Black Female Suffering and Self-Reconciliation Through Writing in *The Color Purple* (1982)

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Dedication

Firstly, all praise be to Allah who helped me to accomplish this study, since, without his help, I would not have succeeded. Secondly, I would like to thank also my dear father Ali and his parents, who are my grandfather and grandmother, Cherif and Mabrouka. Also, I would like to express my great respect and appreciation for my mother Djamila who helps and provides me everything and do not forget her parents who are my grandfather and grandmother, Mostafa and Mebarka. Thanks to my brother Abdessamed “Fateh” and his wife. Great thanks to my sweet sister, Imene “Dodo”. And I do not forget my uncle's daughter Sondos “Amina”.

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Abstract

This study examines the protagonist’s suffering, and her self-reconciliation through writing in Alice Walker’s epistolary novel *The Color Purple*. Walker describes the double suffering of Afro-American women as being black and female.

Celie, the protagonist of *The Color Purple*, manages to change her life and become a strong woman. She achieved that through writing letters to God and to her sister Nettie. These letters are the key elements in Celie’s self-reconciliation. And since, those letters help Celie to assert herself as a strong woman with more confidence. So, this study follows the process of physical and self salvation through the analysis of Celie’s letters.

Key Words

ملخص

تدور هذه الدراسة حول تحليل المعاناة والاضطهاد الذي عاشته بطلة الرواية الرسائليّة اللون الأرجواني للمؤلفة للكاتبة آليس ولكر (Alice Walker) والكتاب The Color Purple، في رواية وتشجر الزمن وذئبها، وذلك لكونها امرأة وسوداء في نفس الوقت. قامت آليس ولكر (Alice Walker) بوصف (Celi) المزدوجة داخل مجتمع الزنج؛ وذلك لكونها امرأة وسوداء في نفس الوقت. قامت آليس ولكن (Alice Walker) بوصف (Celi) داخل المجتمع الزنجي بشكل دقيق وذلك من خلال الرسائل التي كتبتها لبطلة.

في نهاية الرواية استطاعت سيلي (Celi) بطلة القصة من تغيير حياتها، والتحرر نفسها وجسديا حيث أصبحت امرأة مستقلة وت ذات شخصية قوية لأنها تجاوزت جميع الصعاب التي واجهتها في حياتها وذلك من خلال كتابة رسائل إلى مكيتها (Nettie). وبما أن تلك الرسائل لعبت دورا هاما في تحرير سيلي (Celi) نفسها وجسديا، فإن هذه الدراسة ستقوم بتحليل الرسائل المكتوبة من أجل فهم عملية التحرر.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الأدب الإفريقي أمريكي، رواية اللون الأرجواني، آليس ولكر، العبودية، معاناة النساء السود.
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General Introduction:

All along the American history, the blacks played an important role whether during the slave period or after their emancipation. Having lived and suffered as slaves created a sort of long black history of trauma. In other words, the blacks could not recover from the effects of their heritage even after their freedom. African-American literature has focused on issues related to slavery like racism, religion, freedom and equality. Black women writers contributed to the representation of those themes; however, they introduced other themes. One of the most subtle themes is their suffering within their community. It can be said, it is another shape of slavery.

The Color Purple is one of the literary works that vividly depicts the suffering of African-American women in a black patriarchal society. Celie, the protagonist, suffers deeply as a black and a woman. Consequently, she becomes psychologically complex because she was first raped by her step-father, then abused by her husband. To forget about her problems, she started writing letters to God; in which she tells him the story of her life. Then, she writes to her sister Nettie. Writing letters becomes as a therapy; so, this study will shed light on how Celie manages to achieve herself-reconciliation through writing letters.

The reasons behind choosing this topic are to learn the power of literature in which to teach us how to identify with characters. Also, I am impressed by the idea that African-American literature does not depict the blacks as ideals but as ordinary people.

The novel is about a woman’s struggle to take back her personality and her independence. So, the Feminist theory seems to be more appropriate to identify the reasons behind a female character’s behavior and her development. Also, the work can be approached through the psychological approach, because Celie reveals in her writing that she is psychological disturbed.
This study depends on the views and opinions of many writers who tackle the subject of women suffering such as Kristal Brent Zook’s *Black Women’s Lives: Stories of Power and Pain* (2006), she reveals many challenges and inequality that black women still face. *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America’s Prison Nation* (2012) is a book written by Beth E. Richie who argues that black women face racism and class inequality because of the ways that race and culture have not figured centrally enough in the analysis of the causes and consequences of gender violence. Also, there is another book by Michele Wallace *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (1990) tackles the theme of women suffering. Wallace describes how women remained marginalized by the patriarchal culture of black power.

In fact, the dissertation is divided into three main chapters: the first chapter deals with the history of slavery and its impact on black writings. The first section of this chapter focuses on the importance of Afro-American literature through mentioning the history of black narratives which date back to the eighteenth century with figures as Lucy Terry and Phillis Wheatley, this section also traces the development of these black narratives by giving some examples from each period. The second section deals with black female writers with black female writers and their role in the development of Afro-American literature. The second chapter is about black female suffering in *The Color Purple* and it is well represented through Celie. Moreover, this chapter paves the way to understand Celie’s traumatic personality. The third chapter focuses on Celie’s process to regain her personality through writing; using letters in novel is known as an epistolary novel. This chapter, also, explains some of the characteristics of this sub-genre and how it served adequately by Alice Walker to depict black female suffering through the protagonist, Celie.
Effectively, Celie frees herself through writing letters and asserts herself as a strong woman. This leads us to conclude that writing, to some extent, plays an important role to free one-self.
Chapter I: The History of Slavery and its Impact on Black Writing

Blacks have a long history in the United States of America; they suffered a lot from segregation, depression and racism; Afro-American literature plays an important role to depict such issues. This chapter will introduce; first, the history of slavery and its impact on black writings to focus on the historical development of the Afro-American literature and its contribution to the American literature. Second, it will introduce black women writing and its contribution to the American literature in general and to Afro-American literature in particular.

1. The Importance of Afro-American Literature:

African-American literature is interested in different issues linked to black history like: slavery, racism and religion. The black narrative began during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with Lucy Terry, Phillis Wheatly and many others. Then, it developed into what became the Harlem Renaissance; it considered as golden era for many black writers to emerge and compete with the mainstream writing. They worked hard to establish their own writing tradition and to represent their suffering in the white society; like Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Helene Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Jessie Redmon, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, they defended their cause with different styles, but their goal is one which is to give African-American literature value.

African-American literature is “the product of complex issues of voice and authority […] such issues grew out of tendencies and ambiguities of race relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (D.Bruce, 1). From the very beginning, blacks as slaves in America; they were seen as inferior people. They suffered intensively from hatred, prejudice, racism, discrimination and segregation all along their existing in America, before and after the civil war.
The African-American writers worked hard to reflect the suffering of blacks from the first moment they set their foot on the New World. Their themes were various and related to the long history of black’s experiences as Bernard Bell argued that black people’s experiences “of Africa, the transatlantic or Middle Passage, slavery, Southern plantation tradition, emancipation, Reconstruction, post-Reconstruction, Northern migration, urbanization, and racism have produced a residue of shared memories and frames of reference” (Bell, 5). Though black people identify persistently their heritage and experiences, they link themselves to American life. In other word and as W.E.B Du Bois in his book *The Souls of Black Folk* argues that “Negro […] born with veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, a world which yields him no true self-consciousness”. That is African-American writers claim through their writings that they are American people and Du Bois explained this as “double-consciousness”; he clarifies it as follow:

A black person ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

(7)

To prove that they are Americans, the blacks had to fight the white’s imagined stereotypes. Americans neglect any views of black people; they see “them as fit only for enslavement” and they are half-human being, most of them live in the South of America, they are uneducated people. Early slaves were deprived of education; this justifies the absence of early slave narratives. It can be noted that there were attempts to educate blacks.

There were many black writers who wanted to develop and demonstrate Afro-American literature. The first writer trace can return to Lucy Terry who was born about 1730, “she was brought to Rhode Island from Africa […] as a slave narrative to Deerfield
She married a free man of color and subsequently became free herself.” Her poem “Bars Fight” written in “1746, did not appear in print until 1893, in a work of local history.” When she wrote the poem, she was too young, and she was sixteen years old. In fact, Terry succeeds to show her “ability to express herself and ideas” even if she is a black woman. Another earliest Afro-American writer is Britton Hammon and his autobiographical pamphlet The Narrative. It is “religious and didactic in purpose and far from openly against slavery”. Also, there is Jupiter Hammon who is an earliest Afro-American poet; He published “An Evening Thought”. This poem “praised the hope and meaning of salvation”, Dickson D.Bruce in his book The Origins of African-American Literature notices that both poems of Jupiter Hammon and Lucy Terry have “no specific references to issues of color or slavery”. This led to conclude that the earliest writing is closer to the ideas of Christianity rather than to the issues like freedom and equality with white society; this vision is changed during the second half of the eighteenth century. (D. Bruce, 12-37)

During the American War of Independence (1775-1783), blacks are more aware about their issues like freedom, equality and about revolution itself. The earliest African American writers sought to explain that the proposition in the Declaration of Independence “all men are created equal” in which they must have the same human rights that white Americans have it, because blacks participated in the war as soldiers, but they have not any rights as the white people.

