AN EXAMINATION OF SISTERHOOD AS AN EMANCIPATIVE CONCEPT IN ALICE WALKER'S NOVELS: MERIDIAN AND THE COLOR PURPLE

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The study aims to examine the concept of sisterhood as an emancipative endeavor to empower and free the Afro-American women in Alice Walker's (1942) novels: Meridian and the Color Purple, through the liberal treatment of Black Feminism.

Methodology: Qualitative research aims to form speculations or facts that are derived from secondary sources. It tries to understand Walker's liberal treatment of sisterhood, in the selected novels, through the radical black feminism, and the feminist liberal lens of bell hooks. The study considered other related critics and scholars to help further illuminate the emancipative notion of sisterhood. The study is a library-based drawn on literary and critical books and articles.

Main finding: The study clarifies the emancipative notion of hooks on Walker's feminist attitude of sisterhood in the selected novels as a privilege to enhance black women's growth and to strengthen the social bond to achieve women's liberation. Simultaneously, the study criticizes the Western oppressive authority as well as the traditional one-sided thinking of mainstream feminism. By a new and liberal reading of hooks' perspective, the study illuminates that the collective power and mass struggle of Afro-American women lead to self-realization and identity.

Implication: This study can be used by scholars and activists to understand how Afro-American women have been undergoing a long process of transformation by radical feminist thinking, from exploitation, domination, and oppression toward the center of social, political and cultural focus.

Originality/Novelty: A new reading of Walker's novels is utilized by the light of bell hooks' emancipative notion of sisterhood.

Keywords: Black Feminism, Alice Walker, Bell Hooks, Sisterhood, Meridian, The Color Purple.

INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that black sisterhood is one of the controversial topics concerns black feminists, activists, and writers. The feminism's slogans of freeing all women do not genuinely intend to be fulfilled because black women are still suffering from the biases of Western supremacy, masculine domination and recently mainstream feminism itself. Austin (1991) argues that between "sameness" and "difference" have been good useful rhetorical devices black women have launched assaults at the border between liberation and oppression, yet there is a third unspecified category beyond and implicit that category is deviance" (p. 178). These stereotypes and myths are falsely attached to black women, of being 'Superwomen', Jezebel' and Mammy (Beauboeuf, 2003), functioning in the mind of Western women and permitting them to ignore black women's plights and in same time perpetuating their victimization. However, the active role that black women play during the 60s and 70s of the last centuries in women's liberation, but one-sided thinking of mainstream feminism visualizes racialism as the major evil faces women, ignoring the fact that sexism is not less harmful than racism in subjugating and marginalizing working-class and black women. Thus, hooks, (2000) states black feminism illuminates the concept of sisterhood, which based on constant solidarity, mass struggle, sharing economic, political and social concerns through effective engagement with one another, as a pillar to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. viii).

Walker is one of the leading voices whose fiction provides a keen observation of African-American struggle against oppression, cultural bias, and sexual exploitation. Her protagonists try hard to emancipate themselves from the rigid rules and degraded conditions of domineering patriarchy. Patricia Collins(2002) asserts "When I am with other black women I always laugh. I think our humor comes from a shared recognition of who we all are in the world (p.97). They are aware that their prerogatives cannot be achieved without cooperation, like developing a sense of unity among themselves. Hence, Walker adopts many techniques that allow her heroines to overcome the conventional role entailed to them and maintaining self-realization and identity. The resistant role is not only different from one protagonist to another, but it also differentiates through life stages of the same protagonist according to the personal potential and surrounding environment circumstances.

Hooks(1984) advocates a new concept, by inclusively instigating collective power of sisterhood as an important aspect, to reconcile black women's identity," they bond with other women the bases on shared strengths and resources. This is the woman bonding feminist movement should encourage. It is this type of bonding that is the essence of sisterhood" (p.45). In so doing, they support each other liberal endeavor and subvert the patriarchal culture which deflects them from their main causes. Erikson (1993) argues lack woman's identity flourishes and grows stronger along with convenient
integration into an appropriate society and culture, and the opposite is true, a defect in any of these elements may increase the possibility of an identity crisis (p.240).

