



Purple Rebellion by Alice Walker and Chimamanda Adichie

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Abstract

The comparative study of *The Color Purple* and *Purple Hibiscus* finds its argument first in the substantive commonality in their titles: purple, which though a paratextual tool, melts in the texts. Second, the books are stories of veiled (un)common forms of oppression into which purple stands as a symbol in a patriarchal atmosphere purporting social constraints, silence and abidance to religious norms. They portray scenes of sexual, generational and religious conflicts coupled with maturity impulses as well, concomitantly building the oppressive social purpleness and overturning it in a constructive way. This paper relies on semiotics and feminist (womanism and radicalism) theory to hold the assumption that male domination has been taking place over time and space and that it relies on some symbols. Oppressed Women and children can overturn these symbols and build communities for symbolic and relational liberation.

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Introduction

The Color Purple (TCP) and *Purple Hibiscus* (PH) tell stories with different settings: the US for the first and Nigeria for the second. They are separated by two decades by the date of publication. But what draws the actual comparative approach lies in their sameness instead of their differences: “all cultural differences disappear when readers take up great works; art is seen as an instrument of universal harmony” (Bassnett 4). Their reference to cross-border issues like domestic violence, juvenile sexual abuses and religion as a canal of oppression echoes the intersectionality in both books and back up the assumption that the latter book resonates the former in line with Stallknecht and Frenz (3): “a debt which almost every famous author is said to owe to certain of his predecessors, immediate and remote.” The authors depict “purple” as a chromatic symbol that pervades various items of their characters’ daily lives and conveys gender oppression, sexual violence and religious domination. References to this color would stand as an interpretative assignment to detect oppression and also the characters’ ability to rebel: “having a certain personal space that needs to have well-defined boundaries” (Dawson 7). Rebellion would amount to: “a refusal of obedience or order” (Lalor 597). This refusal rather than being a pulse toward anarchy is a resistance to male and filial authority through a change in behaviour and speech patterns.

Some works have laid emphasis only on PH for some critical approaches. Thus, Kevin McBean and Ingrid Johnston in “*Creating New Meanings and Understanding with Postcolonial Texts: Teaching Purple Hibiscus in a Grade 10 Classroom*”, had a political approach through the lens of postcolonialism to appeal for social justice and to create new understandings of a changing world. Likewise, Chris K. Ukande in his article “Post-Colonial Practice in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*” dealt with the effects of colonialism on African people and the tools they engaged to rewrite their history that was distorted by colonialism. Few writers have dealt with TCP and PH concomitantly. Sunitha Diwakar, in his article “Symbolism of the color ‘purple’ in the novels of Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*” depicts the moral and social states of “victimized, benumbed” (137) women in a feminist scope but he excluded the womanist assignment that black feminism is a struggle for the assertion of women and children (male and female) as treated in PH.

This work will be a journey across cultures (black American and Igbo) in the search for “patterns of connection.... across both time and space” (Bassnett 1) that is to say commonality beyond generational and geographical realities between black females and children under the yoke of patriarchy. Through the leadership of female icons, we will make a move from Georgia and Enugu to other places for a curative exile, and from patriarchal Christianity to the rethinking of religion. Therefore, the literary project: “The Question or the tertium comparationis” (Behdad et al. 62) consists in responding to the subsequent query: What means do characters resort to in order to defeat sexism and oppressive religious practices and attain their full beings in TCP and PH? The first lap of the process of finding answers to the above question lies in describing the making of male and filial domination with “purple” as the core symbol. The second step will deal with overthrowing oppression by assigning “purple” euphoric meanings (Courtes 201) that is positive ones that differ from what it means under oppression. Put in a nutshell, the rationale of this study is to promote the liberation of the majority –women and children – from the oppression of the minority (men) using feminism (womanism and radical feminism) as the main literary theory. In this process, we will show how a trans-textual symbol, “purple” can be reassessed and assigned a new meaning, from a symbol of oppression to one of liberation of women and children from male oppression.

1-Constructing the Patriarchal Purple Setting

This section approaches the making of an oppressive society through a symbolic color. Both texts linger on the purpleness of their settings by unremittingly reminding the reader of devices having as common feature their color purple. They compel its interpretation to uncover what that artistic device represents. Purple stands as a sign in the Saussurian meaning that sees a sign in language as “a two-sided coin combining a *signified* (concept) and a *signifier* (sound-image)” (Allen 8). To start, we will recollect the occurrences of “purple” in TCP and PH.