The most known writers at that time are Olaudah Equiano, John Marrent and Phillis Wheatley; they “played an important role in the development of the African-American literature through their physical presence, subject matter and transatlantic publication, as well as the reception of their writings.” Equiano writes The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano in 1789. According to W.E.B Du Bois, Equiano is “the founder of what would become the genre of the African-American slave narrative” In fact, Equiano is
ashamed of his origin and “never represented himself as African-American” but “classified himself among the citizens of the world.” (Carretta, 53-54)

There is another contributor in Afro-American literature who is Phillis Wheatley, she is unlike Olaudah Equiano; Wheatley has “self-consciousness about herself as a writer, and her role in the discussions around her, that was revealing of more general issues about the role of a black voice in the Revolutionary debate.” She is an African woman, she was born in 1753 and “brought to Boston’s slave market in 1761.” She writes many of poems in “Poems on Various Subject, Moral and Religious”; this literary work of Phillis Wheatley come with many discussions; at that time is so difficult to accept black person especially black woman to write or participate on American society, she marginalized and had no role in American society. Others describe her like David Grinsted, as “one of the strangest creatures in the country, and perhaps in the whole world”. (D.Bruce, 40-47) In fact, Wheatley’s poem celebrates “Christian themes.” (W.Cook and Tatum, 9)

In the late of 18th and early 19th centuries appeared another genre in Afro-American literature which is slave narrative. It appeared first as spiritual narratives; in which Afro-American women who wrote these spiritual narratives. They seek to advance their message as a blacks and women.

The early Afro-American woman who wrote spiritual narratives was Maria W. Stewart. In 1831 and 1832, she published two works Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality and Meditations. Also there was Jarena Lee who published two religious autobiographical narratives in 1836 and 1849. These two works were The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee and Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee. In addition, there was Nancy Prince, in 1841, published a pamphlet entitled The West Indies: Being a Description of the Islands, Progress of Christianity, Education, and Liberty among the Colored Population Generally. And in 1850, she published A Narrative of the Life and
Travels of Mrs. Nancy Prince. Her both works were spiritual narratives and travel narratives. (Encyclopedia)

In the middle of the nineteenth century, slave narrative is developed in which written by slaves who describing their lives in the South after escaping to freedom. They wanted to illustrate brutality of their life under slavery. As well as, they demand about the right to live as persons. (Encyclopedia)

The most famous known author in the slave narrative is Frederick Douglass; his best-known work is his autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845). At that time, there were some critics attacked him and his work, they did not accept a black man who could write in a fluent language. He did not care about such critics and portrayed himself as a self-made man who struggled for freedom, education and other issues. Douglass re-published his autobiography in 1855; it became My Bondage and My Freedom. Also, he wrote various influential articles and essays during his work in a number of political posts. Also, there is another best known autobiography Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) written by enslaved African-American woman; Harriet Jacobs. She describes her suffering as a black woman and she calls it the war of her life in which later on gained her independence and that of her two children. (Encyclopedia)

Due to the slave narrative, Afro-American literature entered the world of dramatic and prose literature. In 1853, William Wells Brown published the first black American novel The President’s Daughter or Clotel; is a tragic story about Afro-American daughter of Thomas Jefferson and Clotel who dies to protect her daughter from the evil of slavery. In 1858, Brown published the first Afro-American play based on themes and scenes that close to the fugitive slave narratives. Also, in 1859 the first African-American women’s fiction appeared. There is a short story “The Two Offers” written by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.
In addition, there is an autobiographical novel *Our Nig* that written by Harriet E. Wilson; this autobiographical novel tells the life of black woman in the North. (Encyclopedia)

While the American Revolution (1776-1783) created the United States; there is another central event in the history of America which is the Civil War of (1861-1865). Also, it called War Between the States. Abraham Lincoln was elected as a president; his aim at first was preserve the United States as a nation and not to abolish slavery. He noticed that He could not establish a Union without abolishing slavery; he declared in his Emancipation Proclamation that all slaves are free. In fact, the civil war ended slavery but it did not end racism in the United States. (Encyclopedia)

After the end of the Civil War in 1865, in Afro-American literature appeared a lot of writers who wrote non-fiction works. They were aware about their past and future; among these writers W.E.B. Dubois. Dubois published *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) which is a collection of essays in which he described his personal experiences and how African Americans lived in rural Georgia and in the larger American society. He argued that Afro-American should work together to fight discrimination and inequality. Another prominent writer of this period who is Booker T. Washington, he has multiple works; *Up from Slavery* (1901), *The Future of the American Negro* (1899), *Tuskegee and Its People* (1905), and *My Larger Education* (1911). He argued that blacks should prove themselves then ask to end racism in the United States. In addition, there was a famous Afro-American poet who gained national prominence; this poet is Paul Laurence Dunbar. In 1893, he published his first book of poetry *Oak and Ivy*. Also, there is other works like *When Malindy Sings* (1906), *Joggin’ Erlong* (1906). (Encyclopedia)

There is a great Migration in which many black people leave to the north to find more “economic and cultural opportunities” (Dickson-Carr, 6) and thousands are there “by 1920, Harlem had seventy-three thousand African-American residents.” So in the north, new
cultures emerged and formed, “this explosion of culture was in variety of forms, literature, music, theater, and painting.” Through Harlem Renaissance African-Americans have great confidence more than before, and their demands for “social and political equality” are clearer. (Worth, 19-26)

The Harlem Renaissance also known as New Negro Renaissance which is “one of the most prolific and artistically sound collections of literature by and about African-Americans to date.” (Dickson-Carr, 6) This period is the golden age of African-American writers which is begun from 1917 till 1935. During this period there is a flourish in poetry, fiction, drama as well as in music, dance, and painting. African-American worked to represent their identity and their history in America through literature and other arts which are a means of proving oneself.

James Weldon Johnson is a well known member of Harlem Renaissance and many others writers participate during the Harlem Renaissance period, and they helped to transform the society from Old Negro which is characterized by inferiority, slavery, racism to New Negro which is characterized by self-confidence and self-consciousness. Among these writers Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Helene Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Jessie Redmon, Jean Toomer and Langston Hughes who said in his essay The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain published in the Nation in 1926:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark- skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom- tom laughs. If colored people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn’t matter either. We build our temples
for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on
top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (Qtd in
Rampersad, 33)

Both men and women writers have a significant role in the Harlem Renaissance, women writers depict “the lives of black people generally and of black women in particular” (Wall, 9) few of them lived in Harlem itself like Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen while others they did not.

One of the most known black female writers during the Harlem Renaissance is Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston was born in 1891 in Eatonville, Florida. She received a higher education at Haward University and Columbia University. Hurston is “a major twentieth century author, she published four novels, an autobiography, and two works of folklore.”

She is not “the first Afro-American woman to publish a novel, but she was the first to create language and imaginary that reflected the reality of black women’s lives” (Wall, 101). We touch in her work the image of “rural African-Americans, including depictions of their cultural practices, their folklore, their social customs, their spiritual beliefs and their dialect”. Also, she tackled issues in her various writing such as “the plight of women, romantic relationships, and the struggle for personal and cultural identity”. Hurston focuses more on African-American women and their struggle. As well as, on folklore in which her novel Mules and Men considered as “the first anthology of African-American folklore.” (Glasrud and Champion, 163)

Hurston in her life suffered as a woman, as a black and as a writer; her writing suffered years of ambiguity only few readers and scholars heard about her and Alice Walker who helped to revive Hurston’s writings. In other word, only “fewer were able to read her work, as it had been out of print since long before her death in 1960”. She wrote seven books were published in the thirties; two of these book Mules and Men (1935) a folklore
As any writer, Hurston was attacked by some critics. There is Richard Wright, who criticizes her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. According to him, “it posed situations irrelevant to African-American struggle”. Many scholars examine Hurston’s work, that all of her works are related to women. Alice Walker’s “*In Search of Zora Neale Hurston*” “notes that Hurston represents African-American women who seek a political voice in the areas of race and gender.” Also, Gay Wilentz in “*Defeating the False God: Janie’s Self-Determination in Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God*” argues that “Janie is one of the earliest African-American women characters to develop cultural and personal identity” (Glasrud and Champion, 166).

Zora Neale Hurston used dialect language and folklore in her writing; “her choice of structure, themes and language gives evidence of her commitment to the folk”. This allows her writing to be distinctive and defying the whites writing. In 1943, she published an essay “*Characteristics of Negro Expression*”, in which “she differentiates between the Afro-American culture and its interpretation and she said ‘we may go directly to the Negro and let him speak for himself’”. In other hand, Hurston’s “stories show that the narrative voice plays an important part in the assimilation of the written text to the oral performance characteristic of the Afro-American tradition.” (Fraile, 29-30)

Zora Neale Hurston as a first step that she takes it to write, when she became a member of The Stylus. This is the campus of literary society. In The Stylus, she published her first short story “*John Redding Goes to Sea*” in 1921. In this short story, Hurston gave the theme of “child who dreams with living his or her little hometown and see the world”. Also, in her famous novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, she is interested more in the
value of the Afro-American language. Also, she uses dialect language to give the real image of black people. (Fraile, 29-30)

Hurston published other short stories which are “Drenched in Light” (1924) and “Spunk” in (1925) and “Muttsy” (1926), “introduces the urban setting of Harlem in Hurston’s fiction and intends to introduce Harlem slang too” through the protagonist Pinkie who came from Eatonville to Harlem in which she did not understand their mode of speech. In “Sweat” (1926) “Hurston starts exploring a little more thoroughly possibilities of free indirect speech” and she is the first Afro-American to do so. “The Bone of Contention” was first published in 1991 and “the story itself based on a folk tale that was also the inspiration for the play Mule Bone” (Fraile, 32-33).