Walker's novels are considered an outstanding attempt of Afro-American women's appearance out of their helpless obscurity of class, race, and gender to participate actively in forming a self and cultural resistance against oppressive authority. She always highlights the significance of the social circle in the rehabilitation of her protagonists. By reading Walker's novels we come close to the fact that family, friends, society act as healing factors only when the protagonist starts realizing her values as an important person affect in and back of the community. Bloom illustrates that "[Walker's] womanist and spiritual concerns would not exist without her belief that her writing is an individual and communal intervention into a racist and sexist fabric she sees in American culture" (1982, p.66). In other words, embracing our individuality, the most beneficial things that we can do, our opinion, experience, and taste add vitality and color to the society that we live in. It is highly essential to endeavor for the enhancement of both individuality and society.

The study is utilized to explore the notion of sisterhood as an emancipative endeavor throughout Walker's selected novels. This paper aims to articulate hooks reading of black sisterhood as the vantage of black women's resisting against the oppressive existence of patriarchy, the masculine domination, and the mainstream feminism bias. Accordingly, black feminism issued to examine how multiplicity oppressions eclipse black women's autonomy and self-reconciliation, and the means that can emancipate, empower and pride themselves. Multifaceted oppressions work hard to make women apart, so women should unlearn the lesson and thrust to stand in solidarity to confront the violence of sexism racism and classism which degrades women around the world.

Afro-American Women Consolidation

Hooks in her books, Feminist Theory from Margin to Center, differentiates between the support, as a concept refers to back up temporally and thoughtlessly, and solidarity. The latter means the constant engaging among people regardless of race, social position and gender as long as they share the same cause. Hooks (1984) clearly states that "support can be occasional, it can be given and just as easily withdrawn, [while] solidarity requires sustained ongoing commitment, shared beliefs and goals around which to unite... Solidarity strengthens resistance struggle... women must take the initiative and demonstrate the power of solidarity" (p.64). Black women enjoy a high sense of consolidation so that they form a long term relationship with whom they trust and internalize. The genuine union is more about ethic bonding with others as if their plights are common. Likewise, Walker though her selected novels explore extraordinary situations of multifaceted oppression whereas it is rare to refer to certain oppression without consideration of the others. Thus, living with such a complicated condition requires a high sense of solidarity and commitment among oppressed black women to regain their identity.

Black women actively participate in most of the female liberation movements, like The National American Woman Suffrage, Association Meeting, and Time Democracy, Harley and Terborg (1987) argue that "though white feminists encouraged black women to join the struggle against sexism during the nineteenth century, antebellum reformers who were involved with women's abolitionist groups, as well as women's rights organizations, actively discriminated against black women" (p.132). Walker dramatizes this fact by revealing black women who are extended from racial discrimination to mistreatment by black men from within their domestic and social circle to hatred toward each other. In The Color Purple, Sofia, Albert's wife, is almost the strongest female character in the novel who knows her right and claims it, she has to fight everyone including her family to grant that right. Although she manages housework, childrearing, and in the same time she works on the farm helping her husband, he gets upset about her strong personality, due to the absolute male authority, and complains her to Celie. The latter, out of jealous, tells him that "...And like she pities me. Beat her. I say" (Walker, 1982, p.36). Later Sofia is slapped by the mayor for refusing his wife's request of being a maid "Mayor look at Sofia, push his wife out the way. Stick out his chest. Girl, what you say to Miss Millie? Sofia says I say, Hell no...Sofia knocks the man down. The police come; start slinging the children of the mayor, bang they head together. Sofia really starts to fight. They drag her to the ground" (1982, p. 89). Sofia's rebellious personality is tamed and humiliated by various class, race and gender oppression. Accordingly, Sofia's plight, as a model of black women's suffering, is not satisfied or resolved by ready, shallow and inexperienced resolutions of feminism, but rather by genuine solidarity from within her oppressed social circle, if it is used correctly can regain her trust. Sofia and Celie's relationship is mutually profitable for both, as much Celie learns from Sofia to be bold in reclaiming her rights. The latter also learns, from Celie how to coincide in a hostile and a racial environment and subvert it from within by nurturing love and tolerance, she says" How you manage? Us at. Every time they asked me to do something. Miss Celie, I act like you. I jump right up and do just what they say" (1982, p. 81). Thus, Walker's heroines are dramatized to stand against the given norms as they stand in solidarity and promote their identity through self-realization to defy the malicious power of patriarchy. The heroines, by time and experiences, recognize their independence and freedom eventually regain through a genuine union.