1.1- Purpleness from the Incipits

The incipit refers to the first words of a text, its opening sentences that introduce the plot, the exposition phase. This includes the title. Our prime task is to identify utterances involving “purple” in which men exert patriarchal

domination, enforcing anxiety, distress and disorder.

As first element of the many similarities, TCP and PH convey tension from their opening words. The titles as paratextual elements from the incipits have “purple” as common word. This similarity cannot be accidental and overlooked. It is charged with a meaning which uncovering is imposed by its repletion. It does not take long to identify the signified that is the first common meaning of the purple setting as signifier. Tension rises from the very first words of TCP and PH so that authors seem to have delayed the preliminary stage that brings forth the prevailing tension. Both incipits go like this: “You better not never tell nobody but God. It’ll kill your mammy.” (TCP 1) and “Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère” (PH 6). Whereas the tensive action that compels secrecy in TCP could be revealed only to God therefore allowing the teller to get in touch with the divine for an attempt for solution, the action that underlies the tumbling down of the family structure in PH comes from a refusal of a character to submit to his father’s authoritarian practice of religion. The advising stepfather in TCP who encourages the abused young girl to take her sorrow to God, implicitly urges the girl to look for solution and relief from God. This could mean that some problems are deadly enough for humans to try and solve them themselves. It is advisable to solicit divine assistance for a cleverer solution. Therefore, the young girl refers to God more than fifty times to tell him what she endures as a young girl and as a married woman.

The tension at the beginning of PH originates from a flaw in the faith of a Jaja who refuses to eat the “body of our Lord” Christ at church (8). Jaja has started a revolution from the faith of his father, he’s breaking away from his father’s catholic faith by refusing to receive the communion. His answer: “then I will die” (PH 8) to his father’s advice: “You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that” (Ibid) shows his determination to part from that family faith even if it will cost his life. Let us notice that he repeated that answer and adopted the defying attitude described as follow: “he looked Papa in the face now” (Ibid). From these passages, one is aware of the centrality of divinity in the tensive setting. Far from being a war of religion, the setting is family tension from and around Christian faith.

Besides, in the Biko family in PH, repetitive acts of violence occurred between Eugene Biko and his wife before the one between him and his son

Jaja. Kambili, the narrator, makes a report of this tension as follow:

I used to wonder why she polished them each time I heard sounds from their room, like something being banged against the door. Her rubber slippers never made a sound on the chairs, but I knew she went downstairs when I heard the dining room door open.... She spent at least a quarter of an hour on each ballet-dancing figurine. There were never tears on her face. The last time, only two weeks ago, when her swollen eye was still the black-purple color of an overripe avocado she had rearranged them after she polished them. (PH 11)

When the natural white of the wife's eye turns purple, it means that marital violence has occurred between the spouses. The "something being banged against the door" is a testimony of a secret violence between Biko and his wife. No other noise is reported from that violence but the noise on the door left to any interpretation and nothing else testifies what went on behind closed doors except the impact on the eye. Like the sexual oppression between Celie and her stepfather in TCP, domestic violence in PH is silenced.

Marital violence grew in intensity so that to result in infanticide or miscarriages as Mrs. Biko confides in her daughter in PH: "Mama looked around the room...before she turned to me. 'You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly' ...'My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St Agnes... The doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it" (177-178). In addition to marital violence, violence towards infants also takes place. In TCP, the incestuous stepfather commits baby snatching twice on the children he begot with the young Celie. Her testimony goes like this: "When I start to hurt and then my stomach start moving and then that little baby come out.... He took it He took my other little baby... I think he sold it to a man an his wife" (3-4). A commonality in both texts in their portrayal of violence is the secrecy that surrounds its occurrence. Both Celie and Mrs Biko undergo secret suffering. There is no opportunity for them to cry out the dire situation they are experiencing. This falls in what Patrizia Romito (44) calls "euphemising". In the article entitled "Euphemising", she thinks that silence as a form of language is "a powerful tool, which may obscure or, ... redefine our perception of reality". The untold aim of silent violence is to hide its occurrence and the suffering of victims. Silence and secrecy are tools used by the incest perpetrator and domestic abuser to attain false mental ease and

mislead other characters about what is going on in the community since: “Euphemising is a parallel technique, which allows a phenomenon to be labelled in an imprecise and misleading way such as to obscure the seriousness or responsibility of whoever has committed it” (45). Though silence aims to conceal an occurrence, it does not conceal the perpetrators of the described violence and abuses. Walker partially uncovers the abuser of Celie: Mr----- -- but Adichie is more daring by naming Eugene Biko.

