



BLACK FEMINISM IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE* AND TONY MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE*

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ABSTRACT

African American Literature is rooted in America by writers of African descent. The primary origins of this genre can be traced in eighteenth century writers as Philips Whitely and Olaudah Equiano, who reached high points with slave narratives and the Harlem Renaissance. Today African American Literature is continued with authors such as Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Walter Mosley who are ranked as the top writers in the United States. This genre is accepted as an integral part of American literature. This special kind of literature has generally focused on themes of particular interest to Black people in the United States. Black Feminism is the acknowledgement that women of color have been oppressed by sexism and racism, that there was a failure to recognize and address these issues in the Feminist Movement and the Black Liberation Movement, and that women of color have their own agenda that neither movement can take on. "Black Feminism focuses on the experiences, needs, and desires of women of color"

Key Words- *Black Feminism, Alice Walker, Tony Morrison, Black Liberation.*

INTRODUCTION

Black women want themselves in the part of literature. They remained other; they are not inferior gender and passive object. Women don't want to deny their dignity and worse their identity. They want their basic rights, and totally include in social, political and economic life. They include in social, political and economic life. They include many black women in literature. These black women writers want to remind or save their dignity and regaining their feminine entity, self esteem, self- realization and save their sexual awareness. Alice Walker's intention not only gives voice to black women but also provide their freedom. Afro-American or black women are treated as animals, losing their human right and inequality in society from Afro- American men. They want to break the shackle of patriarchy.

BLACK FEMINISM



The lives of African- American women have been critically affected by racism, sexism and, classism, which are system of societal and psychological restriction. The racist, sexist and classist structure the American society compartmentalizes its various ethnic groups, denigrates the colored as inferior and characterizes males and females as centre and margin respectively. Just as black as groups are relegated to an underclass by virtue of their race, women are related to a separate caste by virtue of their sex. Black women are related to a separate caste by virtue of their sex.

A system of unequal power and privilege where humans are divided into groups or “races” with asocial rewards unevenly distributed to groups based on their racial classification. Variations of racism include institutionalized racism, scientific racism, and everyday racism.

“In the United States, racial segregation constitutes a fundamental principle of how racism is organized”.

A sex-gender distinction has only recently been articulated but many researchers are working in the new field of psychology. This distinction was aimed at separating the cultural (gender) from the biological (sex). Psychologists who focus on the psychology of gender have struggled with the nuances of the terminology because the terms "sex" and "gender" are often used interchangeably to denote if someone is male or female. They postulate "sex" and "gender" to be different.

Black Feminism in *The Color Purple*

Alice Walker is most recognized and celebrated contemporary black women novelists. For her black feministic approach, gender issue and women empowerment her works widely read over the world. Alice Walker who is recognizes as one of the leading voice among the black American writers. She has produced an acclaimed and varied body of work, including poetry, novels, short stories, essays, criticism. Her works are praised for their insightful of black life in particular the experience of black women in a sexist and racist society.

According to Babora Christian, "Walker is concerned with 'heritage which to walker is not so much the ground sweep of history or artefacts created as it is the relations of people to each other; young to old, parent to child, man to women" .Walker admires the struggle of black women throughout history to maintain an essential religion and creativity in their lives, and the achievements serve as an inspiration to others as Alice Walker says , "We must fearlessly pull out ourselves and look at and we our great grandmother were not allowed to know" .

Her works deal not only with the problems of being black women, but also with the possibility of change and progression, even through if is a slow process. Alice Walker show the bipartite identity of black women and says, “it is the black women’s word that have the

most meaning for us her daughters, because she, like us, has experienced life not only as a black person, but as a woman” . Alice Walker says that black women famous for their double identity, because they are victim of both racism and sexism. She says “oppressed almost beyond recognition- oppressed by everyone”.