The patriarchal society estimates women as dependent, weak and secondary, besides, most feminists launch from "the idea of a 'common oppression', which is criticized by hooks as "false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality" (1984, p. 44). The real oppressed women openly refuse bourgeois feminism not only because it is based on the idea of victimhood, but they hardly address racist and sexist
violence as a real threat to women’s liberation. Accordingly, they are deluded of being enhancing the bonding of sisterhood while the truth is worse than practicing racism intentionally. "A woman who attends an unlearning racism workshop and learns to acknowledge that she is racist is no less a threat than one who does not. Acknowledgment of racism is significant when it leads to transformation" (books, 1984, p.54). Anti-racism should not be learned but rather acquired from a real-life experience. That is why oppressed people become more appealing in the anti-racism movement towards liberations.

Walker, as Afro-American woman lives and experiences the true plight of her race, announces her conversion to womanist instead of feminist since mainstream feminism is no longer meet her need and desire. Women's collaboration is one-way, walker seeks to subdue the racial discrimination. Meridian's, Walker second novel, is written in 1976 in the same period that Walker calls herself womanist, Stein (1987) states that "Walker, a '60s activist herself, has revised her appraisal in light of an evolving commitment to feminism or, to use her term, "womanism". In her 1976 novel Meridian, she argues that the Movement failed to acknowledge women's selfhood and thus perpetuated the counterrevolutionary values of a destructive society" (p.129). Thus, the logic scope of the novel reveals that Meridian's, the main heroine whose name carries the novel’s title, participation in civil right movement is effective in both sides, as healing power for her plight as oppressed by racial discrimination and sexism bias, and on the other hand, for her exploited people since she knows exactly what they suffer from and which is the best way to help them.

Hooks(2000) goes even further inclusive to illustrate that women should not relinquish her identity or stick up with a false platform of dominations or undermine others to jump above them. Embracing our differences is the best way to have more experience and share different cultures. Black women can maintain solidarity, "by sharing interests and beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity"(p.65). The first genuine effort of solidarity, in The Color Purple, can be traced in the connection between Celie and her younger sister, Nettie. Both exchange overwhelming feeling towards each other throughout the entire novel because they share love and solidarity, Celie offers unconditional care and guardian to Nettie. She plays a mother role during their mother's sickness and after her death. She helps her to join school while she stays home and consents with incest relation with her stepfather and accepts unfair marriage to keep her sister away. For all that eagerness to connect is unfortunately cut off by Albert, Celie husband, and Celie loses the only hope she has to stand firm, yet they do not give up and maintain their unity through letters, "but I just say, never mine, never mine, long as I can spell God I got somebody along. She says, [Nettie] nothing but death can keep me from it" (1982, p.13). However Nettie has the opportunity to flee the wretched condition of violence to the space of exploring the world, Nettie does not forget her sister's help and support which allows her to enjoy such opportunity.

Walker allows Celie's to the pivotal interaction with another female character Shug Avery, the singer, and Albert's lover. She is almost the only independent and unconventional heroine in the novel and through her, the writer passes her emancipative treatments. Shug's love and solidarity with Celie embrace the true meaning of self-love, as she asserts. "She says my name again … [the] sing is called Miss Celie's song. The first time, somebody made something and name it after me" (1982, p.77). For the first time, Celie is rewarded for her unconditional love and care, as she looks after Shug during her sickness, once she arrives at Albert's house. Shug's appearance unconsciously emboldens Celie to reclaim her identity. Besides, the motherly care of Shug awakens her passionate motherhood feeling. Shug and Celie's union prompts Celie to reject Albert's abuse and redeem her obliterated identity.

Women common Antagonists

One of the patriarchal insidious hegemonies is to disturb any progression that could enhance Afro-American women's union towards liberation. It does not save any effort to weaken the bond of sisterhood as one of the things, if it is used properly, will enable women to circumvent oppression and gain their freedom. Thus Afro-American women are socialized to think that they are weak, 'natural enemies' and any connection with each other will reduce their experience and strength. Hooks states, "we are taught that women are natural enemies, that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another" (1984, p.43). That is why, their values, habits, and customs are stated within the concept of competition, hatred, and meanness. Their relationships are accepted only when they turn to be an object to the male power.

