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### The Impact of Hegemony and Apartheid against African American Women: A Critical Study of Alice Walker

Imad Mohammad Abbar<sup>1</sup>, Wan Mazlini Othman<sup>1</sup>, Jihad Jaafar Waham<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)

Correspondence: Jihad Jaafar Waham (jihadalnashi@gmail.com)

#### Abstract

Through this part the researcher introduces a sufficient analysis of Walker's selected novels to reflect the ill-treatment against black women in American society from 1970 to 1982. The researcher will analyze Walker's characters to offer a real justification of the racial oppression, cruelty, unkindness and misery that most of African American women have been faced on the hand of the whites American especially in the south. The researcher support and analyze this subject by trace the life of the main characters that suffer from ill-treatment and racial oppression. The researcher analyzes these texts with regard to black feminist critical theory, to discuss the main themes by tracing group of heroines who live, represent and portray these topics through a contemporary black American author Alice Walker in her selected novels, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, *Meridian*, *The Color Purple*. Referring to the main themes in the statement of the problem and first research questions the researcher achieve that all the characters of the novels are racially oppressed.

**Keywords:** hegemony, apartheid, African American women

#### Introduction

This study includes that Walker's different heroes like, *Meridian*, *Celie*, *Sofia* and *Margaret* indicate the black women arranged knower where the ladies are undervalued by society and deceived by white American men by prejudice. These ladies face difficulties of life strikingly and accomplish wholeness at last by building up their self-personality. *Celie* in *The Color Purple* raises herself to the degree of independence. She wears the illustrious robe of purple meaning herself as an arranged knower and achieves confidence and wholeness.

Based on black feminist approach and after going deeply throughout three of walker's famous novels. The researcher summarizes the findings of this study to prove that there are an African American's sufferings and multi-faced oppression against black women on the hand of the whites in American society through analysis of Walker's characters who successfully portrays patriarchal and racial cruelty inside black American families. Further, this study achieved that Walker creates that unfair and ill-treatment will always result rebellion.

## Racial Oppression in The Third Life of Grange Copeland

Grange's family has racially oppressed especially women on the hands of white family. Walker presents a black female as a protagonist in her first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, (1970), Margaret as a first victim in the novel frustrated and exploited on the hands of the white master Shipley, with whom she bears a colored child. Finally, Margaret when she realizes that her husband is really gone and she unable to imagine a life without him, finally she poisons herself and her black child, so Margaret is typical portraying of sexual and racial cruelty in America.

As regards *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, critics focused on Walker's intentional use of utopianism, but they failed to analyze it. This study suggests that Walker was able to show her artistic complexity by using the protagonist Senor Robinson and his ties to the utopian fictional tribe the Monad, more specifically through her depiction of the relationship between the protagonist and his two daughters (Sussman, 2010).

*The Third Life of Grange Copeland* according to Kuharic's declaration (2017) that oppression of whites influences both male and female characters, yet the manner by which men experience it frequently has outcomes on their connection to ladies. Feeling disgusted and grudge surrounding them, they become unbelievably disappointed and furious, and they take it out on their spouses and little girls in light of the fact that ladies are viewed as substandard compared to men. Such is the situation in Walker's first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, where the character of Grange and, later, additionally his child Brownfield essentially can't manage the manner in which white individuals treat him, and consequently bothers his whole family. Christian, (1994) stated that in "*The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Walker uses the novel form to explore the complexities of the relationships between poverty, racism, and gender oppression in the life of a black Southern sharecropping family, the Copeland" (p. 5).