In fact, the use of euphemism by the abusers amounts to their refusal to face responsibility for their misdeeds. Purple comes as a criterion that splits characters into two categories: the oppressors and the oppressed, the latter being living reproaches to the former whereas the former representing the source of mental and psychological turmoil. This opposition creates tension. A move from the periphery into the texts unveils the tensive scheme onto which both plots are built. The division of actors sets them into a scheme of power and domination (Greimas 1966) and helps predict actions whose extensibility increases the intensity of the tension.

1-2 Tension in The Color Purple and Purple Hibiscus

Both texts under study present characters split into two opposite sides inscribed in a tensive scheme. The tension is either open or lies in the interpretation of some symbols. Be it through some cultural and literary devices as well as some positions that characters adopt, they convey a semiotic meaning. The narrators depict characters living on either side of a tensive scheme that is constantly growing because of the steadfast increase of exploitation, violence and abuses. The intensity and the extensity of the tension meet at their highest levels (Fontanille 2003). In fact, characters act in an amplifying scheme triggered by sexual greed and male domination. The deeper the reader goes into the texts, the more acute is the tension. Both writers adopt an artistic sameness in their portrayal of violence. It grows steadily in intensity between victims and victimizers.

The shame of the female body together with the ugliness of sexuality on one side and the repetition of incest perpetrated by a sex-starved father shape the tensive scheme of TCP. Every time the stepfather has sex with the young Celie, she feels ashamed in her raped body and loses pride in that body in which dwells her honor as a human being and is now described as ugly. In addition, the access to her intimacy by an unauthorized man at a so precocious

moment of her life coupled with the violence of the act itself leaves a horrible impression about sexuality on her mind: “I’m evil an always up to no good” (TCP 4). The two valences or dimensions of the tensive scheme in TCP are the self-hatred felt by the abused woman and the increasing sexual greed of the father. Whenever the stepfather forces sex on Celie, he increases the amount of shame the girl feels for her body and her disgust for sex. This tension reaches its climax in the two births Celie gives. By pretending the death of the first baby and by giving away the second, the father comforts the young woman in experiencing self-hatred and consequently the horrible side of the incestuous stepfather. The affective distance between the stepdaughter and the stepfather increases with the number of rapes.

In PH, the affective gap between the daughter Kambili and her father keeps on widening too. In the earlier stages of that filial relationship, Kambili is proud of her father as she testifies it: “I felt myself warm all over, with pride, with a desire to be associated with Papa. I wanted to say something to remind ... that Papa wasn’t just Auntie Ifeoma’s brother or the Standard’s publisher, that he was my father” (99). The filial tie started to break away when the father used violence in the education process. As Kambili’s father wants her to be the best student in her class and a very good Christian but she sometimes fails, he resorts to violence: “he poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen.... The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed” (PH 140). The pain that made Kambili scream turned into an obsession so that her affective world tumbled down and decadence prevailed: “Fear. I was familiar with fear, yet each time I felt it, it was never the same as the other times, as though it came in different flavors and colors” (PH 141). The passion of the daughter for her father has melted into hatred in the course of tensive relationship. From passion to hatred, the young girl makes a transformation that Couegnas in *Sémiotique tensive* identifies as: “pluralité spatiale, temporelle et actorielle”²⁹ that follows a prior situation he designates as “indistinction antérieure”³⁰ (70).

Also, the scene of violence where Kambili ate ten minutes before Sunday Mass, and Eugene beat his wife and his daughter for violating the

²⁹ Spatial, temporal and auctorial plurality

³⁰ Prior indistinction

prescription to fast before Mass (PH 74), portrays Kambili and her mother as opponents to Eugene's junction to have a religiously engaged family. Moving from the idyllic stage where she idealized her father, Kambili has reached the new stage where she uncovers the real person her father is. Through the act of pouring hot water on the hands of her daughter and collectively beating his daughter and his wife, Eugene Biko is asserting his authority. Since Kambili and her mother failed to abide by his requirements, the authoritarian father foresees an attempt at defying his power. They have acted as opponents to his power therefore they deserve a punishment that assert his domination. The tense scheme in TCP and PH is mainly between dominant male characters on one side and their daughter (s) and wife on the other. But tension and violence in PH and TCP have not always been there.

1-3 Joyful Past Times

The narrators of TCP and PH are clearly aware of what led to the prevailing tension but in their homodiegetic narration, they adopt flashback as a literary device to tell their stories in a counter-clockwise way. The use of flashback here is a way for both narrators to help readers experience what characters have gone through. Before Celie started speaking to God and "things started to fall apart at home" in PH (1), things were upright. Celie portrays herself before her being aware of her pregnancy: "I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl" (TCP, 1). Kambili, the narrator of PH, states: "But my memories did not start at Nsukka. They started before, when all the hibiscuses in our front yard were a startling red" (14).