Although, the supremacist authority succeeds in maintaining women apart and teaches them that solidarity with each other will limit their potential, simultaneously black feminism provides the lead for women to survive in such intrigue. Thus, hooks believe that "we must unlearn them if we are to build a sustained feminist movement. We must learn to live and work in solidarity. We must learn the true meaning and the value of sisterhood" (1984, p.43). Hooks think that marginalized women should adopt their ways to resolve their problem instead of letting their common aggressor suggests false assumptions to them. The suggested solutions become more authentic and effective to end oppression if they are advocated by women who live and experience oppression. Besides, by sharing diverse cultures, they can find more common points among them to enhance their obligation to end sexism violence. Freeman (1973) rightly asserts in his book The Politics of Women's Liberation that black and working-class women have common problems and need collected and unified solutions "women came together in small groups to share personal experiences, problems, and feelings. From this public sharing comes the realization that what was thought to be individual is, in fact, common: that what was thought to be a personal problem has a social cause and a political solution" (p. 181). By exploring the related
issues of sexism, oppressed women come to the fact that they have been facing the same exploitation but in different forms and justification. Such liberal discussion, besides its psychological healing values, can promote their efforts to develop a resistant strategy to override any oppression through self-commitment and mass struggle.

Walker, through the selected novels, tries to illuminate a sort of bonding between women when they supposed to be in the most antagonizing conditions. However, Meridian's relationship with Truman breaks down because of Lynne, Truman's mistress, and this makes her left alone coping with the difficulties of life. Meridian never hates Lynne, and she offers her help and support, later when Lynne faces many plights of losing her daughter, Camara, and getting divorced from Truman. Meridian plays a guardian role to Lynne, by helping her to think correctly and regaining her consciousness. King and Pascoe(1969) are astonished by the harmony that Afro-American women can share with other women “in spite of all that they have been through, have retained a love of justice and can feel the deepest comparison for anybody oppressed (p.153).

One of the main themes that walker discusses in her novels is black women's plight related to their relationships with men. She enlightens the delicate competition and hatred conduct women have towards themselves. Particularly, when man covertly moves from one woman to another, there seems to be no coordination or patronizing behavior that women possess to each other. Feminism attempts to criticize and change the sexist attitudes of seeing one another. On the other side, the writer shows the type of women who accords each other's pain and aim, laughter and dream cheering each other success and achievement. To improve the essence of sisterhood, hooks (2002) says “we talked about how to combat jealousy, the politics of envy, and so on. Part of the process of becoming a feminist was to critique and change our sexist ways of seeing one another... it was about women learning how to care for one another and be in solidarity, not just when we have complaints or when we feel victimized. (p.130). By adopting a self-loving effort, women never regret their choices to help and empower other women. Black feminism tries to set the latter model as the norm should be persuaded.

In the color purple, Walker tries to draw a comparison between the harmonious union and the competitive one, when there is a triple connection between one man and two women. If the relationship depends on harmony and tolerance, it will lead to self-fulfillment, happiness and the opposite is true, the competitive relation prompts hatred, antagonizing and self-destructive. The relationship gathers Nettie and Corrine towards Adam, Corrine's husband is a competitive one, so it leads indirectly to Corrine's death and letting Nettie has her husband. While Shug’s relation with Albert, Celie's husband can be considered the best thing happens to Celie. Both women enjoy a convenient union that gives Celie the experiences, knowledge, and courage to claim a dignified, independent and free life.

Unplanned Pregnancy

Afro-American women have been treated as a subject of sexual exploitation, especially when they grow on the experience of being enslaved object meant to satisfy their superior figures. Harris (2017) refers to a hard time that the survivors experience during and after sexual abuse, “privately coming forward as a survivor of any sexual or physical abuse is hard enough. To publicly name the abuser is often a fraught path. Legal prosecution of the offender is not certain”(P.1). Besides, the psychological and physical suffering of unwanted pregnancy is the direct consequence of such a sexual oppressive attitude. Hooks goes even further to assert that sexual exploitation results in many of the Afro-American women, “Many of us were the unplanned children of talented, creative women whose lives had been changed by unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. We witnessed their bitterness, their rage, their disappointment with their lot in life” (2000, P. 26).