Through “The Gilded Six-Bits” (1933), Hurston used new technique which later on developed it in her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God. The author realizes the rhetorical strategy which is the speakerly text, “this strategy consists of the interaction of both black and white speeches so as to create a third language that moves in between these two”. In other words, this speakerly text contains two forms of speech “a profoundly lyrical, densely metaphorical, quasi-musical, privileged black oral tradition on the one hand, and a received but no yet fully appropriate Standard English literary tradition on the other hand”. In 1941, she published “Cake Robin Beale Street” and in 1942 “Story in Harlem Slang”, Hurston was interested more in the voice of folk to achieve; first “the Afro-American experience is more directly and freshly conveyed”, and second, to introduce black dialect as a literary language. This is how they enriched the American literature heritage. (Fraile, 36)

In general, Zora Neale Hurston has a folkloric voice in most of her writing, because folklore is close to the tradition of black society. Black women through their different writing focused on African-American history and black women in particular. In other words,
these black female writers trying to make the reader feel their words and read between lines. For them, each word has a meaning and each character has a story.

Another writer is Jessie Redmon Fauset who was born on April 27th, 1882 in New Jersey. She tackled subjects like “racism, passing, limited opportunities for African-Americans and women and miscegenation”. During the Harlem Renaissance “most of her fiction [...] depicted black’s primitive exotics, as free, sexually uninhibited creatures [...] thus Fauset’s choice of subject matter was very coolly received”. There is Confusion is the first novel. Also, through her Plum Bun “reveals her true racial identity in support of a black woman” with her protagonist Angela Murray who “develop a new understanding of the true significance of skin color, money and marriage” (Austin, 102-103).

In fact, some of her novels received some unfavorable assessments because her portrayals of middle class blacks defied stereotypical characterizations that white readers had come to expect and that some white reviewers appreciated”. Deborah McDowell in her essay “The Neglected Dimension of Jessie Redmon Fauset” argues that Fauset “portrayals of black women who struggle for equality and independence in a racist and sexist society” (Austin, 103-104), she classified Fauset as an early black female writer in Afro-American literature. Like Bernard Bell, Fauset “reject the romantic extremes of nationalism and assimilation in favor of cultural dualism”. Moreover, during the forties, Bell argues that there is “an increase in the number of writers who publish novels in which the protagonists and the majority of the characters are white” like Hurston’s Seprah on the Sewanee. (Bell, 112-187)

Afro-American writing needs a firm ground to continue its struggle this ground is the political rights power; this is a great step in the history of Afro-Americans and there is an active effect between politics and literature. During 1950s and 1960s, Civil Rights Movement appeared in American society and later on is known as the Black Power
Movement. Also, women participated in these Civil Rights Movements in which they “are organizers, men are leaders”. The main characteristics of the Civil Rights Movements are no-violence, civil rights, and the right of voting, ending segregated rules in public schools and granted jobs for all. Later on, and because of the continuing of violence from whites, the Civil Rights Movement changed into the Black Power Movement during 1960. Especially during the murdering of its leaders on different times like John F Kennedy in 1963, Malcolm X in 1965 and Martin Luther King in 1968. (Payne, 8)

Bernard Bell argues that:

The adoption of the concept of Black Power is one of the most legitimate and healthy developments in American politics and race relations […]. It is a call for people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense. It is a call for people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society. (Bell, 236)

The Black Power Movement is linked to the Black Arts Movement through their goal which is the “aesthetic and spiritual sister”. There are many successful women artists like Sonia Sanchez who is famous with her poetry, she uses free verse. Also, there are Nikki Giovanni and Gwendolyn Brooks. Literature during 1950s and 1960s is known by “a movement away toward the rediscovery and revitalization of myth, legend and ritual as appropriate sign systems for expressing the double-consciousness, socialized ambivalence, and double vision of the modern black experience” (Bell, 133-189).

Those political and literary developments of 1950s and 1960s led to the spread of awareness among black women more than before. African-American women writers become
stronger and are able to publish and break the silence. Many of them win the Nobel Prize and publish their first novels like Alice Walker’ *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Toni Morrison’ *The Bluest Eye* and June Jordan *His Own Where*. They focus on blacks and their contacts more than the issues between blacks and whites. Moreover, many black women appeared on the stage of African-American literature like Gayl Jones, Audre Lorde and others.

2. **Black Women Writing: Double Jeopardy Case**

For many years, blacks considered as inferior people. But this opinion has changed by the end of the civil war. Inside these black families things did not change only men “to be seen and to be heard”, and black women are still suffering from black men. There are specific “things in a woman’s nature that are universal and transcend the boundaries of race” but black woman suffered from both sides as black and as a woman. For instance, some of the black men when they call black women, politely they saying “Hey, soul sister”, but other blacks use taboo words to call them and do not give them any respect. In fact, black women do not want possible things from them. Fran Sanders in her article “*Dear Black Man*” describes in simple words what she wants. As well as, other black women:

> Talk to me the woman that I am and not me as that woman […]. Look at me with no preconceived notions of how I must act or feel and I will try to do the same with you. […]. Look at my face when you speak to me; look into my eyes and see what they have to say. Think about the answers that you give to my questions. Don’t speak to me in ad- agency prose or in the hip jargon of the day. I am a woman and you are a man and I have always known it. If you love me, tell me so. Don’t
approach me as you would an enemy. I am on your side
and have always been. We have survived, and we may
just be able to teach the world a lesson. (Sanders, 87-90-
94)

Women’s demands about their rights increased especially through writing. In other words, they used writing as a tool to attract the eyes of black men, if they are really interested and feel them. In fact, “these women become the middle class, respectable.” (Collins, 161)

The prison of color and of men faced black women and their life; these women are “doubly marginalized” (Ward and Herndl, 741). In other words, the situation of black women in their society is so complicated; they are rejected and marginalized because they are women and blacks. This situation is described by the term of “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female” by Frances Beale.

Through this term Frances Beale describes the position of black women in United States of America, she emphasizes about the system of capitalism, which is used as a “means to destroy the humanity of all people and particularly the humanity of Black people”. She focused on several factors that led to the suffering of black women; one of these factors is economic exploitation of black women. The system of capitalism exploited women, “they are paid less for the same work that men do, and jobs that are specifically relegated to women are low-paying and without the possibility of advancement”. She makes a comparison in the wages for the four categories in American society; for example black males have 4277 dollars, while black females have only 2861 dollars. So, she notices that black females have the lowest wages compared to white and black men and even white women. So, there is an “economic slavery”; this situation must be changed, as Frances Beale argues that black women must free themselves and do not waste time “until that great day in the future when the revolution somehow miraculously is accomplished” (Beale, 109-122).
Black women talked about their situation through the media, for instance, they suffered from “rape, stalking and sexual violence” (Richie, 24). Black women awareness sophisticated only during the past few decades in which “feminist organizations began to high-light in trim ate partner abuse against women as a social problem needing to be remedied” (Potter, 3). So, the media, literature and even the society participate to raise the awareness of black women. According to Meta Y. Harris black women use their autobiographies as a means “to share one’s history and culture with other’s” by insisting that:

Autobiography by black people in America, as indicated previously originally took the form of slave narratives, produced to show white people that slaves were indeed human beings; with all the same human qualities attributed to white people […] the descriptions of black women were particularly negative in the early literature about black people, often presenting them as fat and doting mammies. (Harris, 36-37)

These images are fixed to characterize black women. For Harris “the only way these images can be changed is for Black women to do it themselves, by writing their own stories about their lives”. These writing are the simple way that black woman follow to emphasize her identity and “to free herself from the stereotypical and derogatory images that have been inflicted on her historically” (Harris, 38-44).

The autobiography of black woman during the nineteenth century is:

a social discourse that applies a unique black woman’s voice to the interpretation and recording of her life experiences within a historical context that saw black
Americans attempting to establish their humanity and self-worth in the eyes of a dominant white American society that granted them neither. (Stover, 133)

From these autobiographies, we notice both place and time of the author, as a reader “need to know out of what social, spatial, and temporal locations that self emerged”. In other words, black women autobiographies illustrate the dominations of enslavement especially those writers of the nineteenth century “who chose to share their personal and secular life experiences in a public arena […] it establishes a unique communicative style in the structure and in the content.” The most known autobiography is that written by Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). (Stover, 134)

Not only Autobiographies that are used by black women, there are also stories that were written by black women writer. They use characters to convey such idea, or image about their suffering and their living. The art of writing is an important means to self-expression especially for black women writers.

Maria Stuart was interested in issues of black women, at her time “race, gender and class oppression were the fundamental causes of black women’s poverty”. Many black women intellectuals lived in “isolation and obscurity and, like Zora Neale Hurston, lie buried in unmarked graves. Others are known and more famous “through the efforts of contemporary Black women scholars like Alice Walker”. In fact, most Afro-American woman “is not known and hence not believed in; she belongs to a race that is best designated by the term ‘problem,’ and she lives beneath the shadow of that problem which envelops and obscures her” (Collins, 1-2-3).

The most known contemporary intellectuals, scholars and writers are Sorjourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Toni Morrison, Barbara Smith and others. They challenged all the difficulties that faced black women and “used their voices to raise
important issues that affect Black African women”. These issues covered both sides of suffering as a woman and as a black. Also, they give the image of “inequality within Black civil society”. Septima Clark illustrates this situation:

I used to feel that women couldn’t speak up, because when district meetings were being held at my home […] I didn’t feel as if I could tell them what I had in mind […] But later on, I found out that women had a lot to say, and what they had to say was really worth while […] So we started talking, and have been talking quite a bit since that time. (Collins, 3-7)

She means about “that time”, the 1970s in which the awareness of black women increased more than before. In other words, during the 1970s, black writers could establish their own literature and it is “relatively independent of the white literary establishment” (Dubey, 14). Also, there is a great participation of black women in politics through the Civil Rights and various movements that helped them to raise their voice about freedom from oppression of blacks. Before many years “black women always talked about their oppressed situation to each other. And then there was the breaking of silence that black women did throughout their history and the history of Black people” (Wright, 77).

