetically on two different levels of language: the first is a formal language, the second one is spoken. The spoken language of the Black people is either called Black English or vernacular. According to McKay and Cosmos, Black English could be considered as "a quite distinct dialect[due to] its consistency and widespread use" (1986:98). Walker plays smartly on the significance of the public black widespread language. Udoette acknowledges that "[t]he novel's power is the vivid folksy language used by the characters. Celie's letters are written in folk language(English) and it records her personal traits and near defeat. Walker uses Celie's uneducated grammar to help the reader perceive the pain of abuse Celie is experiencing" (77). We can say, here, that the author of the novel intentionally gives each one of her womanist protagonist an expressive linguistic tool with a different aesthetic function. The language of Celie's letters is 'folksy', while that of her sister Nettie looks more formal. Celie encounters a very sophisticated situation as she tries to speak Standard English. Celie, for instance, says: "My mind run up on a thought, git confuse, run back and sort of lay down" (Walker,1982:215). The verbs 'run up', 'git confuse' [get confused], and 'run back' lose their right grammarian function. The traumatic experience of being raped by stepfather makes Celie's grammar 'uneducated'. We think that there is a kind of aesthetic doubleness in the narrative discourse of Alice Walker. She manifests, stylistically and thematically, such an aesthetic mechanism through the words of her main characters- the sisters Celie and Nettie. In order to have the triumphant voice of her major womanist protagonist's black identity, Walker makes Celie refuse "to enter the linguistic system of white people because she wants to keep her own autonomy", to use the words of Pi-Li Hsiao (2008:97).

All in all, Alice Walker's novel is an epistolary narrative discourse by means of its thematic and technical mechanism. Celie communicates her letters to God and her sister Nettie as if there is an aesthetic intention of doubleness of voice on the part of the author. Walker, in other words, makes her protagonist consciously or unconsciously address us as aesthetic readers in order to sympathize both humanly and aesthetically with her human and cultural discourse.

B. Aesthetic Mirror of Sisterhood

Walker aesthetically encourages the collective effort on the part of black women that can empower their black sisters. We think that the aesthetic idea of sisterhood is the crux in *The Color Purple*. Through the novel the issue of solidarity among African women within a male-dominant community is very floating. Sisterhood bonding among the black women is irrespective of blood connection. In Ethology, female bonding "is used if the females regularly form coalitions in which they

mutually support each other, especially if such coalitions are used to attack other groups or individuals" (Thims, 2007: 497). In the novel, the major reason behind Celie's victory is the power and support of sisterhood. According to Bill, "the concept of sisterhood has been an important unifying force in the contemporary women's movement...this concept has been a binding force in the struggle against male chauvinism and patriarchy" (qtd. In Ston, 1994:4).

The female characters in the novel: Celie, Nettie, Shug Avery, Sofia and Mary Agnes are all unified aesthetically in an intimate sisterhood. Celie finds support of female characters in the novel such as her sister Nettie. At the beginning, Celie writes her letter to God but in vain, because her God does not answer or comfort her. She turns to write for her sister. The aesthetic dialogue created between the two sisters helps Celie in breaking the silence and give her knowledge of the world as she is a part of it. She discovers herself and begins to express her own feeling. The self-discovery itself is an aesthetic action that mirrors victory in its different shapes. Before that, Celie does not realize her self as she says: "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" (Walker, 1982:23). Nettie also looks after Celie's children, she recalls her past when Celie took care of her like her mother: "I think about the time you laid yourself down for me" (73). Celie's reunion with Nettie helps her to reclaim herself: "When Nettie's foot come down on the porch I almost die. I stand swayin, tween Albert and Shug. Nettie stand swaing tween Samuel and I reckon it must be Adam. Then us both star to moan and cry. Us totter one nother like us use to do when us was babies" (287). Walker, here, has used memory as an aesthetic tool in order to both mirror and strengthen the family bonding that her protagonist needs to transcend her personal passivity in facing all obstacles set in the path of her life.

