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Autobiographical Projection: The Juxtaposition of Texts and Contexts in Alice Walker's Novels

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Abstract

Before Alice Walker and other notable African-American female writers like Toni Morrison began to write about black experience in America, a battle of images had been raging between writers of pro-slavery South and the Abolitionist Movement. The black in America, generally speaking, was perceived as a subhuman species of mankind by whites. But the case of the black woman was particularly precarious. She was not only black, she was also female in a race-conscious society. This compounded the negativity that was associated with her image. The coming of Alice Walker into the struggle for the emancipation of black women in America heralds a radical shift in the age-old struggle. Her approach to the struggle is known to be defiant and unapologetic. It is worthy to note that one of the defining features of her works, particularly her novels, is their autobiographical undertone. She uses this mode of narration for her stories to have direct and immediate impact on her audience and the society they represent. It is for this reason that she employs conscious motives in selecting particular characters and situations in the depiction and projection of her ideas. She has even admitted in some interviews that she uses events in her novels to project herself and her views. This paper establishes how aspects of the writer's personal life and outlook find their way in the delineation of her characters. In other words, part of our effort here dwells on the notion of linkage between life and art. The paper also highlights the fact that Walker is a good representation of the fact that no writer writes outside his

experience. Part of our effort here therefore consists in looking into the role experience plays in the novelist's creative imagination. This is illustrated with some of her interviews with notable critics. Through the interviews, the origins and motives of the author are illuminated. The paper also brings to the fore the use made of autobiographical materials in the novelist's writings. The paper establishes in the end that Walker creates characters who, despite racial and sexist inhibitions, are able to assert themselves.
Keywords: Autobiographical, History, Experience, Projection, Struggle

Introduction

The image of the black woman in America has been one of historical controversy. She was not only perceived in terms of popular stereotypes which marked her out as a special, not well-understood category of human kind, judgments about any manifestation of her presence in a literary work as a character were wholly dependent on racial motives. White and black American writers of the slave era alike found it convenient to depict her image in an unfavourable light. She was essentially portrayed in terms of her sexuality. The popular stereotype was that the black woman was morally obtuse and openly licentious. Thus, while the white woman was assigned the role of wife and mother, the black woman was given the unsavoury one of labourer and mother in a derogatory sense. In fact, she was seen as a bad influence on her society and her race.

In view of the negative image of the black woman which persisted in American writings, she has had occasion to raise objections to the stereotypes heaped on her. The African-American female writer who shares in the prejudices visited on her has been outspoken in this regard. Beginning from the 1830s when the battle of images raged between writers of pro-slavery South and the Abolitionist Movement, black women writers began to challenge the negative characterization of their kind.

Some of the earliest black women writers of the period included Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Ida Wells, Maya Angelou and Zora Neale Hurston, among others. Although their effort was significant in a number of ways, it is necessary to point out that there were obvious flaws in their attempt at redressing the negative image given to them by their male counterparts. Therefore, African-American female writers did not suddenly begin to write in the wake of the women's movements of the 1970s, there has been continuous literary activity among them since the advent of Phyllis Wheatley in the Eighteenth Century. However, the fervour which was brought to bear on their quest in the wake of the women's movements was a direct response to many years of disorienting historical experiences.

By virtue of their race and gender, black women writers, according to Claudia Tate, find themselves at two points of intersection. One is where western culture cuts across vestiges of African heritage, and the other is where male-female attitudes are either harmoniously parallel, subtly divergent, or in violent collision (Tate xvi). Being both black and female, these writers write from a unique vantage point. Oftentimes, it is believed that they respond not only to individual and collective historical experiences of African-American women, but also to their individual tempers and idiosyncrasies as they are affected by history. Most often, they project their lovers, even themselves, through the eyes of female black characters and poetic personae. In other words, their writings are reflective of their experiences.

One such African-American female writer whose writings reflect her experience is Alice Walker. She is prominent in the evolution and propagation of the literary tradition of African-American female writers. She delves into history to lay bare the repressed creativity of the black woman. She also explores the processes of social and personal growth as they affect the identity of her female black characters. She does this in recognition of the fact that the

black woman is unaware of her potentials in the American society. Alice Walker therefore strives in her literary efforts to redress the situation. This is clearly depicted in her novels under consideration in this study.