Besides, the genuine settings in TCP and PH wore on a different color. They had not always been purple:

A row of purple bougainvillea, cut smooth and straight as a buffet table, separated the gnarled trees from the drive way. Closer to the house, vibrant bushes of hibiscus reached out and touched one another as if they were exchanging their petals. The purple plants had started to push out sleepy buds, but most of the flowers were still on the red ones. They seemed to bloom so fast, those red hibiscuses. (PH 10)

The original red color of flowers testifies that actually tension has not been an ever-prevailing situation. Characters lived in harmony; a harmony embodied mainly by red color. An abstract in TCP helps in the semiotic of the red color.

Celie interprets the use of the red color as: “happy looking” (21). The red color is associated with happiness.

In addition, Celie mentions red color as part of a perfect creation: “Then finally one day, I made the perfect pair of pants... They soft dark blue jersey with teeny patches of red (124). One can sense the idea of perfection and diversity conveyed by the use of different colours. Walker promotes plurality over singleness for the former amounts to inclusiveness helping to redesign the axis of the actantial model from that of opponent to that of helper. It confirms that relationships weren’t tense in the beginning. Nevertheless, the coexistence of red and purple as well as the fact that red hibiscuses are blooming while purple ones are on their way means that beside the happiness in both texts, tension and confrontation were on their way. Wife and children in both texts lived happily in the confidence that the spouse and the father would bring them some affection. Unexpectedly, they underwent abuse and violence. Their joy and their world of perfection embodied by the color red would turn into fear, abuse and violence signified by the color purple.

Other details and literary devices in TCP and PH relate purpleness to forced and false practice of religion.

1.4 Purpleness: forced religiosity

The incipits of TCP and PH also have the call for the narrator and other characters to become religious people. Consequently, the abused narrator in TCP writes to God. Her letters are indeed times of communion with the divine but they are made under constraint as the one mister Biko forces on Jaja in PH. The way adult male characters call in the divine in both texts is a testimony of a lack of freedom of religion. In TCP, Pa’s claim that Celie’s reporting her rape to no other people but God would kill her mother, imposes confidence in God for life-saving. In PH, M. Biko advises his son Jaja to reconsider his decision to stop taking the communion: “You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that” (8). Kambili, the narrator, describes the tone of their father trying to convince Jaja as “low, very low” (ibid). This preceded a set-to over religious practices. M. Biko could not stand his son’s refusal to eat the body of the Lord so he makes use of violence and constraint to force religion into his son as the stepfather in TCP use a moral argument – the death of the mother – to compel Celie to keep the

sexual abuse secret. Religion was also forced on Kambili in a figurative way. She came to worship her father as a perfect person, a saint:

Most of what Papa said sounded important. He liked to lean back and look upwards when he talked, as though he were searching for something in the air. I would focus on his lips, the movement, and sometimes I forgot myself, sometimes I wanted to stay like that forever, listening to his voice, to the important things he said. (PH 20)

Between M. Eugene Biko and Kambili, there lied a worshipping relationship. The daughter was enthralled by the charisma of her father in the early stages of their filial relationship. Towards her father's words, she adopted an attitude similar to the one of religious believers towards the words of their prophet or community leaders. Nonetheless, that adorative tie turned into antagonism when she uncovered that the words that she eagerly drank did not traduce the entire truth and the whole set of her father's thoughts. The words that she drank avidly were in fact truncated truths, part of truth since: "Eugene quarrels with the truths that he does not like" (69). A proof of this lies in the fact that he could not make his practice of religion humane. On a Sunday morning, he found out that his daughter Kambili ate before going to Mass. She did not observe the prescription of fasting before going to Mass for those who will eat communion. The scene goes like this as narrated by Kambili:

- "What are you doing, Kambili? You are eating ten minutes before Mass? Ten minutes before Mass?"

- 'Her periods started and she has cramps' the mother replied.

- 'Has the devil asked you all to go on errands for him?' He unbuckled his belt slowly... He swung his belt at Mama, Jaja and me." (74)

For the father, principles prevail over his daughter's well-being and the honor of the mother that he beat before her children. No reason could allow the trespassing of that prescription that has no biblical reference.

The common purpleness in TCP and PH amounts then to violence, abuse and lack of freedom of religion or even hypocritical practice of religion. Purple has been shown as amounting gender oppression and the use of religion as the rationale for domination and means for psychological silencing. Nonetheless, characters that are victimized do not remain shiftless. Though revolution against oppression and violence does not take place as soon as the abuses are committed, it does take place all the same. The astounding occurrence is that the color that represents oppression, violence, and abuse

has not changed. Both texts kept the color purple and transform it into the color of liberation and revolution.