Although Celie, Shug Avery and Sofia are different characters it seems that the womanist bonding among them is very strong. Shug Avery becomes empowering friend for Celie. She changes her idea about God when she argues that "it pisses god off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it" (Walker, 1982:203). Shug draws Celie's attention to consider her personal world: "Man corrupt everything. He on your box of gifts, in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain't. Whenever you trying to pray, and man plopp himself on the other end of it, tell him to git, say Shug. Conjure flowers, wind, water, a big rock" (79). In such an aesthetic action, Shug mirrors a maternal photograph as she comes to be a mother for Celie to protect her from Albert. Furthermore, she works as a moral teacher when she gives her a portion of knowledge about her body, the spiritual world, and helps her in meeting her sister again. She encourages Celie to stand up for herself against the man who has oppressed her. In other words, Shug has enabled her to restore back her lost womanist confidence. In order to encounter courageously all facets of injustice and oppression,

she needs such support which makes her voice triumphant over all times of silence and slavery.

Bonding of Celie and Shug is above Mr. Albert's understanding who claims that: "I never understand how you and Shug got along so well together and it bothered the hell out of me" (246). After that type of strong relation with Shug, Celie begins to express her feelings and thoughts saying: "My life stop when I left home, I think. But then I think again. It stop when Mr... may be, but start up again with Shug" (77). This sisterhood assists her to be more self-confident, and recognize her right in life as a human being. The mirror of such kind of sisterhood, we think, could reflect an aesthetic and human bonding of the main protagonists and the relation of the reader with narrative discourse as well.

From the character of Sofia, Celie learns how to stand up for her belief. In one of her letters, she confesses that she writes talks about her jealous feelings of Sofia's ability to stand up against her husband, Harpo: "I say it cause I'm fool, I say. I say it cause you do what I can't. What that? She say. Fight. I say" (Walker, 1982:39). As a matter of fact, Celie can't fight like Sofia, but Sofia sees fighting as her only way to be alive: "All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brother. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men" (39). Such comment may aesthetically sharpen the womanist consciousness of the protagonist against the oppressive patriarchal and male-oriented power. That form of sisterhood between Celie and Sofia could be aesthetically mirrored by means of both exercising a job of quilt-making. This job does not only connect Celie to Sofia, but it also puts her on the path of empowerment. They call their work as 'Sisters Choice'. We think that this kind of action does aesthetically reflect how these female characters taste flavor of freedom and liberation. Once Celie writes a letter to God saying: "Dear God, Me and Sofia work on the quilt. Got it frame up on the porch...It a nice pattern call Sisters' Choice" (56). Quilting leads African-American women to female bonding as they sit together in groups and make quilts. The joint quilting Celie does with Sofia brings another phase in Celie's life towards self-consciousness (Baskaran, 2008:361). Such a sisterly bonding has its aesthetic key role as it supports women to be strong and self-confident as they encounter exploitation, violence and oppression of different types. Clenora Hudson-Weems acknowledges that "...with such love, trust and security, it is difficult to imagine any woman without such a genuine support system as that found in genuine sisterhood" (1998:65-60).

C. Aesthetic Mirror of Spiritual or Actual Journey

One of the most important themes that could be aesthetically mirrored in the novels of black women writers in general and those written by Alice Walker in particular is that of journey (McDowell, 1980:174). This motif, spiritual or actual, is a necessary factor for the progress of the protagonist's female consciousness. At the beginning of the novel, Celie writes her letters addressing God in an attempt to lessen her