Theoretical Framework

From the background to this study, we have been able to establish that the stereotype image of blacks in America is rooted in history. As a result of this, the black woman in America has had to contend with negative images of her race and sex in the works of writers of the slave era and even beyond. Disturbed by these images, the African-American female writer appears determined to rescue the black woman from the negative, often stereotype, images by which she is portrayed.

Alice Walker is one of the African-American female writers at the forefront of this exercise. She belongs to what Elaine Showalter (Selden 135) considers as the "female" phase in the tradition of women's writing. The phase which started from 1920 onwards developed the idea of specifically female writing and female experience. For Showalter, writers in this phase are preoccupied with the projection of female consciousness. In the works of Alice Walker, the African-American woman finds images to sustain herself. In her novels, we are presented with black protagonists who are determined to shake off the inhibitions imposed on them by the shackles of racism and sexism.

Thus, in highlighting the historical circumstance of blacks which lent impetus to the works of the novelist under consideration, the study also takes cognisance of the fact that Walker, as a “female" writer, has a peculiar temperament which informs the tone and content of her works. For the purpose of our study then, we deem it most appropriate to adopt the historical and feminist approaches to criticism in our analysis of the novels. As an approach to criticism, historicism, as popularised by Matthew Arnold, is interested in the

historical circumstances of the people about whom a work of art is written. It considers all factors of society as well as the background of the writer. In historical criticism, socio-economic and political considerations come into play. It urges the reader to identify with the intentions of the author by proposing the audience of the different periods as the standards of interpretation and evaluation.

According to F.W. Bateson, the "historical-sociological approach provides the critic with a factual structure to which he can attach his perceptions and generalisations" (Wellek 267). The approach, he further says, typifies and somehow summarises the society of its time. He calls it "the expression in language of social solidarity"(Wellek 267). In historicism, the need for relevance makes it mandatory to take historical facts into consideration in assessing the author's work and concerns. This is because a sense of history is important considering the fact that every age has its own sensibility. Historical criticism then endeavours, as Hippolyte Taine says, to recover "from the monuments of literature, a knowledge of the manner in which man thought and felt centuries ago" (David & Schleifer 369). This approach to historical criticism thus defines literary interpretation on a genetic model, as an explanation of how a work's genesis in a historical situation brings the work into being a distinct aesthetic object.

In the view of Stephen Greenblatt, the historical approach to criticism is concerned with discovering a single political vision, usually identical to that said to be held by the entire literate class or indeed the entire population. This vision, he argues, can serve as a stable point of reference, beyond contingency to which literary interpretation can securely refer. Literature is conceived to mirror the period's beliefs, but to mirror them as it were, from a safe distance. (Davis & Schleifer 369).

Feminist criticism, on its part, is concerned with the politics of sex. In pre-Mendelian days, for instance, men regarded their sperm as

the active seeds which give form to the waiting ovum. This was an assertion of patriarchy over matriarchy. According to Raman Selden (Selden 129) , what feminist critics do is to summon up furies to counter what they consider as the complacent certainties of patriarchal culture and create a less oppressive climate for women writers and readers. They also try to expose what they regard as the fraudulent objectivity of male science. Feminist criticism therefore wishes to escape the fixities and definites of theory and to develop a female discourse which cannot be tied down conceptually to a recognised male-produced theoretical tradition.

For Barbara Smith, a black feminist approach to literature must embody the realisation that "the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of black women writers" (Showalter 170). She also argues that the black feminist critic must have a primary commitment to explore how both sexual and racial politics and black and female identity are inextricable elements in black women's writings.

While using the framework of feminist criticism as our tool of analysis, it should be noted that Alice Walker's brand of feminism is somewhat different from the general notion. Her approach borders on what she calls "womanism". According to her, "womanist is to feminism as purple to lavender" (Walker xii). In Walker's scheme, a womanist is a black feminist or feminist of colour. She is given to "outrageous, audacious, courageous or wilful behaviour (Walker xi). She is intent on knowing more and in greater depth than is considered good.

For Walker as well, a womanist is "interested in grown-up doings (Walker xi). She loves other women sexually or non-sexually. She appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility, and women's strength. Above all, she is committed to the survival and wholeness of an entire people. For this reason, she

loves struggle. This variance of approach by Walker is taken into consideration in our analysis of her novels.