In the early of 1970, Marlene Dixon said “the very stereotypes that express the society’s belief in the biological inferiority of women recall the images to justify the oppression of Blacks”. Black women are not known for the American society, but during the 1980s, their voice became so powerful. Collins who describes this in few words:

Much of the public voice that Black women gained in the 1980s represents a dare. Because individual African-American women broke silence in multiple arenas. Black
women’s collective voice is now public and known. Such voice challenges the legitimacy of public transcripts claiming Black female inferiority. Because it represents profound public in subordination, this newly public voice was bound to generate new form of suppression dedicated to resilingence African-American women. (Wright, 77)

One of the most known writers, who depict and give black women voice to defeat black male oppression, is Toni Morrison. Morrison was born on February 18th, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio. She said:

To make the story appear oral, meandering, effortless, spoken to have the reader feel the narrator without identifying that narrator, or hearing him or her knock about, and to have the reader work with the author in the construction of the book is what’s important. What is left out is as important as what is there. (Mackenzie, 221)

For more than thirty years, through her writing, she makes the reader closer to her ideas. Morrison is a fictional novelist, she writes different novel “to illuminate and engage with social and cultural complexities”. She is considered a postmodern writer and Madhu Dubey who “notes many of the questions and techniques associated specifically with Postmodernism have long been the concern of African-American writers; it is reductive to regard their contribution to literature as ‘a subset of postmodern culture’” (Lister, 13-14). In 1993, she is the first African-American woman who won the Nobel Prize Literature.

Morrison’s novels are “dialogic, featuring multiple points of view, and incorporating themes
and imagery from many sources including biblical, classical, African, and African-American traditions” (Stein, 6).

The first novel that written by Morrison is *The Bluest Eye* (1970); this novel is about Pecola who was raised inferior due to her eye and skin color. In other words, this novel is “an exploration of the physic consequences, particularly for black girls, of being marginalized, not only in the earliest text books used in elementary schools, but also in their every life both in and outside school”. Toni Morrison helps the reader to understand the art through this novel; according to her art “could be both unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time” (Mackenzie, 222-224). In 1979, Betty Jean Parker asked Toni Morrison about the reasons behind her writing *The Bluest Eye*, she answered him “I wrote about a victim who is a child, and adults don’t write about children.” (Parker, 61)

In 1973, Toni Morrison published her second novel *Sula*. After three years Robert Stepto made a conversation with Morrison and asked her about this novel and about the protagonist Sula; she said “Sula was hard, for me; very difficult to make up that kind of character. Not difficult to think it up, but difficult to describe a woman who could be used as a classic type of evil force” (Stepto, 12). Then, in 1979, Betty Jean Parker asked Morrison about *Sula* and the message that she is trying to convey it. She said “in *Sula* I tried to posit a situation where there a so-called good and so-called evil people. Nel and Sula are symbolic of this condition” (Parker, 62). Also, about choosing her characters, she answered Pepsi Charles and she said, “The names that I’ve chosen for people in the books are very often real names of real people” (Charles, 17). In fact, Toni Morrison as a writer has the skills and the ability to choose characters and this led her to be the most famous contemporary African-American writers, and these two novels *The Bluest Eyes* and *Sula* become contemporary classics.
In 1977, Toni Morrison published another novel about the loss of fathers which is *Song of Solomon*. She was interested about man as a main character because as she said to Pepsi Charles “I wanted to talk about something that I hadn’t talked about before. Some idea which was a combination of surrender and domination at the same time […]. Because my father died when I was writing the book”. Morrison’s writing helps her not only as a woman but also helps her as a person; the distinction is that, as she said “helping me as a woman as having something to do with the complicated levels of one’s sexuality. But the books emanate out of where I am as a Toni Morrison, as opposed to as a woman, or a black, or an editor, or any of these other words. But they enhance my life” (Charles, 18-19-23).

In 1981, Morrison published *Tar Baby* which is a novel focusing on the struggle and relationship between a man and a woman. She won a Pulitzer Prize, when she writes *Beloved* which is a story about an emancipated woman, Sethe, who killed her daughter to protect her. There are another series of writing *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1999), *The Big Box* (1999), *The Book of Mean People* (2002), *Love* (2003) and *A Mercy* (2008).

Another black female writer who contributed to the Afro-American literature is Alice Walker. Walker was born on February 9th, 1944 in Eatonton, Georgia. She is the youngest of eighth children of Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker and Willie Lee Walker. Novels, short stories, essays and poems that are written by Alice Walker focused on issues of black women; who suffer from the oppression of black people. For her, writing may not change social and political issues but it can announce realities and suffering of human living. She admires the works of black women writers, especially Zora Neale Hurston. Walker revives Hurston’s writing in which she writes an article entitled “*In Search of Zora Neale Hurston*”.

Walker through her writing focused to depict the inner strengths of black women, and among their suffering; they are fighting to prove their existence. She is interested in
writing, when she received a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College in New York, and she was supported by the poet Muriel Ruykeyser and the writer Jane Cooper. Walker writes poems in which we find them in her first volume of poetry *Once* (1968). After that, Walker became depressed because she is pregnant. She writes several volumes of poetry to express her feelings at that time. Then, she wrote a short story “*To Hell with Dying*”.

Alice Walker as a black woman and as a writer, she participated on the Civil Rights Movement and published an essay “*The Civil Right Movement: What Good Was It?*” and *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* which is her first novel. This novel received criticism especially from black critics because for them Walker dealt harshly with the black male characters. In fact, she did not care about such critics and continued to write about the oppression and suffering of black women.

In 1976, she published the second novel *Meridian*. This story is about young woman and her fighting during the Civil Rights Movement. In addition to, another literary production which is a book, *You Can’t Keep a Good Woman Down*, contains short stories.

In 1982, she completed her famous novel *The Color Purple*. This novel is an epistolary novel about Celie, who suffered a lot because she is a young black woman. She is raped by her step-father and abused by her husband. In 1983, she won a Pulitzer Prize and later on *The Color Purple* is made as a film which is produced by Quincy Jones and directed by Steven Spielberg.

Black women writers prove their personality in both societies black and white men. *The Color Purple* as a novel gives the real image of suffering of different female characters, especially the protagonist Celie, the poor black woman; who become psychologically complex because she is raped by her step-father and abused by her husband and will be tackled in the second chapter.
Chapter II: Black Female Suffering in *The Color Purple*

Celie as a black woman suffered a lot; she writes her painful story in letters to illustrate her traumatic personality within black society. There are many women appeared in The Color Purple, these women help Celie to assert her personality and appear as a strong woman. So this chapter will be about Celie’s traumatic personality and the reasons behind her writing these letters.

1. Celie’s Traumatic Personality:

*The Color Purple* as a novel considered as a “social history, psychoanalytic case study, love story and fairy tale”; this description is complete through the analyzing of female characters. Celie the protagonist of the novel, she is a poor black woman; she lives within family while kindly and love does not exist. Celie starts writing letters to God, through these letters, she tells her story and her experience in this life. She addresses her words through letters only to God because she has no one else to write to him or her. Celie knows that she must never tell anyone about what happening to her, especially with her step-father, Alphonso, who warns her “you better not never tell nobody but God. It’d kill your mamy” (Walker, 8). Celie is only fourteen years old, when she writes her first letter. She does not understand what is happening to her. In fact, Celie’s step father raped her and she feels “sick every time” (Walker, 8). In other words, *The Color Purple* is:

A pivotal text in the tradition of literature by black women writers who have taken as their theme a young black woman’s journey from silence to voice and authentic female selfhood, an autonomous identity that reflects the female protagonist’s agency and her authority over her own life and her own story. While African-American men and women have been silenced historically
because of race and class, African-American women’s silencing is compounded, both within and without the black community, by gender. (Smith, 3)

Celie is a victim of her step-father and, later on, of her husband, Albert. She has two children by her step-father, but at birth he has taken away. In other word, “he sold it to a man and his wife over Monticello” (Walker, 10). The first letter that is written by Celie:

Has two fold significance. It indicate her awareness; if only on a fundamental level, of power dynamics within her environment: if, Pa, a man, has the power to unsettle the world as she knows it then only a more powerful entity, God has the potential to set it right. Her letter also indicates her confusion about what has happened to her and the extent to which it has fragmented her sense of self. (Smith, 7)

Also, the reader can understand the personality of the protagonist, Celie, for instance this phrase is written by her in the first letter; “I am forteen years old” (Walker, 8) with more confidence about her age and no one can debate about this. However “her next statement is less certain ‘I am I have always been a good girl’ and reflects the inner struggle between her desire to hold on to her individual perception of self and her internalization of society’s negative judgments about her self-worth” (Smith, 7)

Through time, there are things changed in Celie’s life but her miserable situation does not changed; Celie married Albert who known for her as Mr. in fact Albert is a boyfriend of her sister Nettie; his wife died and he has only three children. At first, Celie advices her sister to interest only about her learning; because by education she can prove herself and does not become like her. Celie wants to protect her sister especially from her
step-father, and she tells her sister that is not an easy matter to take care of children; they are not own. In other word, she warns her sister, and she says “Look what happen to Ma” (Walker, 11). There is motherly kind especially her interests about her sister and worrying about her sister’s life and her future, even after what happened to her from Alphonso; her step-father.