emotional and physical suffering because she is abused and raped by her stepfather who tells her that "You better not tell anybody but God" (Walker, 1982:1). Although his words are insulting but they guide her to a kind of an aesthetic outlet to speak and express herself in time of being silenced and muted in her real life. Instead of writing "I am" she writes "I have always been a good girl" (1). She looks, here, not sure about her nature or existence as a woman; however, this is the first step in her spiritual journey. She is secure and not threatened. Now her feelings are no longer silenced. Aesthetically, the writer makes her create a spiritual sphere to reveal the problem that she cannot declare in public. Walker makes her protagonist leave her actual world and travel aesthetically into a spiritual one. Celie's journey, therefore, is not a mere attempt of escaping an oppressive and aggressive environment, rather it is a kind of an aesthetic search for an inner voice that could free her from the dark prison of the institutional god. Her aesthetic journey comes to be a kind of a confident "rejection of her inherited theology of a white male[g]od which Shug Avery [a major womanist character] helps foster", according to Alycia Minshal (2009, no page, *Reclaiming the Self*). In other words, the protagonist rejects the patriarchal power whether it is in the church or family. Donaldson and Beckman (qtd. in Minshal, 2009) think that:

With Shug's help, Celie rejects her inherited theology's portrayal of God as white and male. Shug explains to Celie why she rejects the God found in the white man's church.

This rejection itself, therefore, is an aesthetic mirror of the inner voice of a human being who is liberated from the patriarchal dominance whether it is related to the institutional church or domestic related to the power of family.

By means of the aesthetic mechanism of voice, Alice Walker always makes her protagonist mirror her womanist philosophy. The voice is an aesthetic sign of connectedness between the outward and the inward of the major protagonist and the other helpful womanist characters throughout the narrative discourse. The voice, then, is supporting Celie to defeat her weakness. It helps her to strengthen her self-assertion, to redefine her self-identity as an African-American woman. Aesthetically, her new-born voice is a key for looking for a lost happiness. To be happy means that you can discover the inner light of God inside you. It's really that God Almighty is the source of strength and happiness, not the institutional god which goes hand in hand with the "dark satanic mills", to use William Blake's words (Keynes, 1972:481). Walker, here, expresses her strong belief in the Great God. Really, she is not atheist, she is a big believer. Her aesthetic voice and that of her main protagonist invite her readers to read her perspective of the real God as:

God ain't a he or she, but a it....It ain't something you can look at part from anything else, including yourself. I believe God is everything....everything that is or ever was or ever will be. And when you

can feel that, and be happy to feel that, you have found it (Walker, 1982:190).

Within the novel, Alice Walker aesthetically injects the thematic setting of her narrative discourse with a force of voice as the voice of Celie's mobility to Memphis which helps her to prove her identity, creativity instead of humility and passivity. It is a kind of aesthetic mobility as this actio achieves her independence and frees her of captivity. The mobility is essential in building one's consciousness (Okereke, 1997:91). To prove her aesthetic connectedness with the other male and female characters Celie claims that "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, a voice say to every thing listening. But I'm still here" (Walker, 1982:187). Such a tone of voice which addresses every listener with the words of 'I'm still here' is really triumphant humanly and aesthetically.

D. Aesthetic Mirror of Education and Independence

Throughout the novel, there is an interrelationship between the notion of education and that of independence. One can feel that both education and independence may be achieved through the assistance of the female bonding. There is a great contribution on the part of the womanist characters that help Celie in the area of education and independence. In most of her narrative works, Walker focuses on both topics as if they were aesthetically coherent and they could be read as reciprocal issues. Throughout *The Color Purple*, for instance, we can read education as an influential theme. To Walker, education is not necessarily institutional; it could be personal as well. Her main protagonist Celie could not go to school, she lets her sister Nettie teach her: "She try to tell me something about the ground not being flat. I just say, Yeah, like I know it. I never tell her how flat it look to me" (Walker, 1982:10). At the beginning, Celie could not understand all the words Nettie wrote. After leaving Celie and travelling to Africa in missionary, Nettie shares all her experiences of the outer world with Celie. Aesthetically and educationally, Nettie plays an important role in developing Celie's character and language. She helps her break silence by dialogue. As a matter of fact, she becomes a moral teacher for Celie. Her dialogue with her is a kind of an aesthetic action that changes a great amount of her passive consciousness towards life. Dialogue, however, becomes one of the aesthetic tools which play a key role in the narrative setting. By dialogue, Celie gets self-recognition which leads her to her identity-assertion and womanist independence.