Our choice of these critical approaches is informed by some considerations. For instance, the historical approach to literary criticism will cast light on and clarify the text itself. This usually involves identifying a text's references to history - specific allusions to actual people, political events, economic development, and so on. This effort will help to locate the text as a historical phenomenon.

The historical approach also helps to identify the author as an artist with a significant past and a predisposition to write in a certain manner. This will enable us to ascertain how a text reflects the historical forces that shaped it initially and to understand how a historical moment produced a particular work of literary art.

In adopting feminist criticism as an analytical approach, certain crucial questions present themselves for consideration. One is, "Are women's novels necessarily feminist novels?" Another is, "How much of the so called feminist temper is found in the novels?" By providing answers to these and related questions, we are able to establish the extent or lack of it of gender bias in the novels. We have also been able to discover how the assumptions of a patriarchal culture are countered in the novels.

Literature Review

As a frontline female African-American novelist whose works announced the new era in black women's writings in America in the 1970s, the works of Alice Walker have received a great deal of critical attention. The critical points do not only differ in perspectives and approaches, they shed light on the new readings of the novels.

One of the earliest critics who expounded on the novels of Alice Walker is Barbara Christian. In "Novels for Everyday Use: The Novels of Alice Walker," a chapter in *Black Women Novelists* devoted to two of Walker's earliest novels, Christian says that Walker, in her novels, concentrates on the sensibility of the South as a way of perceiving the perennial conflict between the human spirit and societal patterns. She does this, according to Christian, by sorting out the seemingly insignificant and hidden aspects of the lives of Southerners, particularly black families and stitches them into a tapestry of society (Christian 80).

One recurrent motif in her novels is the question of responsibility for personal action and societal change. Her novels, Christian believes, "stitch a fabric of the everyday violence that is committed against her characters and that they commit upon one another in their search for regeneration (Christian 80). For Christian, Walker believes that for the black woman of her generation to discover herself, she must garner wholeness from the bits and pieces of the past and recreate them into their own image. The foundation of Walker's artistic vision then rests on the often unheralded heritage of black women, the creative sparks as well as the history of restrictions.

Commenting specifically on *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Walker's first novel, Christian opines that the novel is marked by the motif of physical and spiritual murder, by suicide and infanticide, by wife-beating and killing set against the background of the horror of racism in the South (Christian 84). In presenting this situation, Walker, in the view of Christian, was substantiating the pervasive myth that black people, particularly black men, are by their very nature, violent and that they inflict the full range of their violence on their own blood.

For Christian as well, *Meridian,* Alice Walker's second novel, has the black woman's struggle as its focus. The novel explores the

relationship between the movement for social change and the personal growth of its participants. In it, Walker encompasses the past, the present and the future as her major character uses her heritage to change her society. For Christian then, personal history, in Walker's novels, is an index to cultural history.

David Bradley (Bradley 63), a notable critic, also expounded on the works of Alice Walker. For him, Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is a book to be admired because Grange Copeland, one of the protagonists of the novel, emerges as one of the richest, wisest and most moving old men in fiction. His speeches, Bradley observes, are never preachy but are always set perfectly in context and ring with complex truth. For Bradley, the dialogues between Grange and Ruth, his grand daughter are "dramatic expressions of an unabashedly universalist philosophy" (Bradley 63).

Bradley's assessment of *Meridian,* however, negates his view of *Third Life.* In his view, Walker, in *Meridian,* appears to have lost the balance of form and content that made her first novel forceful. Bradley is of the opinion that it was this omission that led Walker to ignore the human power of situations in favour of polemical symbolism. For him then, Walker in *Meridian* "appeared to have got caught up in the business she had advised young writers to avoid - advice I had taken to the heart of my own experience. I was furious at Alice Walker. I felt.....misled" (Bradley 64).

In the aforementioned book, *Black Women Writers,* Barbara Christian, in an essay entitled "Alice Walker: The Black Woman Artist as Wayward"(Christian 457), posits that Walker in her works pays attention to the black woman as creator and how her attempt to be whole relates to her community. These themes, Christian says, are present in Meridian and *The Color Purple.*

For Christian as well, Walker's works demonstrate her insistence on probing the relationship between struggle and change. This probing encompasses the pain of black people's lives. It is a pain which sometimes results in growth precisely because of the nature of the struggle that must be borne if there is to be change. This motif, Christian says, is presented primarily through three generations of one family in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland.* The novel then is based on the principle that societal change is invariably linked to personal change.