Walker is keenly aware of the sexual harassment being applied to black women. Thus, her novel's the Color Purple, begins with a stepfather, Alphonso takes advantage of his presumable teenager daughter by exploiting her sexually since her mother is ill and exhausted, as Celie declares "A week go by, he pulling on her arm again. She says Naw, I ain't gonna. Can't you see I'm already half-dead, an all of these children ... she [the mother] went to visit her sister's doctor over Macon, left me to see after the others. He says to me. Just say you gonna do what your mammy wouldn't ”(1982, p.5). Accordingly, Celie has two illegal babies from her stepfather. Having babies at a younger age reduces Celie chances in a better life. When Mr. Albert proposes to marry Nettie, Alphonso thinks that it is a golden opportunity to get rid of Celie in a deal closer to trade more than marriage "[he] say 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 anyhow. I got to get rid of her. She too old to be living here at home. And she a bad influence on my other girls” (1982, p.9). Since then, Celie never has a good day in her life until she meets Shug, Mr. Albert's old mistress.

Mainstream feminism is inaugurated mainly to address luxury women's concerns and ignored the others, such as middle and working-class women. Thus, it disregards the impact of sexual bias on women's lives, particularly those who live under poverty, illiteracy, and cultural bias. One of these sexual issues, which work as a deficient force on personal, social, economic and cultural life black women, is unwanted or unplanned pregnancy. Before achieving gender equity, one-sided thinking of feminism calls for free love that women should be allowed where and with whom they can enjoy sexual privilege, without sexual awareness. Thus, unplanned pregnancy increases with its undesirable impact on black women's self-autonomous and freedom. Radical feminism along with the civil rights movement highly calls for sexual justice and the hazard of unplanned pregnancy in maintaining a dignifying living condition, hooks(2000) asserts:
While the issue of abortion was and remains relevant to all women, other reproductive issues were just as vital which needed attention and might have served to galvanize masses. These issues ranged from basic sex education, prenatal care, preventive health care that would help females understand how their bodies worked. (P. 26)

In the Third Life of Grange Copland, Walker shows how Mem, Brownfield's wife, loses her control, appealing and power as much as she gives birth to more babies, particularly, when birth control is not affordable. Brownfield maliciously tempts Mem to have more babies in this way she grows weaker mentally and physically and he can take revenge from her easily "still making babies, he planned ahead. Planting a seed to grow that would bring her down in weakness and dependence and to her ultimate destruction" (1988, p.90). Walker reveals another example of an unplanned pregnancy, in her second novel Meridian, the immature girl, Meridian, engages in a love relationship without being sexually educated about the consequences of unplanned pregnancy which leads her to have a baby and drops off the school. Meridian's life fades of and reduces to torture by only looking after the new baby with immature experience and tolerance, "she began to dream, each night, just before her baby sent outcries, of ways to murder him" (2011, p. 65). Lately, she decides to start her life over somewhere else leaving the baby to an unknown fate.

In the Color Purple, the dramatic transformational treatment of Celie's character from being submissive female due to all hardships she has gone through "I can't fight. I don't know how to fight...I say to myself, Celie, you a tree" (1982, p.24). Later we notice her heroic statement to her abuser husband Albert "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, but I'm here" (1982, p.207). The problem of portraying home as an oppressive arena by Western feminism makes black feminists' task more challenging to prove this idea is insufficient. Black women's long career of working at other people's houses sustains them with experience and endurance to soften the rigid reality of Western authority. They have implicitly constructed the homeplace to be a site of resisting the sexist, racist and colonizing thinking. However, the patriarchy attempts to take advantage and dehumanizing black women, they domestically fight back as an offer to return their dignity and healing up their wounded in the middle of supremacist society.

Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous, had been subject to be subjected, not object, where we could affirm in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation (p.42).

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Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous, had a radical political dimension black women resisted by making homes where all black people could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people strive to be subjected, not object, where we could affirm in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation (p.42).