They imagine black feminist as an absence, and draw attention to the textual effects of this absence”. Celie is the protagonist of the novel. She is a fourteen years old girl and she is poor, ugly and uneducated girl. She is a moving figure in the novel and fully novel depends on her struggle for getting gender equality. In the novel Celie is only the subject of repeated rapes and beating. She raped or torture by her father physically, mentally and emotionally. The Color Purple, Alice Walker’s novel of black feminist awakening, is a model for the reconstruction of a black feminist literary tradition.

If the existence of such a tradition had previously been marked by the “white page” and historical silence, Walker subverts the space by embracing the absence. In *The Color Purple*, Walker also voices concern over gender dynamics. The polarity between masculinity and femininity causes the division of gender roles. Not being able to fit into role models is frustrating; men and women are supposed to show masculine attributes and feminine attributes respectively.

Black Feminism in *The Bluest Eye*

The Bluest Eye portrays in poignant terms the tragic condition of the blacks in racist America. It examines how the ideologies perpetuated by the dominant groups and adopted by the marginal groups influence the identity of the black women. Bombarded by image of white beauty, Morrison’s characters lose themselves to self- hatred and their only aim in life is to be white. They try to erase their heritage, and eventually like Pecola Breedlove, the protagonist, who yearns for blue eyes, have no recourse except madness.

A violent and abusive husband and father, Cholly rapes Pecola soon after she returns home. Pecola visits a Holy Man, Soaphead Church and wishes for the “the bluest eyes.” These, she believes will grant her the redemption of white beauty. In Pecola’s eventual mental breakdown and the death of her body, Claudia sees a condemnation of the society in which she lives. The novel traces the environment that produces this crisis. Morrison’s examination of lives of different characters which form this black community presents the black experience in a Midwest town-a microcosm for the experience of blacks in America.

The book is divided into four sections- Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer. Morrison’s narrative weaves its way through the four sections, and through flash blacks and time shifts. Morrison provides the reader with the context and history behind the Breedlove family’s misery, Pecola’s obsessive desire to have the Bluest eyes and her eventual descent into

madness. Morrison uses multiple perspectives of the nine-year-old and the adult narrator, Claudia as well as the other characters, to examine the themes of race, class and gender in *The Bluest Eye*.

Morrison considers racism as the African-American's primary obstacle. Racism pushes the central character in *The Bluest Eye* towards the fringes of existence. The novel focuses on intra-racial as well as inter-racial problems. The black community wants to conform to white standards of beauty, they desperately want to be accepted by the whites and this internalized racism is the root cause of the central conflict in the novel.

Pecola knows only a life of traumas and rejection which reaches its peak being raped by her father who ironically interprets his attitude as an act of love for his daughter, which contributes to her emotional disintegration. Her rape occurs in her own house which increases its horror, and the writer does not use any metaphor to mask it.

Pecola looks for help and tells what happened to her mother who does not believe her or at least tries not to. Silent, isolated and pregnant of her own father, she eventually miscarries and remains childless, and starts to give signs of insanity, especially when she decides to change the color of her own eyes from black to blue. She loses the sense of reality completely after visiting a kind of male urban wizard, for she believes he was able to make her dream come true. Pecola now can identify herself with Shirley Temple and her blue eyes.

CONCLUSION-

African American women have had a long-standing feminist tradition that is not frequently considered and was often overlooked by the black feminist movement's narrative. *The Color Purple* records important hallmarks in feminist literary criticism. In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker provides an opportunity for black female characters to defend themselves in patriarchal system and gain individuality and social role. As a result, Celie is transformed from a timid non-fighter to a courageous fighter who stands up for her rights. The black female characters in *The bluest eye* are constantly bombarded by female condition and roles which exclude them and which do not provide them with any sense that they really exist, so that they are injured in their deepest selves. Claudia tries to escape from her suffering by dismembering Shirley Temple dolls. Mrs. Breedlove swallowed the cultural definitions and rejects her own self and family for they do not fit into the hegemonic condition and role. Pecola turns to prayers and communion, pushing herself to an imaginary world where her wish comes true.



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