In the essay, "Alice Walker's Women: In Search of Some Peace of Mind", Bettye J. Parker-Smith also offers perspectives on the novels of Alice Walker. For her, Walker in her fiction calls together a meeting of black women. In the essay, she re-affirms Walker's assertion that she is preoccupied with the spiritual survival of her people as well as her commitment to the exploration of the oppression, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women (Evans 479).

These women, in the view of Parker-Smith, are plain women from the South who grow petunias. They struggle endlessly and are harmless because they know no wrong. Their tragedies are very personal, very real, and extraordinarily bleak and black. They are women who push against the barbed- wired wall of racism, sexism, age, ignorance and despair (Evans 479). In the process, they often become frustrated and operate on the level consistent with their reduced state. They are trapped by circumstance and this entrapment is the result of their sense of powerlessness against the structure of the dominant society. This pitiable state of the black woman, Parker-Smith says, is amply evident in the novels of Alice Walker.

In Henry Louis Gates' *Reading Black, Reading Feminist,* Walker's works are also given attention. But the specific focus is her third novel, *The Color Purple.* Molly Hite's essay, "Romance,

Marginality, and Matrilineage: *The Color Purple* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God"*, for instance, attempts a dissection of *The Color Purple.* For Hite, the novel is a pastoral tragi-comedy, for in it, Walker makes a group of black farmers the central social unit and uses this community as the vantage point from which to deliver a blistering critique of the surrounding white culture.

Between Life and Art: A Critical Analysis of *Meridian* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*

The review has given us a general overview of Walker's involvement in the quest to free the black woman in America from the shackles of racism and sexism through her works. However, our study is focused on two of her representative works, namely, *Meridian and Possessing the Secret of Joy*. Through them, we have explored the surviving, the succeeding, the nurtured and supported images of her female characters. What should be noted is that Walker has, to a very great extent, used these characters to depict her personal life and experience.

Although the relationship between life and art may not follow a one-to-one correspondence, a connection is usually achieved through a certain distillation as well as through a vision projected into an imaginary world. In cases like this, the reservoir of personal experience may be tapped in depicting a situation. While some critics insist that the artist's life and art are inextricably linked, some do not agree that experience is the basis for art. One such critic is Nikki Giovanni who believes that "we cheapen anything written when we consider it an experience. Because if it's someone else's experience, we don't have to take it seriously...."(Tate xvii). For her then, writers write because they empathise with the general human condition.

In this work, we will dwell or build on this notion of linkage between life and art in addressing some of the aforementioned generic issues. In doing this, we aim at establishing how aspects of

the writer's personal life and outlook find their way into her delineation of female black characters. The essay will also reveal the writer's conscious motives for selecting particular characters and situations in the depiction of her ideas.

The role played by experience in the shaping of the novelist's creative imagination is better appreciated in interviews with the author. Interviews, regarded as the most recent of literary genres, have, according to Tillie Olsen (Tate ix), become a staple in our time. Through the interviews, the origins and motives of the author are illuminated. Furthermore, they bring to the fore the use made of autobiographical materials as well as influences and the place and power of the imagination in the novelist's writings.

The novels of Alice Walker reflect, in very broad perspectives, the historical experiences of blacks in America, and the gender-based experiences of the African-American woman. In doing this, Alice Walker creates history through her writings. As she puts it, "My whole program as a writer is to deal with history just as I know where I am" (Tate 185). In Walker's view, we have a personal and collective need to create ourselves.

In an interview with Anne Simpkinson, the editor of ***Common Boundary Magazine,*** she explains that:

> The self has to have space in which to grow. The self has to have space in which to be. If you're to have a self, it can't be constantly crowded out by all the other selves that are beamed in on you. You have to have time to develop it (Simpkinson 59).

Like many of her fictional characters, she was born the daughter of a southern sharecropper in rural Georgia. Her active involvement in the Civil Rights Movement is also reflected in her novels. Her immediate concern is with the relationship between black men and black women. Twentieth Century black women writers all seem to be much more interested in the black community; in intimate

relationships. Black women writers know that their survival depends on trust.