The male characters of this novel nurse so much hate inside them towards the white man, that they are no longer capable of showing love and affection, not even to their own family. Domestic violence thus becomes huge problem, with its roots being in the overall horrible treatment that black people experience and that is what Alice Walker dives into in her 1970 debut novel. (Christian, 1994) adds "In *Grange Copeland*, she demonstrates the ways in which the oppression the men face sometimes results in cruelty to wives and the destruction of children" (p.5). It goes as far as Brownfield's wife, Mem, being killed by her husband. In the end, however, the title character eventually comes to reason and is able to see his mistakes in the treatment of his family members, deciding that the discrimination he faces must not affect the relationships inside a family and trying to make up for his deeds by protecting his granddaughter, Ruth. Walker as a youngster actively participated in the Civil Rights Movement, and this semi-autobiographical novel is based on her personal life experiences. The protagonist Meridian Hill, who has given the same name of the title, is like Walker, completes her education on a sponsorship, participates in the Civil Rights Movement, and elector registration drives and creates awareness about their being. Walker through the novel has put forth that the Civil Rights Movement has been one of utmost turmoil and upheaval for blacks in America, as they fought for their rights, against white, supremacist society. Black men have had to only fight with racism, while black women have had to fight with racism and sexism within, and outside the movement.

## Racial Oppression in Meridian

As a Civil Rights activist Meridian, the main character faces all odds and demeaning situations. She puts forward a brave front and contributes her unquestionable might to the movement. She actively participates in voter registration drives, marches, and civil disobedience acts, to make blacks realize their rights. She does everything with utmost dedication and involvement that "whatever she was doing canvassing, talking at rallies, tying her sneakers, laughing tears rolled slowly and ceaselessly down her cheeks. This might go on for days, or even weeks" (*Meridian*, 1976, p. 80). Tears flow down her cheeks as she realizes the true situation of black lives in America. "Walker through the novel has put forth the view "that would-be revolutionaries must avoid reproducing the power structures that they

combat.” From the novel, it can be inferred “killing, for Meridian as well as for Walker, is an act of tyranny, even if one kills in the fight against tyranny” (Pifer, 2007, p.52).

### **Racial Oppression in *The Color Purple***

In *The Color Purple*, Sofia’s relationship with Miss Eleanor Jane and other members of the mayor’s family offers a more finely colored and extended critique of race integration, albeit one that has often been overlooked. With the efforts of Squeaks and Celie, Sofia was shifted from prison to the mayor’s house and she worked as a nanny for his children. Miss Eleanor Jane is the mayor’s daughter and is the only sympathetic one towards Sofia. Miss Eleanor Jane and Sofia appear to have some genuine feelings for one another. However, Sofia’s feelings for Eleanor Jane are ambivalent. The prison in which Sofia was in is a metaphor for all the black women who were caged by gender bias (Shahida, 2013).

The controversial issue of female complicity with patriarchy as illustrated by the relation between the two characters of Tashi and MLissa has been managed in the provisions of the bigotry of white against black ladies, and there are not many artistic forerunners for Walker's investigation of this complicity inside the black society. The necessity to openly counter the components of brutality in the private circle of the home and sexuality is accentuated by Tashi in the motion she makes in the wake of coming back to Africa to execute the Tsunga who ruined her. Tashi picks her basic metaphorical going by circumcision and her last execution, a repetition that signifies the certainty of her tireless abuse (Manoharan, 2019).

### **Hegemony and Apartheid against Sofia**

While serving at the white mayor’s wife, Sofia portrays the group-specific adversity African American women endure as opposed to members occupying other categories. Sofia is barred from seeing all but one of her children, going five years without even a single visit. While cleaning their house Sofia exclaims, “I’m slaving away cleaning that big post they got down at the bottom of the stair” (Walker, 1982, p. 102). Sofia’s son says, “...Don’t say slaving, Mama” (Walker, 1982, p. 103). Sofia angrily exposes the harsh oppression, discrimination, and trauma forced upon her because of her position in society, a source of her gender and race. She declares,

Why not? They got me in a little storeroom up under the house, hardly bigger than Odessa’s porch, and just about as warm in the wintertime. I’m at the back and call all night and all day. They won’t let me see my children. They won’t let me see any means. Well, after five years they let me see you once a year. I’m a slave, she says. What would you call it? A captive, he says (Lewis, 2017 p.18).