Shug Avery plays the role of a teacher for Celie as well. She teaches Celie that God loves all the feelings of people "liking what you like" (197). Shug's role is educational and aesthetic at the same time. She guides Celie to know about her body. Celie lacks knowledge about her body as a human being. Celie declares that "[s]he say, Here, take this mirror and go look at yourself down there" (78). Also, she contributes, to a great extent, in developing Celie's language by teaching her how to communicate. Through talking to others, she gets

recognition about her world and self. In other words, her female consciousness starts to be framed on a moral, educational and aesthetic base.

On the other side, Celie requires some supportive works such as quilt-making and pants designing by the assistance of female characters. By these works, Celie improves her living conditions. She and Sophia work together in quilt-making. Aesthetically, this act of creativity could not only indicate the principle of connectedness in Walker's theory of womanism, rather it attaches her to Sofia and makes her put her foot on the way of economic independence and empowerment. Designing pants is another aspect of creativity which aesthetically mirrors her ability to collaborate with others in order to achieve her economic independence. Moreover, Mary Agnes gifts Celie such aesthetic creativity. All in all, Celie is personally determined to create her own business. She turns from being passive to be creative in sewing pants for both genders. Concerning her new job, Celie declares:

I got pants now in every color and size under the sun...I ain't been able to stop. I change the cloth, I change the print. I change the waist, I change the pocket, I change the hem, I change fullness of the leg. I make so many pants Shug tease me. I didn't know what I was starting, she say, laughing (Walker,1982:190).

Thus, Celie acquires the freedom by asserting her self-identity and continues the course of her life as a confident and independent woman with a victorious womanist voice over the oppressive, aggressive, patriarchal and male-oriented world.

CONCLUSION

In her masterpiece narrative discourse, *The Color Purple*, the wonderful black American writer Alice Walker tries her best to apply her own aesthetic philosophy in life and literature to the actions and dreams of her black womanist protagonists. Following the path of a new female consciousness, i.e., consciousness of black 'Womanism', her main protagonist Celie develops her simple scope of thinking and leaves her passive history of being a humiliated and silenced woman. By the aesthetic mirrors which were used as devices of her theory of 'Womanism', Walker could free her narrative womanist characters from the manacles of the social, racist and patriarchal systems. Her womanist protagonists reject all manifestations of male domination, and instead, they as black women are committed to be connected and unified within a web of aesthetic sisterhood community in order to release themselves from the oppressive and aggressive abuses of man at home and outside. Walker's central protagonist Celie could be supported, both aesthetically and educationally, by the power of sisterhood and her new-framed female consciousness. Consciously such aesthetic strategy makes her encounter bravely all the obstacles set in the daily course of her life. She became optimistic enough to rise the tone of her voice with a strong confidence to change her bitter reality

from being a passive victim into a triumphant womanist human being over all forms of injustice and oppression.