2- Euphoric Purpleness

As Jean Courtes (201) claims that language has a euphoric aspect as well as a dysphoric one, color purple changes meaning as characters approach it differently in the course of their actions and interactions. In its dysphoric aspect, purple has meant violence, oppression and abuse. The euphoric aspect is the new meaning that it bears in the course of the revolution of characters. For Courtes, revolution “comme la grève d’entreprise a essentiellement pour but d’établir un nouveau contrat : loin d’être de nature fondamentalement polémique, elle se spécifie par sa visée transactionnelle” (152)³¹. The characters whose actions are inscribed in the revolutionary process, take part in a transitional movement from oppression to a new social contract.

2-1 Female Freedom Icons

Walker and Adichie chose two women as icons to fight for oppressed women in particular and all oppressed people in general. Shug Avery and Auntie Ifeoma have jobs that stand as symbols. Shug was an artist and Ifeoma a university teacher. Indeed, they are people with an audience in their jobs. Symbolically, they are naturally set to have an audience to talk to, to entertain and to teach. These two female characters are meant to part from the others in their behaviour for: “all womens not alike” (TCP 38). Some women can rebel against oppression. They can stand up and be the opposite of Celie who claimed: “Couldn’t be mad at my daddy cause he my daddy. Bible say, Honor father and mother no matter what” (30).

Also, both authors have chosen two outcast women to transform them into prominent characters that would cure pathological men for “Men who are violent with their partners are pathological” (Cling 45). Shug had a series of depreciatory attributives held by gossiping people: “slut... hussy...heifer...streetcleaner” (TCP 31). Ifeoma is a university teacher who has not received any salary for months and whose brother mock at her misery saying that she cannot feed her children, pay their school fees and buy their

³¹ just as strike essentially aims to establish a new contract: far from being fundamentally polemical in nature, it is characterized by its transactional purpose.

clothes (PH 159). Nonetheless, the narrators of TCP and PH portrayed the female icons with envy-like words. Celie describes Shug in a hyperbolic way: Shug Avery was a woman. The most beautiful woman I ever saw. She more pretty then my mama. She bout ten thousand times more prettier then me. ...she got a red wool dress and chestful of black beads. A shiny black hat with what look like chicken hawk feathers curve down side one cheek, and she carrying a little snakeskin bag, match her shoes...She look so stylish it like the trees all around the house draw themself up tall for a better look” (TCP 7; 32).

Kambili goes on in PH about Ifeoma: “Aunty Ifeoma was as tall as Papa, with a well-proportioned body. She walked fast, like one who knew just where she was going and what she was going to do there. And she spoke the way she walked, as if to get as many words out of her mouth as she could in the shortest time” (52). Another passage adds to this description: “... cackling and throaty and enthusiastic, like Auntie Ifeoma’s... She looked taller, even more fearless, in a red wrapper and high heels...wore...bright red lipstick” (64-65). The appearances of the icons are forerunning indicators of the way both authors would entrust them with the liberatory mission. With Shug, the narrator lingered on her beauty and her noble attitudes. Thus, Alice Walker’s devices to make Shug bring about changes in TCP are peaceful, good-mannered and conciliatory.

Celie is portrayed as worthless (122) believed that she does not count and cannot change the way the world goes: “I don’t know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive” (18). However, with the help of Shug Avery, Celie became assertive enough to retaliate to the physical violence she endured from her husband: “I jab my case knife in his hand (TCP 109), then divorced him and rebuilt her life by being economically active and adopting exilic attitudes to free herself from the enslaving marital environment (TCP 124-40). She gains her financial autonomy and built her house adopting the same colors that originally meant oppression: “Everything in my room purple and red Cept the floor” (TCP 160). By keeping this color, she reminds the reader that she has kept her self – identity and strength – but has redesigned her agency. Purple means now constraint and submission but agency and freedom. This new Celie testifies that Shug has brought about economic as well as erotic freedom. On the other hand, Kambili pinpoints the fearless attitude of Ifeoma coupled with some red color as a symbol of revolution since it is often associated with purple by the characters that undertake

freedom.