Sofia’s experiences epitomize trauma stemming from gender and race. As an African American woman, she is confined to “slaving” for a White family in a female-specific role. Walker uses a poor black woman Sofia’s confrontation with the white mayor and Miss Millie to shake the reader into understanding the driving force behind her misery. Like Celie and Squeak, Sofia’s gender and race corner her into a life of oppression and discrimination, which ultimately induces her trauma (Lewis, 2017).

Sofia’s relationship with Miss Eleanor Jane and other members of the mayor’s family offers a more finely colored and extended critique of race integration, albeit one that has often been overlooked. With the efforts of Squeaks and Celie, Sofia was shifted from prison to the mayor’s house and she worked as a nanny for his children. Miss Eleanor Jane is the mayor’s daughter and is the only sympathetic one towards Sofia. Miss Eleanor Jane and Sofia appear to have some genuine feelings for one another. However, Sofia’s feelings for Eleanor Jane are ambivalent. The prison in which Sofia was in is a metaphor for all the black women who were caged by gender bias (Shahida, 2013).

The oppression of whites against black Americans is seen wonderfully in *The Color Purple* as expressed by Kuharic (2017), where woman characters experience each sort of persecution conceivable. Inside the hover of those racially abused, ladies are furthermore oppressed, by white

individuals, however by their very own spouses and men. They are viewed as powerless and futile, worth nothing without a man remaining behind them. A man is encouraged that he needs to beat his significant other with the end goal for her to obey him, and this sort of brutality is regularly a consequence of men themselves being persecuted and looked down on by the white individuals. Before the whites, black men feel equivalent to ladies do before men, be they white or black. Men are permitted to take their indignation out on ladies; however, ladies have no place to go to treat their own dissatisfactions, which accordingly lead to either their annihilation or their freedom. The character of Sofia is the main lady in the novel that battles from the earliest starting point. Other than opposing her better half's endeavors of controlling her through savagery, she additionally confronts the white individuals who attempt to debase and pester her. Berlant (2000), comments:

The voice of sexual and racial resentments, for instance, she twice expresses a desire to “kill” her sexual and racial oppressors, Sofia is the first woman Celie knows who refuse to accede to both the patriarchal and the racist demand that the black woman demonstrates her abjection to her oppressors. But the mythic test of Sofia's strength takes place in her refusal to enter the servitude of double discourse demanded of blacks by the white culture (p. 12).

Sofia was beaten, denied of her youngsters since she would not be a servant in a white's home. Once in prison, she was depicted by Celie as a dead individual after the torment she has experienced. Celie supposes it is possible that Sofia was as yet alive despite the fact that they “crack her skull, ribs, tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye” (Walker, 1982, p. 93). In prison, she was doing every one of that was said to her, without disgusting of course, she went about as she had officially lost expectation. Sofia then again analyzes her accommodation to that of Celie, making Celie an image of accommodation, saying: “Every time they ask me to do something, Miss Celie, I act like I'm you I jump right up and do just what they say” (Walker, 1982, p. 94).

Morales (2016) analyzed some topics related to Walker's works and found they generally focused on hatred, particularly her second novel *Meridian*, where it addresses the extent to which racial segregation, hatred, stigmatization, and outbursts of violence is existent between the white and black Americans particularly, against women. This study aims to address this segregation in *Meridian* by focusing on ethnic prejudice and negative stereotyping. In *Meridian*, Walker portrays the prejudice that black women hold against the white who enslaved and humiliated them. This was to show how race-related hatred can trigger more hatred.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion we can say that Walker is extremely praised for her insightful and noticeable depictions of black women's lives. It received the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for fiction in 1983. Walker treats with gender matter and racial issues, most of her works deal with several themes like racism, sexism, gender bias, oppression of women, slavery, male-female relationships, culture, and marginalization. Some critics consider her writings as having a universal appeal because the oppression of black women exists in all communities. Further explores the suffering of African-American women from patriarchy and domestic violence.

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