There is another anxiety, she afraid to happen for her sister, Nettie, what happened to her before with Alphonso. Because he still “looking at Nettie” (Walker, 12). To avoid all this, Celie orders Nettie to marry Albert and she does not give her the reason. There are many changes in the course of events; Alphonso does not give Nettie to Albert, because she is too young. He tells him that he can take Celie, the oldest one and Albert says “she ugly”. Alphonso starts to convince Albert about Celie; he says “she clean, […] can do everything just like you want.” (Walker, 14)

Alphonso, the step-father, describes Celie as an animal, she cannot say anything just work and obey. Albert does not decide if he takes Celie or not, he takes “the whole spring, from March to June” (Walker, 15); he takes this period of thinking because he is a man and has all the rights. But Celie has no right to defend or give her opinion about this marriage.

Albert takes Celie as a wife, but in fact as a slave; she works all the time and takes care about his children. The first surprise for Celie is that she finds four children instead of three. Celie does not stop working, in this situation, she describes herself as a “truck” and “her experience have been limited to the trauma that she suffered at the hands of the men in her life and she is unable, at this point, to imagine any other possibilities for herself.” (Smith, 8)

One day Nettie decides to leave her home and came to live with her sister, Celie. She thinks that her sister lives in a paradise with her husband. Later on, Nettie notices the
miserable situation of Celie’s life; She advises her sister “to fight” (Walker, 19) and not stand as a stone; she is a woman, she is a human being, she has emotions, feelings and heart. In fact, Nettie tries to learn her sister but Celie answered her by saying “I don’t know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive” (Walker, 19). First, Celie must increase her consciousness about her fight and must be something, inside herself, exist to push her to fight, and must has confidence about herself.

As well, Alice Walker tackles a controversial issue which is rape; she creates, Celie as a main character in The Color Purple to show the reader “not only her experience of rape, but the integrity of her life.” Celie becomes psychological complex because she was raped by her step-father. Walker succeeds and lets the reader “learn about the traumatic reality of sexual assault.” In addition, Walker through The Color Purple argues that rape’s victim can heal herself and fulfilling her life. (Field, 150)

There are few black women writer who participate in the anti-rape movement which is began in the early 1970’s. If the black women keep silent, they “compromise their own personal safety”; in The Color Purple, Celie’s story goes “upon the larger political and societal implications of her rape”. Walker focuses only on Celie’s character and her psychological and physical personality; as Deborah E. McDowell says:

*The Color Purple* fits primarily into the private paradigm suggested by its choice of the epistolary mode –by definition personal and private- and the finite focus of the Celie letters. one of their most striking features is the conspicuous absence of any reference to the outside world… instead, like epistolary novels generically, *The Color Purple* emphasizes the psychological development of character. (Field, 154-161)
Walker gives the reader great details about Celie’s consciousness and her personality since she is a victim of rape; also, “she allows Celie to delineate the events that she endures at the hands of her step-father.” (Field, 161)

The story is not about Celie, but also about other women who have abused by men; these women mentioned in brief in Celie’s letters. Celie is similar to the three mothers in the novel; her mother, the second wife of Alphonso and Sofia’s mother. These mothers are mentioned a little bit in Walker’s novel. In addition, they are oppressed by their husbands with different means but the pain is one. These women are exception in only one case; they oppressed and have no voice to defend about their rights till they died. They are not like Celie who breaks her silent at the end of the novel.

Cели’s mother has no power to defend or communicate with Alphonso who abuses her and her children. She becomes sick and can’t move or do anything; that’s why Alphonso tells Celie that she can do things, her mother cannot do it and he raped her many times. Celie mother notices that something happened in the house, but she does not know exactly what happen. And about this Celie says “after a while… Mama finally ast how come she find his hair in the girls room if he can’t never go in there like he say” (Walker, 65). In fact, when Celie tells Shug (the blues singer) about this; she cries a lot because she knows exactly what happen to her. In other side, Celie thinks that her mother becomes sick and dies for this reason; which is she has a boy friend and this just fabricate from Alphonso, and “trying to believe his story kilt her.” (Walker, 65)

In fact, the mother knows what happen in her home, but she cannot change anything; Alphonso is the master and the others are slaves. She has no voice to protect herself and her daughters from the evil of Alphonso who oppressed them physically and psychologically. When Celie’s mother died, in some way she emancipated and her soul becomes free. In fact, her livings like her dying both are characterized by silent.
After Celie’s mother dying, Alphonso remarried from a young woman. For a short period, she knows what happen in the house especially for Celie, but she cannot put an end for this violence. In other hand, she is only “in room crying” (Walker, 14) but she cannot do anything or stop her husband who beats Celie.

When Sofia meets with Celie, she tells Celie about her mother; Sofia says “to tell the truth, you remind me of my mama. She under my daddy thumb. Naw, she under my daddy foot. Anything he says, goes. She never say nothing back. She never stand up for herself. Try to make a little half stand sometime for the children but that always backfire. More she stand up for us, the harder time he give her. He hate children and he hate where they come from. Tho from all the children he got, you’d never know it” (Walker, 31). From these words, Sofia gives a real miserable situation for her mother, her brothers and sisters too. They are suffering a lot. Sofia’s mother likes Celie’s mother she becomes ill then she dies.

All these three women are abused from black men; these men are their husbands. They do not look for these women like wives; but as something they use it and then throw it and because they want this. For them, these women have not any emotions or feelings; these women are marginalizing in their homes from black men, husbands, and their dominance.

There are other women appear in the novel are closer to Celie. These women are friends and guides for Celie, and before this when Celie goes to the Church; different women, sometimes are very kindly with her, and “sometimes not” (Walker, 33). But, these friends give some emotional support that in some cases, Celie needs it and she retreats her inner from the violence that she lives in.

Nettie is the first woman that tries to help and guide her sister, Celie. Nettie sees Celie as a mother and as a sister at the same time, because Celie takes care about her. In other words, Nettie influenced by her teacher, Miss Beasley. Alphonso takes Celie out of the
school and never interests and cares if she likes learning or not. In fact, Alphonso hates Miss Beasley because she works and teaches in the school; for him woman only works at home and only looks for the demands and orders of her husband, she has no right to be equal for the man.

Nettie as Celie describes her “She a good teacher” (Walker, 19) because Nettie, most of the time, tries to teach Celie; how to read, how to spell words. She wants her sister to learn and know more to change her situation. Nettie and her goals are trying to teach her sister any way. Albert separates the two sisters, and he hides Nettie’s letters. Celie knows exactly where he hides them, but after a long time, they are in “his trunk” (Walker, 70).

Shug helps Celie to get the key from Albert, she starts reading letters and she is so happy because her sister is still alive; these letters have good news for Celie, in addition, her two children are still alive too, and they are with Nettie in Africa; they are succeeding in their education and their life. This news gives Celie the power that needs it in her hard times. Nettie transmits to Celie realities that she did not realize it and even Nettie does not have any idea about it until she travels to Africa and find colored people, as Nettie says in her letters to Celie, these people “who want us to know! What us to grow and see the light! They are not all men like Pa and Albert, or beaten done like Ma was.” (Walker, 74) Nettie thinks that Celie lives in a dark life; she lives without any sense because Alphonso and Albert who abuse her and they do not behave with her as a human being.

There is another role that Nettie plays it for Celie; she tries to correct the image of God for Celie; she tells that she is so happy in Africa, but she is missing her sister. She tells her that Ethiopia that they read about it in the Bible is Africa and “all the Ethiopians in the bible were colored”. In other words, she wants to tell Celie that black people are valuable not only white people; she says:
When you read the bible it is perfectly plain if you pay attention to the words. It is the pictures in the bible that fool you. The pictures that illustrate the words. All of the people are white and so you just think all the people from the bible were white too. But really white white people lived somewhere else during those times. That’s why the bible says that Jesus Christ had hair like lamb’s wool. Lamb’s wool is not straight, Celie. It isn’t even curly.

(Walker, 75)

Nettie’s letters are not just telling the news for Celie; they are, also, used as a means to enlighten Celie and her spiritual, to put an end for the abuses of her husband; Albert, and his children who ordered Celie to do this and that. In fact, Albert beats Celie, as well as his children; but not as he beats Celie. Celie does not cry; she makes herself as a “wood”. In addition, she thinks that she is a tree and “trees fear man” (Walker, 22), for her, that’s why she fears men especially, Albert. She cannot raise her voice; she has no voice to raise it; she forbidden to speak from the very beginning of her life, when Alphonso raped her. No one feels or helps her, except few; especially her sister when she grows, she wants to change Celie’s situation.

Nettie, in her letters, mentions the era of Jim Crow Law; when she visits New York, she notices that whites used different toilets, restaurants, and sits at the bus station. Also she tells her sister about Harlem and the black people who lived there; they are finer in their own houses and works.

Nettie is a model to Celie, she is her hope, her dream and her life; she is “Smart as anything. Read the news papers when she was little more than talking. Did figures like they was nothing. Talked real well to. And sweet. There never was a sweeter girl. Eyes just
brimming over with it” (Walker, 67). All these words do not describe this mutual love between the two sisters; Celie and Nettie.

There is another female character appears in the story and plays an important role in Celie’s life. One day Harpo tells Celie that he loves a girl and he wants to marry her; this girl is Sofia Butler who helps and enlighten Celie as Nettie do. Harpo brings her to his father who does not accept her at all, because he sees her still young but Sofia is pregnant from Harpo and he must married her. Sofia has a strong personality, when she meets with Harpo his father Albert; Harpo keeps quite but Sofia “not quite as tall as Harpo but much bigger, and strong and ruddy looking, like her mama brought her up on pork.” (Walker, 26)

Sofia does not respect Albert and his opinion about her marriage from Harpo; she says to him: “Naw, Harpo stay here, when you free, me and the baby be waiting”. Celie admires Sofia and her strong personality; Celie writes “she don’t act like me at all. Is she talking when Harpo and Mr. come in the room, she keep right on. If they ast her where something at, she say she don’t know. Keep talking” (Walker 29). In fact she is a “strong girl. Arms got muscle-legs too” (Walker, 27-28).