REFERENCES

- [1] Baskaran, G. , " Black Feminist Identity: A Reading in the Novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker", *Critical Perspectives on American Literature*. S. P. Dhanvel, ed., Delhi: Sarups and Sons, 2008, pp.355-368.
- [2] Bradley, David," Novelist Alice Walker Telling the Black Woman's Story" Interview, *The New York Times*, 1984,P.36. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/10/04/special/walker-story.html>.
- [3] Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Geddie, William ed., London: W. and R. Chambers,1960.
- [4] Collins, H. Patricia," What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond", *Black Scholar*, 26.1, 1996, pp.9-17.
- [5] Davis, Amanda, " To Build a Nation: Black Women Writers, Black Nationalism, and Violent Reduction Wholeness", *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 25.3,2004, pp.24-53.
- [6] De Lauretis, Teresa, " Feminist Studies/ Critical Studies: Issues, Terms and Contexts", *Feminist Studies/ Critical Studies*. De Lauretis, ed., Bloomington: Indian University Press,1986.
- [7] Dickson-Carr, Darryl, ed. *The Columbia Guide to Contemporary African American Fiction*, Columbia University Press,2005.
- [8] *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol.6: American Novelists since World War II. Second Series. A Brucoli Clark Layman Book. James E. Kibler Jr. University of Georgie; the Gale Group, 1980.
- [9] Golubeva, Anna, *The Relationship Between the African and American Heritages in Alice Walker's Novel "Possessing the Secret of Joy" and the Short Story "Everyday Use"*(MA Thesis). UNI of Tartu,2009.
- [10] Hsio, Pi-Li" Language, Gender, and Power in *The Color Purple*: Theories and Approaches", *Ferg Chia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, No.17,2008,pp.93-120.
- [11] Hudson-Weems, Clenora, *African Womnism: Reclaiming Ourselves*. Troy: Bedford, 1998.
- [12] Kenyes, Geoffrey, ed. *William Blake Complete Writings: With Variant Readings*, New York: Oxford University Press,1972.
- [13] Lorde, Audre, *Sister Outsider*, Trumansberg, New York: Crossing Press, 1988.
- [14] Locke,John, " Nature of Personal Identity" 1689, 1001 Ideas that Changed the Way We Think, 2013. Robert Arp, New York: Simon& Schuster.
- [15] Mc Dowell, E. Deborah" New Directions for Black Feminism Criticism", *African American Literary Theory: A reader*, 1980. Winston Napier,ed.,New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- [16] McKay, Janet Holmgren and Spenser Cosmos. *The Story of English: Study Guide and Reader*, Dubuque: Kendall/ Hunt, 1986.
- [17] Minshall, Alycia, *Reclaiming the Self: An Exploration of Celie's Spiritual Journey in The Color Purple*(2009). Available at:[Othello-alma.edu/minshall/1qq/womanism the color purple.pdf](http://Othello-alma.edu/minshall/1qq/womanism_the_color_purple.pdf).
- [18] O'Brein, John, ed., *Alice Walker: Interviews with Black Writers*, New York: Liveright, 1973.

- [19] Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo, " Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English", *Signs*, Vol.1.11, No.1, 1985, pp.63-80.
- [20] Okereke, G.E. " The Journey as Trope for Female Growth in Zaynab Alkali's *The Virtuous Woman*" , *Currents in African Literature and the English Language*. Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 1;1, 1997, pp. 91-102.
- [21] Signh, Sakshi," Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*: Exploring of the Idea of Women Empowering Women", *International Journal of Research*, Vol.2, Issue 5, 2015. Available at : <http://international Journal of research>.
- [22] Smith, Barbara," Black Feminism Divorced from Black Feminist Organizer", *The Black Scholar*, 14.1, 1983, pp.38-45.
- [23] Ston, Lynda, ed. *The Education Feminism Reader*. New York: Routledge,1994.
- [24] Thims, Libb, ed. *Human Chemistry*.USA: Lulu Enterprises, 2007.
- [25] Torfs, Elisabeth. *Alice Walker's Womanism: Theoty and Practice*. Katholieke University, Leuven,2008.
- [26] Udoette, S. Monica, "Female Consciousness in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*", *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*. Vol.2, Issue5, 2014,pp.74-80.
- [27] Walker, A. *The Color Purple*, Orlando Austin, New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982.
- [28] _____, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens, Womanist Prose*, San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984.
- [29] _____, *Living by the Word*, London: Hachotte UK, 2011.
- [30] Ward, Robyn R., and Herndl, Diane Price, *EthnicityFeminism: An Anthology of literary Theory and Criticism*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press,1997.
- [31] Washington, Mary Helen, "An Essay on Alice Walker", *Alice Walker Criticism Perspectives Past and Present*. Henrey Louis GatesJr. And K. A. Appiah, eds, NewYork: Amistad,1993, pp.37-49.
- [32] Zafar, Aneeqa, *Alice Walker's Use of Epistolary Narrative in The Color Purple*, USA: Grin Verlag /Open Publishing GmbH, 2015, pp.5-9. Available at www.grin.com/en/e-book/2987/alice-wlker-use-of-epistolary-narrative-in-the-color-purple.