In another interview with Claudia Tate, she states that "we will not have or cannot have anything until we examine what we do to and with each other" (Tate 181). For Walker then, black women talk about intimate relationships so that they will recognize what is happening when they see it and may be then there will be some change in behaviour on the part of men and women. In this essay, we shall use two of her novels, namely, ***Meridian*** and ***Possessing the Secret of Joy*** in the elucidation of our discourse.

The Role of Experience

In ***Meridian***, Walker explores the individual and collective experiences of blacks in America. In it, she particularly reflects her experiences as a Civil Rights Worker. This is realized through her exploration of the valiant life of Meridian Hill who is herself a Civil Rights Worker. As a worker of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, Walker confronted racism while working on voter registration. This was not only a test-case, her experience while participating in the women's movement was equally trying. As a Civil Rights Worker, Walker witnessed the split, on questions of anti semitism, integration, class, region, religion and sex, of the black movement with which she identified. The women's movement of which she was an evocative contemporary spokesperson was also not only factionalized, it was equally being accused of racism.

In creating Meridian, Walker seeks to reflect her experiences in the Civil Rights Movement. While in the movement, she was disappointed that most of the very brave and amazing people whom she knew in the fold were often incredibly flawed. In Meridian then, she wants a counter image of what a Civil Rights Worker should be.

The frustrations which Walker went through as a Civil Rights Worker are equally suffered by Meridian in the novel. But Meridian's role as a revolutionary is flawed. She fails because, as Walker herself explains, Meridian is under enormous stress. Her stress is the type Walker herself suffered while working for the Civil Rights Movement. Like Walker, Meridian suffers racial brutality and intimidation.

In an interview with Tate, Walker concedes that the novel is autobiographical but that it is only so in the sense of projection. She uses the events of the novel to project herself and her views. She uses the personality of Meridian to make a model for herself, and this, she says, is the reason she writes at all. As she puts it:

> Writing to me is not about audience actually. It's about living. It's about expanding myself as much as I can and seeing myself in as many roles and situations as possible (Tate 185).

Walker also uses the personality of Meridian to represent her disgust for capitalism. In real life, Walker says she is drawn to working class people. This identification with the proletariat is one that brings her into confrontation with capitalism. She strives to change the system and that explains why she creates characters who cannot fit into capitalist societies. This idiosyncrasy of Walker is amply represented in the novel by Meridian. As a member of the Civil Rights Movement, Meridian stands against capitalist structures. She repudiates agents of the federal government and the police who perpetuate injustice against the common herd of the community represented by blacks. To change the system, she involves herself in freedom marches and freedom songs organized by the **civil rights movement.**

As an uncompromising feminist who is cable of hardnosed, clear-eyed analysis, Walker rejects formal religion which she believes does not give her a wider recognition of the universe. She reflects this idiosyncrasy of hers in the novel. Meridian, the title character,

is moulded by the author to reject organized religion. Whenever she finds herself in church, she feels claustrophobic as if the walls are closing in. Rather than see religion in this formal sense, Meridian prefers to see it in the sense of communal spirit, togetherness and righteous convergence. She believes that it is in this way that religion can reach into the soul. To further fashion Meridian into a character that is worthy of emulation, the author makes her assume the role of a Universalist. As a black woman, Meridian epitomizes the black woman's world view which sees black children, yellow children and brown children as belonging to one world. In this way, Meridian's image and that of all black women whom she represents become elevated and worthy of emulation.

From the foregoing, it could be seen that ***Meridian*** illuminates black experience in white America. Meridian Hill, the protagonist, is made to bear the cross of not only her sex but that of black people in general. In mirroring this slice of American history, the novelist removes the narrative from the realm of the familiar. Rather, she imaginatively renders the contemporary history of blacks into a credible work of art. The complex character of Meridian makes this artistic rendering very realistic.

The Feminist at Work

Like other novels of Walker before it, ***Possessing the Secret of Joy*** is borne out of the author's personal experience. In it, a character whose sufferings, aspirations, and frustrations have been of concern to Walker is made to come alive.

Tashi, a traditional African woman who has been made to suffer genital mutilation, is merely glimpsed at by Walker in two of her novels, namely, ***The Color Purple*** **and** ***The Temple Of My Familiar.*** But in ***Secret of Joy,*** her personality comes to assume a wider significance in the imagination of the author. At the writing

of ***Secret of Joy,*** Tashi has become a force, in fact, a phenomenon which cannot be wished away.