Maternity as the Emancipative Concept

Motherhood cannot be drawn as a unified standard subject without realizing the exceptional background of social and familial situations of all women (Collins, 2002, p.11). That is why the second wave feminism inappropriately judges maternity statuses being oppressed environment. Wide stream feminism instead of shedding light on the most critical violent situations that women face regardless of their race and class, it enlightens the plight of luxury households white women who feel bored for being household, the feminist Betty Friedan asserts "we can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: I want something more than my husband and my children and my house" (as cited in hooks, 1984, p.1). Such one-sided thinking neglects many working women who wish to be free from house labor, given equal paid wages compares with their fellow males and not being harassing by men in the work field. Likewise, hooks advocate that feminism “has been built on a racist foundation” (1982, p.124). What makes the case even worst, among all the classism, racism and sexism issues, the luxury demands of Western women turn to be the norms of feminism.
Tandon(2008) rightly says "White women ignorance of other women's experiences is one of the primary forms of racism that women of color decry in the women's movement" (p.61).

Toni Morison is a black American writer, and the first black woman rewarded with Noble Price in literature illuminates the protesting and pivotal role of motherhood from black American point of view, "[it is] an act of resistance; in loving her children the mother instills in them a loved sense of self and high self-esteem, enabling them to defy and subvert racist discourses that naturalize racial inferiority and commodity blacks as other and object" (as cited O'Reilly, 2004, p.11). Radical feminists have an ethical endeavor to enlighten maternity as a powerful call for togetherness in a safe environment, through changing the inherited unfavorable stereotype image of motherhood done by general feminism, and give women the attention and honor they deserve. "Female parenting is significant and valuable work which must be recognized as such by everyone in society, including feminist activists. It should receive deserved recognition, praise, and celebration within a feminist context where there is renewed effort to re-think the nature of motherhood" (hooks, 1984, P.136).

Likewise, the concept of maternity takes a major concern in Walker's novels, but since motherhood comes across many challenges which may change the traditional definition of maternity. Meridian depicts the story of women who sacrifices her biological motherhood to a higher purpose of mothering the black community. However, her motherhood is essential in constructing her social concern for taking care of the poor children in her neighborhood, such as the homeless Wild Child, and she even stands against an armed tank only to let black children attend circus' show. Meridian does not see the ultimate goal she pursues in either her mothering role or being a loyal wife established by patriarchal norms. Being supportive and helpful to the downtrodden people of her society, Meridian becomes the social ideal woman who fights for them so as they can live better. Walker comments "With beads of cake and colored beads and unblemished cigarettes she tempted Wile Chile and finally captured her. She brought her into the campus with a catgut string around her arm" (2011, p.25). When she looks after the helpless pregnant child, she underlies the notion of sexual oppression by which they are being made pregnant (Willis 1987, p. 112). Accordingly, one may not interpret her action as a favor but it is rather genuine solidity and a commitment to highlighting the profound exploitation that they have been exposed to and become pregnant.

Motherhood is the cornerstone in the foundation of the Afro-American community. Black women, through the motherhood's role, vividly participate in the benevolence of society. Walker (2004), In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens, underlies the relationship with her mother and her grandmother and its impact on her literary senses that “no song or poem will bear my mother’s name. Yet, so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories" (p.240). Walker absorbs the essence of her mother's life and transfers in a better way than the old generation has. Thus, young women's responsibility is to embrace their mothers' stories and heritages to strengthen their liberal process. "Our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower that they never hoped to see: or like a sealed letter they could not read " (2004, p.240). In other words, young radical feminists can benefit greatly from motherhood's legacy by being good daughters and keep that heritage alive.

The psychoanalyst Winnicott(2018) illustrates 'mother' is the baby "primary caretaker", and during the infancy period depending on his/her mother's sympathy rather than the logic understanding, such relation will develop what lately called the "true self" character(p.40-47). Especially, we learn that Celie receives "good parent care" during her infancy from her real parent which is turned later to a survival strategy. Though her true self is distributed between endurance in the unsecured feeling of self with a hostile environment, in the right circumstances, her true-self awakens the resistant process and emboldens her to be independent and free. Besides, Shug's unconditional good maternal role, "Us each other's people now" (Walker1982, p.189), motivates Celie to regains her mental and emotional identity.