While Mr..... advises Celie in these words: “Men and women not suppose to wear the same thing...Men spose to wear the pants” (TCP 154), Ifeoma advises Kambili: “I think you will be more comfortable in trousers” (PH 58). Ifeoma was a progressist holding “university talk” (179). With her, the color purple turns into the color of defiance, freedom and originality. She took part in strikes with two symbols that are hibiscus and purple as reported by Kambili: “Jaja’s defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma’s little hibiscus: rare, flagrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup” (14). She is not using her symbols to support other people’s revolution but to undertake her own, a break away from any male-ruled system that would turn oppressive. She confronts her brother Eugene Biko’s ruling his family life and his disdain for their father’s religious faith that he considered as heathenism.

Besides, Ifeoma stands as a model for Jaja, a male character, who wants to fight exaggerated masculinity. He enters an inductive acquisition relationship with her to gain autonomy in thoughts and defiance to male authority through a well-planned process that takes time to ripe:

We went downstairs to the kitchen. It was wrapped in black cellophane paper, as well, and he had lodged it in the refrigerator, beneath bottles of Fanta. When he saw my puzzled look, he said they weren’t just sticks; they were stalks of purple hibiscus. He would give them to the gardener. It was still harmattan and the earth was thirsty, but Aunty Ifeoma said the stalks might take root and grow if they were watered regularly (PH 142).

It stands even clearer that Jaja had already grown the stalks of hibiscus in his heart since he had been standing for weak and harmless people as Ifeoma did for his old grandfather literally bullied by his father. When he was informed of his mother’s pregnancy, he engaged himself and his sister in protecting the fetus against their father’s virilism: “We will take care of the baby; we will protect him” (PH 18). As he showed his defiance before his father about communion, he is ready to confront him in his handling of his family like his aunt Ifeoma did when she sided with their father who refused to convert to Christianity.

Shug Avery taught Celie peaceful as well as radical ways to resolve

domestic violence. When Celie came to know that her husband Mr..... hid her sister Nettie's letters from her, her feelings were: "I stumble bout the house crazy for Mr..... blood. In my mind, he falling dead every which way" (TCP 77). Celie wanted to kill Mr..... for keeping the letters she had been writing to her sister but Shug told her the most effective way for her to know where the letters were actually and how to get them through non-violence: "All of a sudden Shug buddy—buddy again with Mr----- . They sit on the steps, go down Harpo's. Walk to the mailbox" (77). Mr----- could not guess that Shug was spying on him to know the whereabouts of the hidden letters. She succeeded in unveiling the hiding place and bring Nettie's letters to Celie "Saturday morning Shug put Nettie letter in my lap" (Ibid). In a very short time, Shug did what Celie could not in years. Shug has taught Celie to adopt purpleness as a color of patience and negotiation. It has become the color of diplomacy in the light of Shug's agency.

Additionally, Shug was an icon of erotic liberation. She taught Celie to turn her sexual behaviour toward a female by initiating lesbian acts with her and teaching her how to use her anatomy to experience pleasure away from the violence of heterosexuality: "Shug ast me could she sleep with me. She cold in her...Us talk this and that. Soon talk about making love" (64). Celie learns to free herself from heterosexuality which has proved to be a vector of sexual exploitation of women by men since her childhood. The presence of female icons teaching patience, negotiation and radicalism are symbols for rupture from the domination of men.

2-2 Toppling Down Patriarchy

Beaubeouf-Lafontant (2009) lays an emphasis on the mental strength of black women: "The defining quality of Black womanhood is strength. As a reference to tireless, deeply caring, and seemingly invulnerable women the claim of strength forwards a compelling story of perseverance" (1). She lauds black females' ability to make use of courage and commitment to move away from oppressive environment and oppressing people. The effects of the winds of change are to be found in the following apocalyptic scene:

Everything came tumbling down..... Howling winds came with an angry rain, uprooting frangipani trees in the front yard. They lay on the lawn, their pink and white flowers grazing the grass, their roots waving lumpy soil in the air. The satellite dish on top of the garage

came crashing down, and lounged on the driveway like a visiting alien spaceship. The door of my wardrobe dislodged completely. Even the silence that descended on the house was sudden, as though the old silence had broken and left us with the sharp pieces (PH 183).

The frangipani trees could stand as symbol of the majesty and the prestige of the Biko mansion for standing in the front yard. Like them, the acquisitions represented by the satellite dish was demolished as if the symbols of domination could not withstand the revolution started by nature and to be completed by oppressed humans. Everything on which patriarchy relies has tumbled down: bright, fragrant flowers in various colors represented by frangipani trees and the scheme of tension that underscores domination. Many tools served in the attempt at uprooting the patriarchal system and attaining liberation at various levels.