In creating Tashi, Walker was responding to an experience which has been haunting her. Female genital mutilation in Africa, Far Eastern and Middle Eastern countries has been of grave concern to the author. The sexist bias inherent in the practice has more than infuriated her. Even the ritual surrounding it has been revolting to her. When she glimpsed at it in the two novels before ***Secret of Joy*** she had thought the experience was something she could relegate to a second order phenomenon. But because the experience stayed with Walker and remained uncommonly tenacious in her psyche, she felt compelled to raise her voice against it. Her denunciation of the ritual practice is what ***Secret of Joy*** explores.

In "To the Reader"(Walker 282) in ***Secret of Joy,*** Walker reveals that her writing of the novel is based on certain experiences which she could not ignore. According to her, in 1982, the year ***The Color Purple*** was published, fourteen children died in Kenya from the effects of genital mutilation.

However, to remove the experience from the realm of common, everyday happenings in Africa, Far and Middle Eastern countries, Walker invents an imaginary African village called Olinka where Tashi's circumcision is enacted. The experience which Tashi goes through as a result of her circumcision is revolting to feminists such as Walker. In standing up against it, Walker universalises the experience by seeing Tashi as her own sister.

In the novel, Walker uses Tashi's experience to question and assail traditional sex roles. Through it, she rejects previously accepted forms of masculine authority like that of Pater familias. What Walker seeks to create in the novel is sex awareness. In creating it, she confronts Sigmund Freud's sexist characterization of the

female sex. For Freud, (Miles 15-16) the chief characteristics of the female include passivity; a fragile ego with an underdeveloped sense of self; a feeble superego resulting in an under-operative conscience; and the renunciation of active aims and ambition. For Freud also, the female has an incapacity for abstract thought and is given to retreating into inward action and fantasy. For him therefore, the female is a simple -minded sentimentalist.

Since sex definition is one of the staples of the modern period and consequently of the modern novel, Walker, in ***Secret of Joy,*** counters Freud's sexist views of the female through the character of Tashi. As a feminist, Walker questions Freud's characterization of the female. And since sex definition, especially in the Twentieth Century, is the primary imperative of being, feeling and knowing, Walker uses Tashi to create sex awareness in women.

To counter the "fraudulent objectivity of male science"(Selden 129), represented in this case by Freud, Walker deliberately puts Tashi through female circumcision - an experience which the male world considers ennobling for women. But rather than feel elevated, Tashi is physically and psychologically devastated.
As an apostle of womanism, Walker believes that the black woman, if she must survive the debasement which the patriarchal world visits on her, should be ready to act. She must free herself from male-dominated theories and embrace female discourse. She must, most importantly, be autonomous.

Tashi is a faithful disciple of this Walkerian postulation. Rather than be the passive being which Freud and his disciples believe she is, she acts. In her action, she kills Mother Lissa. She does not stop at that. She equally proves that she is capable of developing an independent sense of self. Rather than retreat into inward action and fantasy, she confronts the sexism of her environment. To prove to her oppressors that she has the right to anger and action,

she does not regret killing Mother Lissa. Rather, she courageously faces her murder trial.

As she awaits the hangman's noose, she is able to see through the entire smokescreen which male science has erected. Contrary to her earlier belief that circumcision is "the only remaining definitive stamp of Olinkan tradition"(Walker 63), she discovers to her chagrin that it is, in reality, a major step toward destruction. She accepts to be circumcised because she wants to join other Olinkan women on missions of liberation. But having gone through the ritual, she gets annihilated, instead of being liberated. Rather than being bold and free and wearing the garb of a revolutionary, she finds herself cocooned in a contraption that destroys her.

Conclusion

In the novels under study, Walker goes a long way in countering the phenomenon of racism and sexism especially as they affect the black woman in a male- dominated world. While Meridian rejects and counters structures that tend to subjugate women, the sex awareness which Walker makes Tashi to attain goes a long way in liberating the female sex from male codes. That is why Tashi, even as she dies, is psychologically liberated. If all women become rebels like Meridian and as sexually aware as Tashi, then the female world would have succeeded in taking a giant step towards self-actualisation. With the advantage of experience, Walker has been able to weave an imaginative fable in the works under study.

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