Sofia fights to get her independence and prove her personality within black men; she says: “all my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy; I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles” (Walker, 31). Sofia and Harpo married, they enjoy their life and sharing housework. One day, Celie hears something crash inside the house, she finds that Harpo and Sofia “fighting like two mens”, but after that, they take the two babies “for the week-end, to visit Sofia sister” (Walker, 30).

Sofia is not afraid and does not give any permission to anyone to abuse her; even her lover, Harpo, and about this; she says: “I love Harpo, God knows I do. But I kill dead before I let him beat me”. Sofia most of the time against Harpo’s father, Albert, when he tells her to do something, “she do another.” For instance, Albert orders Sofia that “she can’t
be all the time going to visit her sister”, Sofia does not respect or listen to what he saying. In addition, Albert become anger about this situation and orders his son, Harpo, to beat Sofia because “nothing can do that better than a good sound beating.” (Walker, 29-31)

Harpo’s family knows only violence with women. Sofia with her strong personality has an ability to control and take care about her family, she can do male works; Celie wonders about this and describe this situation, she says:

I look out cross the yard. I see Sofia dragging a ladder and then lean it up against the house. She wearing a old pair of Harpo pants. Got her head tied up in a head rag. She clam up the ladder to the roof, Begin to hammer in nails. Sound echo cross the yard like shots. (Walker, 42)

In other side, Harpo wants to become like his father; he says “I want her to do what I say, like you do for Pa”; he loves Sofia but he wants her to obey him and does not dispute him. In addition, he wants to beat her if she does not respect or follow him. Celie listens to Harpo carefully, and she wants to convince him; in which he is wrong in his thinking. Celie tells Harpo that his father beats her if she obeys him or not, in the two cases he strikes her hardly and Celie says: “Mr. marry me to take care of his children. I marry him cause my daddy made me. I don’t love Mr. and he don’t love me” but “Sofia love you, she a good wife. Good to the children and good looking. Hardworking. God fearing and clean. I don’t know what more you want”. Celie recognizes that “some women cannot be beat […] and Sofia one of them” (Walker, 43).

Sofia suffers from white people; they put her in the prison because she “sassing the mayor’s wife”; the image of slavery is repeated again. Celie describes Sofia’s situation when she goes to visit her:
When I see Sofia I don’t know why she alive. They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her on one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out between her teef like a piece of rubber. She can’t talk and she just about the color eggplant. (Walker, 53.54)

The image of strong woman disappeared in the prison; Sofia’s works “from five to eight she washing clothes”, she feels about Celie who works all day and night, Sofia says “Every time they ast me to do something, Miss Celie, I act like I’m you. I jump right up and do just what they say” (Walker, 55).

2. The Reasons behind Celie Writing:

Sofia feels Celie and knows that she acts like Celie and does not say anything. In fact she is not like Celie in only one case; she does not write her feelings and oppression like Celie. Isolation, depression, sadness and anxiety, all these pushing anyone to write letters because letters change the distance between sender and receiver. In other word, Alice Walker using dialect language in Celie’s letters and this give an impression in the reader’s mind that he listens to Celie’s voice not Walker’s voice.

“Writing is an act of specifying a defiant testimony to Celie’s growing ability to comprehend the injustice of her fate and to rebel against it.” (Kauffman, 192) Celie is a protagonist in The Color Purple; she has no capacity to defend about herself or assert her personality. She is a weak woman to change her position, many critics see it as an exaggeration from Alice Walker to create such a character; one of these scholars is Trudier Harris who argues that there is no a weak woman as Celie’s personality. Harris reject this situation of Celie; she argues “even slave women who found themselves abused frequently found ways of responding to that by running away, fighting back, poisoning their masters or
through more subtly defiant acts as spitting into the food they cooked for their masters.”

(Harris, 157)

Celie is abused physically and emotionally in black male society; this society keeps Celie as a silent woman. However, she decides to cry her suffering into a paper; this act motivates Celie to react and fight this violent society. There is a skeptic about Celie, uneducated black woman, would write. Trudier Harris in her article “On The Color Purple, Stereotypes, and Silent” says “I can imagine a black woman of Celie’s background and education talking with God […] but writing letters to God is altogether another matter.”

(Harris, 156) In fact, Celie forced to leave the school, but her sister, Nettie, helps her to gain some words and their way of writing which help her to write; especially Celie’s letters are not written in a sophisticated style. These letters contain many grammatical and structural mistakes. Celie uses her own words to describe her miserable situation, to show her pain within black men.

Celie is a weak woman who has no power to defend herself; the first persecution that Celie experienced is with her step-father, Alphonso. The first step that she proceeded to do it is writing letters to God, she writes down her pain and suffering within black society. She is fourteen years old, when her step-father raped her; “Celie’s letters are her only possible rebellion against Alphonso’s prohibition.” (Fifer, 158)

Celie chooses writing as an act to fill the gap that she feels about it. At the beginning of the novel, Celie has no friends or any contact with the other people even her mother does not ask or interest about her; she is close only to her sister Nettie, but Nettie is too young to understand Celie’s situation and her suffering. This suffering left only when Sofia and Shug enter her life.

The main characteristics of epistolarity is absent and silent; Celie chooses writing to put an end to her “isolation and of her desperate need to communicate”. Also, she wants to
appear as a strong woman as Sofia even she “feels guilty” (Kauffman, 186). When the reader read Celie’s letters, he/she feels Celie’s sound and not the writer, Walker, sound. Alice Walker gives an impression for the reader that these letters are real and Celie is a real character. These two examples of Celie’s letters, these letters contain grammatical and structural mistakes in which makes the reader hears and sees Celie.

DEAR GOD,

He act like he can’t stand me no more. Say I’m evil an always up to no good. He took my other little baby, a boy this time. But I don’t think he kilt it. I think he sold it to a man an his wife over Monticello. I got breasts full of milk running down myself. He say Why don’t you look decent? Put on something. But what I’m sposed to put on? I don’t have nothing. I keep hoping he fine somebody to marry. I see him looking at my little sister. She scared. But I say I’ll take care of you. With God help. (Walker 10)

This letter shows the inhumanity of Alphonso who takes Celie’s second child away from her. This child is his son too, so he knows that he do something defect; in this case he sold his son to a family in Monticello. And she is afraid that he will start to assault her sister, Nettie. But Celie says that she will take care of Nettie.

Another letter that reveals Celie’s painful story:

DEAR GOD,

Harpo ast his daddy why he beat me. Mr. _____ say, Cause she my wife. Plus, she stubborn. All women good for—he don’t finish. He just tuck his chin over the paper
like he do. Remind me of Pa. Harpo ast me, How come you stubborn? He don’t ast How come you his wife? Nobody ast that. I say, Just born that way, I reckon. He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don’t never hardly beat them. He say, Celie, git the belt. The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That’s how come I know trees fear man. Harpo say, I love Somebody. I say, Huh? He say, A Girl. I say, You do? He say, Yeah. Us plan to marry. Marry, I say. You not old enough to marry. I is, he say. I’m seventeen. She fifteen. Old enough. What her mama say, I ast. Ain’t talk to her mama. What her daddy say? Ain’t talk to him neither. Well, what she say? Us ain’t never spoke. He duck his head. He ain’t so bad looking. Tall and skinny, black like his mama, with great big bug eyes. Where yall see each other? I ast. I see her in church, he say. She see me outdoors. She like you? I don’t know. I wink at her. She act like she scared to look. Where her daddy at while all this going on? Amen corner, he say. (Walker, 22)

These letters played the role as a narrative voice; also they are key elements that are helping Celie to reconciliate herself physically and spiritually. And this will be in the third chapter in which to show the effective role of these letters in Celie’s life.
Chapter III: Celie’s Reconciliation through Writing Letters

Walker’s use of letters facilitates and helps the reader to understand Celie’s psychological state. Those letters are the reflection of Celie’s ideas, emotions, the past, the present and the future. In addition, this form of writing helps the protagonist to release and express her agony. It helps her implicitly to self-reconciliation and independence.

This chapter will follow how Celie sets spiritually and physically free. The reader will hear her voice in the letters she has sent to her sister and God. But, first, we will define the epistolary novel and its characteristics.

1. The Epistolary Novel:

The epistolary novel is a novel “in which the story is told through an exchange of letters between different characters. Through the systematic use of letters can be seen as artificial and implausible, if one imagines the long hours the characters spend writing, this is outweighed by a number of advantages”. This kind of novels have different advantages; for instance, the events jotted down in the letters are the characters’ mind, “so that the reader is introduced to their private experiences and emotions and is often close to witnessing inner monologues” (Grellet, 77). This sub-genre exposes directly the characters’ ideas and events that take place in their daily life.

To reflect the suffering of black women in black society; Alice Walker adopts the epistolary novel. Celie is raped by her step-father; she forced to leave the school and to marry unwanted man. She writes letters to God, to tell her story of suffering gradually over time; she has suffered a lot in her life. She does not find anyone to express to him her agony. So she decides to write letters, first to God then to her sister Nettie. Gradually, through writing letters, Celie finds a space of freedom that is absent in her real world.