First there is spatial liberation as both texts suggest pilgrimage and exile as learning processes to uncover the possibility for new horizons. Thus, Kambili describes the process through which Jaja got to learn liberatory methods: “Perhaps we all changed after Nsukka —even Papa—and things were destined to not be the same, to not be in their original order” (PH 150). A move from Enugu to Nsukka is a move from the oppression of their father to learn from their asserting and open-minded aunt Ifeoma and their balanced-minded cousins. The children [Kambili and Jaja] moved from a strict family environment that makes their cousin Amaka question their mental state: “Are you sure they’re not abnormal... she behaves funny. Even Jaja is strange. Something is not right with them” (PH 103) to that place where they can do some community service like “plate washing” (102) or have the opportunity to play with children of their age and overcome the handicap of stuttering: “I wanted to talk with them, to laugh with them so much that I would start to jump up and down in one place the way they did, but my lips held stubbornly together. I did not want to stutter (102). TCP also portrays exilic characters, mainly women. Celie going away with Shug Avery from Mr-----, Mary Agnes (Squeak) and Sofia from Harpo. The outcome of Celie’s exile is reported in details. She who was portrayed as ugly and poor, joyfully proclaims: “I’m so happy. I got love, I got work, I got money, friend and time” (126). She reached self-fulfillment after leaving the place and people that oppressed her.

Second, there is an ideological and religious liberation. Through the

pilgrimage, religiously oppressed characters get as a liberatory tool the reassessment of religion. Believers turned into non-believers. It is after his contact with his grandfather that Jaja would not go to communion anymore (PH 184). He could not let religion prevail over his ties with his grandfather. Since his father cut every relationship with his grandfather because of religion, he made the decision to refrain from the religion that teaches division and exclusion. Kambili followed in his footsteps. She claimed: “I am not taking an English name” (193) for confirmation. She dared more by refusing confirmation. She cries out her anger for the loss of African identity because of religion: “When the missionaries first came, they didn’t think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptized. Shouldn’t we be moving ahead?” (Ibid). Celie had a similar reaction face to abuses in the name of religion. She decided: “I don’t write to God no more” (TCP 115). She had made the decision to write to people and teach them what Jaja and her sister Kambili seemed to be convinced of: “God ain’t a he or a she but a It. God is everything... Everything that is or ever was or ever will be” (TCP 116).

Both texts also include retaliatory violence to the whole patriarchal abuses going on in them. Female characters have resolved to use radical ways to get rid of their oppressors. As hooks (163) wrote: “Revolutions can be and usually are initiated by violent overthrow of an existing political structure”, to end sexism and female oppression, hook deems it vital to refer to radical solutions. Accounts of revolutionary actions in TCP exist like the confession of Celie: “I drop little spit in old Mr----- water...I twirl the spit around with my finger. Next time he come I put a little Shug Avery pee in his glass” (37). In PH, Beatrice secretly resorted to poison to fight her husband’s oppression and avowed it to the police after his death: “I started putting the poison in his tea” (206). The effect of poison was quite visible on Mr. Biko Eugene as Kambili reports long before his death:

Papa had lost weight; usually, Mama’s small hands barely went round to his back, but this time her hands rested on the small of his back. I did not notice the rashes on his face until I came close to hug him. They were like tiny pimples, each with whitish pus at the tips, and they covered the whole of his face, even his eyelids. His face looked swollen, oily, discolored. (180)

These female characters have reacted against hierarchical rule and coercive

authority as the root cause of violence against women (hooks 118). They are the victims of daily beatings and mental as well as psychological victimization therefore they are the most logic fighters for a change of their condition. Radicalism is part of liberatory politics aiming at reinserting the marginal individuals into the category of privileged and impactful individuals using the tools to achieve liberation. They did not apply what Armstrong (33) called “Ethical freedom and politics” or “the doctrine or liberation by reason”. The goal of that politics is to encourage the intellectual shaping of liberatory means that could reasonably ensure one’s freedom from bondage. The two women have acted from reason instead of in accordance with that is they acted on the basis of personal impulses that could be seen as external forces.

2-3 Literary Tools to Attain Female Freedom

Some symbols are rampant in the two texts and stand as means through which characters share mental and psychological unease as well as the need for change. Characters hold symbolic communication through their eyes and their hearts. Sometimes, no word is used to express whatever feeling or emotion. Those who are embarked in this wordless communication form a community with a secret language requiring an intimate literacy to decode the message.