Maternity Surrogate

This term refers to standing in a position of child-parent, either by relationship or virtue. This person assumes all rights, duties, and responsibilities of the adopted child, besides it can be temporary or permanent. Nonetheless, the historical impact of racism on black women, the connection between convention and history of them remains vigorous to deal with values over generations. The phenomenon of other mothering is rooted in the Afro-American community due to their unique and difficult life circumstances. Collins(2002) defines Maternity Surrogate as "other mothers who assist blood mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities traditionally have been central to the institution of Black motherhood" (p.178). Black women are used to working and supporting their families, it is not that they adore working more than other women, but this is something impose on and get used to it, besides maternity surrogate as she asserts" is a collective responsibility, a situation fostering cooperative, age-stratified, woman-centered 'mothering' network" (2002, p.179). Besides, hooks(1984) further argues the idea of mother surrogate that:

Black women who had to leave the home and work to help provide for families could not afford to send children to daycare centers and such centers did not always exist. They relied on people in their communities to help. Even in families where the mother stayed home, she could also rely on people in the community to help. ... People who did not have children often took responsibility for sharing in childrearing. (p.144).
In *Meridian*, the role of mother surrogates also plays a pivotal role to set the principles of Afro-American women. When Meridian feels paralysis by her life's unfair treatment, Miss Winter stands in her side and provides her with other mothering care. The process of maintaining female solidarity is clear throughout the story. “She acts as the surrogate mother Meridian needs to recover from the various traumas she has experienced, including her abortion” (2011, p.85).

In *The Color Purple*, we notice the young Celie adopts the role of mother to protect her younger sister Nettie. She plays a mother role during their mother's sickness and after her death. She helps her to join school while she stays home and consents with incest relations with her stepfather and accepts unfair marriage to keep her sister away. Nettie appreciates her sister’s efforts and promises her that they will be together no matter what, and ask her to write constantly “She [Nettie] says, Nothing but death can keep me from it” (1982, p.19). Nettie returns the favor to her sister by raising her presumably died children, Adam and Olivia. Another image of mother surrogate is represented by Odessa when she raises her sister’s, Sofia, children after she is jailed for assaulting the mayor's wife and bunched the mayor back. The children are reared without the feeling of their mother’s absence. Walker explores a kind of kin solidarity throughout a mother’s passion to keep the society safe and sound, “Her bigger children married and gone, and her littlest children mad at her, don't know who she is. Think she acts funny, look old and dote on that little white gal she rises. Yesterday we all had dinner at Odessa's house” (1982, p.141). The other mothering affection is used by the writer to draw attention to the bond of solidarity in black society. Nettie’s story is similar to Odessa’s one since she looks after her sister’s children whose mother is despaired to see them anymore and work hard to eventually join them together.

The Mutual Moderation of Maternal and Parenting Role in Childrearing

Marriage has been understood as social and religious commitment more than a romantic bond between people and it seeks a set of obligations and companionship in the existence of rearing the children. However, motherhood has deemed as central issue in the viewpoints of Afro-American people,” but to emphasize the need for collective parenting, feminist theorists who emphasize the hazards of single parenting, who outline the need for men to share equally in parenting, often live in families where the male parent is present” (hooks, 1984, p.146). The role of fathering becomes more effective since parental role will add more qualities in the childrearing process that single mothers cannot. Hence black feminism works hard to join parental role along with maternal one to create a healthy domestic environment, Schoonmaker(1983) optimistically asserts:

The overall goal of the women's movement has been a quest for equality—to take the oppression out of mothering, to join 'mothering' to 'parenting,' and for those who choose to have children to share parenting with men and with society in general. Looking back over the past twenty years, it seems as if these goals have been among the hardest for the women's movement to reach”.

Black feminism is highly concerned about educating the society about the advantage of sharing equal parenting. Otherwise, the children who are raised by single mothers will think that parenting is a woman's duty which besides of its negative consequences of family's relation and children raising, it will increase male's domination and exploitation towards women. Accordingly, black feminism has reinforced the idea that women should not accept such a habit and give space to their men to take their natural role in childrearing.