*The Color Purple* is collected of ninety-two letters, including fifty-five from Celie to God, fifteen from Celie to Nettie and twenty-two from Nettie to Celie. In those letters, the
reader is directly exposed to Celie’s experiences, and therefore he learns about some of the problems that faced black women. The reader gets the opportunity to know about Nettie’s feelings, too, and can contrast between the lives of the two sisters.

One can notice the importance of the epistolary novel resides in what Janet Gurkin Altman notices that “epistolary novelists were experimenting with elliptical narration, subjectivity and multiplicity of points of view, polyphony of voices, interior monologue, super imposition of time levels, and presentation of simultaneous actions” (Altman, 195). In other words, the flexibility of the narration gives more opportunities and possibilities to understand Celie’s experience.

The epistolary novel is more appropriate to trace the changes that happened in Celie’s life. Celie, the narrator, starts her story speaking to God, she asks God, “May be you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me” (Walker, 8), and then telling the reader about the events that lead to raise such question; her step-father raped her, and her husband abuses her. In other words, Celie tells her story only to God, until she finds Nettie’s letters and decides to write to her sister instead of God who never answered her; she thinks that God will give her a sign or an answer about what happened to her. Celie decides to write her story and what happened to her to Nettie instead of God; she tells God “you must be sleep” (Walker, 91).

As mentioned before, Celie writes only for God. In fact, Celie thinks that God who “praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens.” (Walker, 97) She stops writing to God because she deduces that God is like man, and she starts fearing him as she fears men. Until one day, Shug corrects this picture for Celie; she says “God is inside you and inside everybody else” (Walker, 98). This helps Celie to correct her image about God and this is considered as a step of change. In brief, Celie writes letters to God because
she cannot tell anyone about what happened to her, and then she writes to her sister, Nettie, because she thinks that God will never answer or help her.

Celie comes to voice through her own narrative acts as she writes first to God and then to her sister Nettie and finally to ‘everyone’. This makes The Color Purple probably the first and only epistolary novel written by a black woman in America; as such, it claims for a poor and poorly lettered black woman of the American South.

(Lanser, 212)

The Color Purple is a novel “of seduction through letters, is built around the letter’s power to suggest both presence and absence, to decrease and increase distance.” (Altman, 15) In these letters, Celie tries to be close to other persons, also to omit loneliness and depression. She thinks that all people hate her because she is a poor, black and ugly woman, till the coming of Sofia and Shug who helped her to find and assert her personality. In other words, through the course of The Color Purple, Celie’s personality develops from a weak woman to a strong one and this due to Celie’s relation with other women. This means that social interaction and integration would help the development of one’s personality.

Furthermore, the epistolary novel gives an opportunity for even the marginalized voice to appear; “marginalized characters in epistolary novel […] through their letter writing take control of language in particularly direct, personally accessible form of communication.” (Bower, 6-7) Writing the letters gives Celie, a marginalized character the opportunity to be heard.

Also, the epistolary form and the use of simple present give life to Celie’s language and we feel that we are hearing her voice while reading. Though, Darlene wants to teach Celie Standard English language, but Celie rejects this and sticks to write the letters as she
wants, she says, “look like to me only a fool would want you to talk in a way that feel peculiar to your mind” (Walker, 105). Celie thinks that Standard English language is a language for white people and she wants to write her letters as she wishes. For her, these letters are her own letters. This can be interpreted as a rebellious side in Celie’s character and she wants to be distinct from the white man.

Importantly, the epistolary form characterizes the traumatic personality of Celie. Walker chooses such a form to make a clear observation and evaluation of certain things that are happening around Celie. The letters can be considered as an object to analyse Celie’s Psychology. They reveal events and secrets in Celie’s past that help the reader to understand her “You better not never tell nobody but God. It’d kill your mamy”, this sentence appears in the novel before Celie begins her writing. It is a clear threat from her step-father who forced her to keep her mouth closed or he will kill her mother. After this, Celie starts writing her first letter, she says:

DEAR GOD,

I am fourteen years old. I am I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me. Last spring after little Lucious come I heard them fussing. He was pulling on her arm. She say It too soon, Fonso, I ain’t well. Finally he leave her alone. A week go by, he pulling on her arm again. She say Naw, I ain’t gonna. Can’t you see I’m already half dead, an all of these children. She went to visit her sister doctor over Macon. Left me to see after the others. He never had a kine word to say to me. Just say You gonna do what your mammy wouldn’t[…]. He start to
choke me […] And now I feels sick every time I be the one to cook. My mama she fuss at me an look at me. She happy, cause he good to her now. But too sick to last long. (Walker, 8)

She is just writing and does not understand what happened to her exactly and she fears to tell anyone; she is only telling God.

In the first letter, Celie describes how her step-father raped her and when she tries to keep him away; he says “shut up” (Walker, 8). He forced her to keep silent and just obey him. “Celie’s need to tell her story […] each letter becomes a work of art with its use of the black vernacular”. Celie’s letters are addressed to God; she has a desire to tell her story more than communicate with others through these letters. “Through the letters, Celie is able to tell someone in her own words about the abuse she is subjected to, thus gradually increasing her confidence to speak up” (Nass, 17-18).

Celia knows that her husband, Albert, hides Nettie’s letter for years and this led her to change her mind about God, she says, “‘what God do for me’? […] he give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown dog of step pa and a sister I probably won’t ever see again” (Walker, 97). Celie wants God to change her situation because she wishes to change it; she writes in colloquial black language which makes the sentences so complicated to understand it but this gives her the power and independence.

The silence dominates Celie’s character, “Celia writing is not in itself an act of liberation or even self-expression, but rather an escape valve when all else fails. Celia writes, in other words, when telling is impossible” (Nass, 23). Writing for Celie is a means of escape; she talks to her emotions through writing words and to her inner silently. Through Celie’s word, the reader feels that there is despair in Celie’s tone but at the same time writing is just a tool of self-assertion.
Celie writes letters for filling the gap of isolation; she is present as a person with feelings and emotions; only in her letters, but in her daily life she just obeys what her step-father and her husband say. Celie does not say anything for anyone, she is just writing what happened to her especially when she knows that no one could read her letters; for Celie these letters contain secrets of her life; these letters are material for Celie that create her personality. In other words, these letters become a representative tool for Celie’s character and let her express her emotions freely without any obstacles.

Epistolary form makes an essence for writing. Moreover, it gives a presence for the sound of the narrator, as well as, draws attention that these letters are written progressively over time. Celie shares her emotions and pain with God openly without any fear, for her these letters give her a path of salvation and freedom. And above all, the spontaneity in the letters gives the impression that Celie is a real character.

Black female voice rises in Celie’s letters; it describes pain, oppression and suffering of black woman. Celie has two personalities; the first one is a silent woman who is abused by the two men, Alphonso and Albert. The second one, she is a woman that she wants to change her life and lives as the other women. Celie learns a lot from her miserable situation; she learns that she is not like the other women; she is not like Sofia, Shug or even her sister Nettie. “The act of writing, a frightened pregnant girl, struggling to understand her situation by forming it into language, enters the public world”. In other words, Celie writing is:

Audacious and librating, with it she can analyze and judge, raising her her consciousness through an examination of other women’s lives. All her acts of thought, of psychology, all her triumphs are made
available and possible by the writing itself. (Fifer, 155-156)

Celie creates a meaning for life through language and letters and “between the letters problems are solved” (Fifer 156).

Celie is the main narrator, she is an actor in all the dramas that she recounts; she is writing, telling, and trying to emancipate herself. Each letter has a story of suffering and helps her to recognize herself and “understand how she appears to others” (Fifer, 159). Celie’s letters are a window of her life, they make the reader look and feel Celie’s life and they detail her story. These letters are friends and make up people who have moved away from them.

There is another characteristic that dominates Celie’s character; Celie is a subaltern character in which she cannot speak, she ignored, marginalized and oppressed by black people. Gayatri Spivak argues that “subalternity is a position without identity” (Qtd in Bakhsh and Khammerzaie, 33); as well as, she raised her controversial question “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (Ashcroft and Griffiths, 79) In the beginning of The Color Purple, Celie voiceless stands without any identity. Martha J. Cutter in her article “Philomela Speaks: Alice Walker’s Revisioning of Rape Archetypes in The Color Purple” links the story of Celie “to the story of Philomela in Greek mythology”; Cutter notices that Alice Walker rewrites the story of Philomela in which to clarify “a patriarchal society censors and erases woman’s voices by writing oppressive dictates on women’s bodies and minds, destroying both subjectivity and voice.” (Bakhsh and Khammerzaie, 33)

The story of Philomela can be found in Greek mythology; which is a story about Philomela who was raped by her sister's husband, Tereus. She decided to take revenge; she transformed into a nightingale. Later on, this nightingale became as a symbol of sorrowful song in Europe and Southwest Asia.
Celie notices that God does not listen to her or gives her an answer about what happened to her, she says, “I care about God. What he going to think. And come to find out, he don’t think. Just sit up there glorying in being deaf.” (Walker, 97) Celie stops addressing God and starts to address Nettie but nothing is changed concerning her situation. “Celie’s letters to Nettie are not intended to be sent and are never read by anyone in the novel. Using Spivak’s words, the subaltern’s in ability to speak is predicated upon an attempt to speak, to which no appropriate suspense is proffered” (Bakhsh and Khammerzaie, 33)

Celie has no right to choose her husband; when Albert comes to marry Celie, her step-father negotiates with him the details and she does not say anything. Then, when Celie married Albert, she never calls him by his name; she calls him by Mr. until the end of the novel. The relationship between Celie and Albert is similar to the relationship between slave and master. Celie “takes all the suffering without a word because in her view, this life soon is over, heaven last all ways.” (Bakhsh and Khammerzaie, 34)

2. **Celie’s Physical and Self-Reconciliation:**

Celie puts in her mind that she is ugly, her body is black and her experience in her life give her incorrect image about herself. To avoid all these and to emancipate herself she must know herself emotionally and physically and this led her to control herself and assert her personality.