Jaja, Kambili and Beatrice, their mother, communicated with their eyes and spirits so that to keep their message unknown to Biko Eugene. As codes in the attempt to overrule domestic tyranny, languages of eye and spirit stick oppressed people together and give a faithful account of one’s inner self to the others. In the process of remembering past events, Kambili recalls: “my mind rake through the past through the years when Jaja and Mama and I spoke more with our spirits than with our lips” (PH 14). It is thanks to that silent communication that Jaja was able to feel the necessity to protect the unborn infant from their father and that Kambili could feel that every time their mother cleaned the figurines, it meant she was symbolically wiping away her tears after domestic violence.

Celie and Nettie who lived far away from each other because of the will of Mr----- known as Albert to keep the two sisters separated for ever (TCP 122), did stay in touch thanks to their intimate ties and determination as Nettie wrote: “The years have come and gone without a single word from you. Only the sky above us do we hold in common. I look at it often as if, somehow, reflected from its immensities, I will one day find myself gazing

into your eyes” (196), “I try to picture what the years have brought you in the way of weight and wrinkles” (232). The sky stands as a linking device that helps go beyond physical barriers in order to establish a telepathic communication and reunite people symbolically.

Defeating oppression also requires the birth of women communities aiming at their empowerment. Both texts have a genuine way of building women-only communities. They depict women involved in a symbolic instillation process through hairdressing. A female character dresses the hair of another female character but transform the simple act of beautifying into a gathering to reflect on their condition. Symbolic gatherings daughter/mother (Kambili and her mother): “Every Sunday before lunch, ... Mama plaited my hair. She would sit on an armchair near the kitchen door and I on the floor with my head cradled between her thighs” (PH 10) or woman/woman (Celie and Shug Avery): “Shug Avery sit up in bed a little today. I wash and comb out her hair. She got the nootiest, shortest, kinkiest hair I ever saw, and I loves every strand of it.... I work on her like she a doll.... I comb and pat, comb and pat” (TCP 36), amounts to the birth of friendship. This friendship among women is beneficial in the sense that: “Friendship between women reinforced femininity, but at the same time it licensed forms of agency women were discouraged from exercising with men. As friends, women could compete for one another, enjoy multiple attachments” (Marcus 14). The competition for one another helps have a new approach of heterosexual marriage. It frees women from the oppression of men and compels the latter to experience the burden of oppression by rising in them some worries as Albert confesses it to Celie “When I looked around and the two of you was always doing each other’s hair, I started to worry” (154). Making cornrows is a process of reversal of impotency. Through the initiatory act of hairdressing, one can sense the occurrence of rituals of intimacy and voice-making. Women gained the power of speech. Celie reacted: “Oh, Hold on Hell” (119) to Harpo’s command to keep quiet. As she refuses to stay silent, Albert “start to sputter. But But But But. Sound like some kind of motor” (118). The birth of a female community means the reversal of psycho-dramatic attitudes like stuttering. Women and girls have taken advantage of the community they built and relied on some female icons to redesign feminist social norms that questioned and overthrew patriarchy through conciliatory as well radical methods. Some have proven beneficial as they guaranteed a happy ending for freedom seekers like in TCP

but led to tragedy as in PH. These results are conducive to examining the integration on reason in seeking liberation.

Conclusion

The Color Purple and *Purple Hibiscus* painted oppression in purple by using this color as a symbol of domestic violence, religious as well sexual abuses. Both texts portrayed two categories of female characters. The first category is overwhelmed by prejudices and the second is psychologically and emotionally fit to overrule the purplish servile patriarchal setting painted by two female narrators with different intellectual backgrounds. Revolution made by overturning the content and meaning of the purple setting and by making freedom and self-fulfillment prevail is possible by teaching submissive or passive black women to become subservient people inscribed either in the vision of womanism characterized by peaceful and humanistic methods as depicted in *The Color Purple* and radical feminism resorting to some extremism to counter exploitation both in *The Color Purple* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Literary devices aiming at uncovering the rampant oppression and suggesting ways of solving social injustice are abundant in both texts. For solving dire tension between characters, genuine symbols of spatial, relational and symbolic liberation like hairdressing, communication through spirits and hearts, and exile for self-fulfillment are suggested means made in both texts. Given that two novels separated by time and place have so many things in common means that female and child oppression go beyond time and place borders in their occurrence and command a move over borders and civilizations to topple them down.

TCP and PH contrast in their endings as one notices happy ending for women and men in the former whereas death, imprisoning and separation conclude PH thus opposing womanism and radical feminism. This compels reconsidering feminist means for self-determination. This work did not focus on the inclusion of rational forms of conduct to question oppression. Also, this study has not made any scholarly contribution about the use of colors (red and blue) in questioning power. The rebellion of Jaja and Kambili against their father triggers the need to make a postmodern approach of child-parent relationship in an era where technology and globalization is questioning traditional institutions like family.

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