Social and Political Movement

The deep connection of Walker with her roots and community is mostly incarnated in the solution and satisfaction of her female protagonists. Meridian's struggle, in the civil rights movement, solidifies her ethic with civil right values. Her journey in civil rights and the direct connection with tyrannized Afro-American women enhances her mental growth and political awareness. Besides, it illuminates the possibility of rehabilitating the black community when its values are reaffirmed. The mutual relation, between Meridian and her society, helps her to be healed as she returns to enlighten her neighborhood about their rights. *Meridian* has verbalized what hooks refers to, in her book *AIN'T I A Woman*, that “we, black women who advocate feminist ideology, are pioneers. We are clearing a path for ourselves and our sisters. We hope that as they see us reach our goal—no longer victimized, no longer unrecognized, no longer afraid—they will take courage and follow”(1982, P.196).To presume the search for her identity, after she has been alienated by Western infertility and the failure of the emotional involvement, Meridian moves back to the south to move ahead in the process of self-actualization. Although Walker always dramatizes the south of the USA, Georgia, as the venue of violence and oppression, she also conceives it as a regenerative world and the backup experience of black people in the new world (McDowell, 1981, p. 272). By creating the space in which Meridian can shape her won painting away from established norms, Meridian starts another journey through teaching subjugated people how to reclaim their right in a conscious awakening revolution. Thus, Walker has showcased the civil rights movement as a platform in which Meridian is reformed due to the association between societal progressions and personal self-realization and development.

Likewise, in *The Color purple*, Nettie's trip, to Africa as a missionary to Olinka's people, serves as renewal and positive transitional point for her and her sister, Celie. Thus, Nettie's personality is mature up as she becomes educated and undergoes a change in her notion, language, ethics, and values, besides her marriage from Samuel turns her as perfect women from Olinka's tradition. By the same token, Nettie's massages allow Celie's to create self-realization and awareness. She knows about her past and how they enforced to be transformed to America as slaves. She also knows
that Pa, Alphonso, is not her father and that makes her relieved and purified from her guilt. The social and political movement illuminates the gender violation of African women and reveals the global exploitation of them is transcultural and prevalent in Africa and America as well. Hooks demonstrates that "sexism is perpetuated by institutional and social structures; by the individuals who dominate, exploit, or oppress; and by the victims themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo"(1984, p. 43). Nettie's missionary's mission sheds light on the influential reconstruction of the Afro-American tradition which marks a revolutionary turning point in the main heroines' view and attitude. Through this journey, Walker underlies the role of African history on the fruitful association among Afro-American women.

CONCLUSION

The paper underlines the essential and unavoidable role of sisterhood in patronizing and supporting the transformation process of the selected novels' heroines from being mistreated and exploited to be free women. The study discusses the ideal use of sisterhood, through Walker's selected novels by hooks' radical and feminist notions that differentiate from the passive prototype manifestation of Western feminism. At the same time, it shows a moderate and emancipative process drawing on sub-concepts of maternity, solidarity, home and mother surrogate, parental role, social and political movement and their impact on Afro-American women. Thus, the new reading of sisterhood does not call for naïve and shallow support of feeling and desire but rather sharing concerns, commitment, and aims. Likewise, it shows that novels' selected heroines, Celie, Nettie, Shug, and Meridian decide to stand in guanine union to overcome the unfavorable conditions imposed by the patriarchal norms. It's a message to the people, who interested in women's liberation, to pay attention to radical black feminism since it advocates a collective, systematized, mass-based struggle of oppressed women. The initiative place of change starts from the way how women related to feminism across ethnicity, race and social position which is free from patriarchal imposed thoughts and customs.

Hooks' unique, radical and innovative reading of the sisterhood illuminates Walker's selected novels in a more liberal and challenging way. Walker invests the power of sisterhood to allow her heroines to declare that traditional roles do not suit them, and they have to search for a better life. Sisterhood gives them more power and the potentials to challenge their bitter reality and regain their identity. One of the essential messages that the writer intends to send is that women become more appealing, strong and free as long as they stand in constant solidarity to look for each other best interest and live with the feeling of wholeness.

LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

The study is limited to analyze the discourses of the main characters of the selected novels in light of the radical black feminist, bell hooks. The discussion revolves around the 60s and 70s period which witnessed abiding for affirmative amended of racial and sexist based-discrimination. The research is based on appraisal theatrical framework by applying a descriptive and analytical study between wide stratum feminism and a radical black one, and how the latter through its liberal tools can grant black women personal and social transformation. The data in this study can be used by scholars and university students to develop particular study materials, researches and seminars on the same tool with any literary work which is written in the same period and discussed the same issue.

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