One of the primary projects of modern feminism has been to restore women’s bodies, appropriate long ago by a patriarchal culture, to them. Because the female body is the most exploited target of male aggression women learned to fear or even to hate their bodies. […] consequently, women often think of their bodies as torn or fragmented a pattern evident in Walker’s Celie. To
confront not only an individual’s abuse but also the abuse of women’s bodies throughout history; as the external symbol of women’s enslavement, this abuse represents for woman a reminder of her degradation and her consignment to an inferior status. (Ross, 4)

Shug helps Celie to see her body, and she is not ugly as she thinks. This is the first step for Celie to find herself in which she is like the other women. In addition, “she begins to find an identity through a network of female relationship with Shug, Nettie and Sofia” Celie is able to change her situation by knowing certain things and “freeing herself from dependence on and subjection to male brutality”. In the beginning of the novel, Celie is not free; she has to obey only her step-father and husband. The search for identity and her ability to assert herself is the core of the novel. Celie, during her life, goes through different steps that led her to prove her identity and her personality too. These steps characterized as following. First, Celie is a silence woman without any power then she meets Shug who helps her to find Nettie’s letters and corrects for her the image of God. And finally she asserts her personality as a strong woman; for instance, at the end of the novel, she succeeds to make a conversation with Albert as a husband and a wife. Also, she can give her opinion and discuss things with Albert freely without any afraid. (Ross, 5-6)

There are different things that changed in Celie’s inner which led her to be an Independent woman with a strong personality. Before Shug arriving Celie’s life; Celie is completely under Albert’s foot that enslaves her physically and emotionally. Through Shug, Celie notices how a woman can be gained her personality and become an independent woman. Shug helps Celie to find the hidden letters from her sister Nettie; this give Celie faith and power to fight the miserable situation that she lived in. for Celie the image of God is corrected and this due to Nettie’s letters and Shug.
The first letter that she addresses to Nettie after her realization contains a new news which is “Pa not pa” (Walker 91), then she decides to go with Shug to Memphis. At the first time, Celie refuses to let Albert hurt her physically and she takes the first step to change her life; she finally wake up and refuses the violent of Albert; she says, “you was all rotten children. […] you made my life a hell on earth and you daddy her ain’t dead horse’s shit. Mr. reache over to slap me. I jab my ease knife in his hand” (Walker, 99). Albert, as usual, tries to destroy Celie’s personality “he laugh, who do you think you is? You can’t curse nobody. Look at you. You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman […] you nothing at all” (Walker, 102), but he does not know that Celie’s personality is changed and become an independent woman with a strong personality.

There are some words appear in Celie’s letters in which she tries to show the reader the view that dominate black society which is the superiority of man and how man see himself as a better than a woman; for instance, there is a cynicism in Albert's speech, he says “you a woman” (Walker, 102). However, Celie announces her freedom in front of Albert and she is not regaining back. Celie assert her personality, she says, “I’m poor, I’m black, I may be ugly and can’t cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I’m here” (Walker, 102); her words convey the meaning that no one can be silenced her any more. Maya Angelou in her poem *Still I Rise* illustrates this:

You may shoot me with your words
You may cut me with your eyes
You may kill me with your hatefulness
But still, like air, I’ll raise (Encyclopedia).

Celie, now, is a powerful woman who claimed her life and voice; she has a power and no one could keep her down. Celie wake up and rises as Maya Angelou says in her poem.
Celie recognizes “the power a woman’s voice [That] break male domination […]" the kind of sacrifice women must make in order to bind themselves together in a community that resists the pressure of male domination” (Ross, 13). Celie becomes a silent woman due to the two painful experiences that she suffered from. Celie is a poor girl; poverty makes her staying inferior within her family. She is forbidden to wear what she wants; even choosing her favorite color. For instance, she likes purple and red colors. But when she goes with Shug to Memphis; she learns how to earn money by making pants; here the economic factor plays an important role to gain her freedom.

Celie succeeds to make a living for herself, she says, “I am so happy, I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time” (Walker, 105). Finally, she provides herself financially; she is free with her own dream and power. Celie puts an end for her suffering with Albert, who behaves with her as a slave not a wife; she lives her life and includes herself in the society as any other women. Celie puts an end of her isolation with more confidence, in her letters, she is able to know, to make her future and present after all her suffering in her life. Celie changed even in her way of writing, when she writes for her sister Nettie; she closing her letters with “Amen” (Walker, 98). This is another step toward independence because when she closes her letters in this way, she confirms her ability to define and make her own spirituality.

Celie finds her own voice, she says, “I’m here” (Walker, 102); this led her to feel about her power and shows the other that she is a person, a woman or a strong woman. She makes a link between her own voice and herself as a strong woman. Also, for the first time, when she sent a letter for her sister, she mentions her name and this is an act of self-validation.

Celie finds happiness with Shug and waiting Nettie’s return; but she hears that her sister Nettie is died. She feels sadness and isolation again. Celie returns again to write and
this as a tool and a therapy for her sadness, she says, “I don’t believe you dead. How can you be dead if I still feel you? May be, like God, you changed into something different that I’ll have to speak to in a different way, but you not dead to me Nettie. And never will be. Some times when I git tired of talking to myself I talk to you.” (Walker, 122)

Celie’s faith is changed progressively in *The Color Purple*; she “accepts her spiritual awakening and rejoices in her new found liberation. Celie’s new God is one who grants her self-esteem, voice, independence, and sexuality; this God is one who actually listens and cares about Celie”. Celie starts loving herself and pleasing God who created her; “loving herself also means leaving Mr. accepting the house that she inherited from her mother, and enjoying everything that life has to offer”, also she realizes that if a black woman work to gain respect she must demand it. (Andujo, 70-72)

The central point of Celie’s independence is leaving her husband Albert. He did not provide any comfort or happiness for Celie; in all cases, he beats her and does not allow her to defend herself. “Celie’s spiritual rebirth comes full circle in her last letter reveals a reordered perspective toward God, who is no longer a depersonalized male deity, but a personalized God who reveals divinity through nature […] instead of diaries of suffering, Celie’s letters become records of growth” (Andujo, 73).

Celie opens her eyes and her soul too; she “can write to convey ‘Dear God, dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God’, she has affected yet another transformation: her voice becomes public, but on her own terms.” (Lancer, 213) She has new conception and notion about her life.

By the end, Celie’s situation transformed and “become independent, happy, lively woman”. In other words, she is not under men’s control and “she depends only on God for emotional stability” (Andujo 73) and “*The Color Purple* represents voice as a luxury of birth and circumstances tracing a character’s escape from silencing” (Lancer, 214).
By the end of The Color Purple, Celie has moved from the dependent, victim class to the class of the self-sustaining entrepreneur. She makes the transformation with the support of black women. Her business is supported by and serves her community. Her business employs members of her racial group. Celie makes decisions and gives directions. Most importantly, she does not depend on the white community or black men for financial support. (Sangwan 186)

Celie finds her path to break violence, suffering and puts an end to her pain; she finds her voice and asserts her freedom after many years of suffering. She stands up as a strong woman by various women who appeared in her life, as well as by writing and expressing her feelings in letters. Celie is an independent woman after a long fighting and after a long painful story.
General Conclusion:

Afro-American literature enriched the field of American literature; it has begun in the seventeenth century. *The Color Purple* (1982) is an epistolary novel that portrays the protagonist Celie who asserts herself and her personality after a long painful story. This novel is written in black dialect that helps the reader to hear Celie’s voice and her miserable situation within the black society. In other words, these letters seem as spoken language that makes the reader hear and feel Celie’s words rather than reading them.

Also, the reader could feel Celie’s self-reconciliation through the development of her style. The first letter of Celie is not like the last letter in the novel. Also, Nettie, Shug, and Sofia are main female characters in *The Color Purple* who help Celie a lot to assert herself as a strong woman. In fact, Alice Walker wants to convey the message that black women must stand up and help each other.

Celie’s letters are evidence that she exists, though the people around her marginalize her. Celie’s relation with other female characters and her writing too, helps her to know and discover things assert herself. First, to know that she is a woman and she is not ugly as her husband always describes her. Then, she gradually frees herself physically and emotionally after a long traumatic experience.

Through writing letters, Celie enjoys her life and her freedom that she has never lived it before and she starts thinking to adopt a new life perception. Also, writing letters help Celie to correct the image of God who is not a person as her step-father told her before. In other words, Celie starts asking herself about God who never answered her letters.

In *The Color Purple*, Letters can be considered a therapy for Celie. Writing allows her to ask questions and creates those questions on papers. She structures her identity through these letters and gives a meaning to her suffering when she describes it in words. She was raped at the age of fourteen and then given to a man who abused her.
This terrible experience created an incurable scare in Celie’s psyche. However, one can learn at the end of this novel that writing is a healer. Consequently, one can generalize about Celie’s experience. That is *The Color Purple* tackles issues that did not only face black women but all any other women in the world. Women should learn how to establish their independent personalities and fight to gain their rights and put an end for the violence as Celie did.

For those who are interested in literature, and want to learn about the history of black women in the South of America; they should read *The Color Purple*. This novel reveals the double suffering of black women within black society through the protagonist Celie and other female characters as Nettie, Shug, and Sofia. Also, it teaches us how to overcome any problem in this life.
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