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Gulfing marginalisation in meridian

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Abstract

Feminists have fostered their voice against the secondary position accorded to women under patriarchy and social structure for several years. To antagonize the diminished status of women, feminist theory distinguishes or tries to trace the differences between biological sex and socially constructed gender. However, neither feminism nor African American criticism has been able to do proper justice to the black women's familiarity and experience that has been expounded by black female authors. There are three major circles and trends of reality in American society, which reflect degrees of power and powerlessness. In a larger circle white people, comprised mostly of men, experience influence and power. Far away from it, there. Alice Walker has presented real heroine of rare caliber who can see the nakedness of society.

Keywords: Feminist, distinguishes, comprised, biological etc

Introduction

Alice Walker is occupying an eminent place among women writers. She feels through the twentieth-century black women writers all seem to be much more interested in the black community there just has not been enough examination or enough applications of findings to real problems in our day-to-day living." She has "a commitment to write the "authentic lives of 'real' Black people with urgency to tell the specific stories of Black women. Alice Walker has stated in one of her interviews;

Walker feels that a commitment to writing to be momentous must be combined with social and political activism and that the artist must stay close enough to his/her people and be there wherever they need "such a presence. To fulfill her commitment, Walker uses her description, grounded in racial history, and focuses on the histories of women of African ancestry. Butler-Evans writes: "These historical narratives of women while contained within the framework of racial historical narratives, become signifiers of sexual difference." (126)

American author Alice Walker's second novel, *Meridian* (1976), has been calculated as encapsulating Walker's views on the modern civil rights movement, just like crucial point first and foremost on the psychological impact rather than social or biased political views. The novel follows Meridian Hill, a young black woman and college student in the late 1960s, as she embraces the civil rights movement at that time when the movement becomes aggressive or violent. The story follows her life into the 1970s through a connection that eventually fails, and her continued efforts to support the movement halt but for a short period only. The novel begins in the 1970s. Truman Held, an artiste, and former civil rights worker, finds himself searching for Meridian in Chicokema, Georgia. Meridian is foremost handling a group of children who have been deprived of entry to every freak show featuring Marilene O'Shay, who is said to be one of the Twelve Human Wonders of the World, a dead woman potted in life-like condition. Truman first spots Meridian staring down a tank at the mummified woman on a day the children, mostly poor and black, are prohibited to attend. After that she collapses and is brought home unconscious, she and Truman clutch up. Ten years ago, Meridian had been concerned with a black revolutionary association in New York City, but her rejection to kill on their behalf thwarted them and caused Meridian to leave the group. Still, she has a passion for black activism and has unyielding to return to her roots as a previous civil rights worker, vowing to live and work amongst the people.

Truman struggles to understand the unsolved illness that has taken hold of her, causing her to experience fainting spells and paralysis. He admits his inability to let her go.

The story moves forward sometimes and in flashbacks. Meridian does her best to adjust to college life, having left her son behind after getting pregnant in high school and not perceiving the meaning of motherhood but wanting to pursue a greater life for herself. She also falls in love with Truman. The two begin dating. White women tum up from the North, volunteering to assist the movement. Truman is fascinated by one of the new arrivals, Lynne, and the two begin dating. Although Truman and Meridian briefly recommence sexual relations, Truman continues to pursue his promising relationship with Lynne. Meridian becomes pregnant and has an abortion. After Lynne leaves, Truman attempts to reawaken his former love for Meridian, asking her to have his children. Meridian, in response, strikes him with her book bag, cutting his cheek.

The action shifts to a flashback of Lynne, who left her family to be with Truman and pursue her involvement in the movement. Lynne and Truman grow increasingly distant, with other members of the black community suggesting to Truman that Lynne is only with him to assuage her feelings of white guilt. They both move to New York City but live separate lives. Lynne seeks out Truman only one time, to let him know that their daughter has been attacked and is in the hospital. She finds that he is living with a young blonde woman. Their daughter dies and Truman contacts Meridian, who comes to comfort him. Eight years later, Meridian struggles with questions of intolerance and how the movement ultimately turned out. Truman finds it easier to leave such issues alone. Meridian remains in her small town, advocating for the black residents to vote and try to change their lot. She recalls the time she took to regularly attend church services. Once, an old man, whose radical son had been killed while working for the movement, addressed the congregation. Meridian regained her wavering desire to kill on behalf of the rights of blacks. She and Truman continue their voter-registration drives in earnest. Cured of her illness, Meridian prepares to move on, leaving Truman behind to continue the work that she started in Chickpea. Reading the poems, she has posted on the wall, Truman falls to the floor in a swoon. Upon beginning, he concludes that he must take up the internal struggle from which Meridian has finally freed herself.

Truman Held arrives in Chicokema, to meet up with his former lover, Meridian Hill. He first sees her staring down a manned tank as she escorts local schoolchildren to a sideshow attraction displaying a mummified woman, on a day the children, mostly poor and black, are forbidden to attend. After collapsing and being brought home unconscious, she and Truman catch up. The action then shifts, in a flashback, to New York City, where, ten years ago, Meridian is unwilling to assert that she will kill on behalf of a black revolutionary organization, to the dismay of the others assembled. Then, even further back in time, Meridian, at the age of thirteen, is unwilling to accept Jesus into her life, a decision that prompts her mother to withdraw her love. Meridian, back in the present. Has decided to return to her roots as a former civil rights worker, and vows to live and work amongst the people. Truman does not understand the mysterious illness that grips her. Causing her to experience fainting spells and paralysis. He admits his inability to let her go. The action shifts to Saxon College,

where Meridian and Anne-Marion first meet. While canvassing a local neighborhood for voters, Meridian meets the Wild Child, a pregnant, homeless teenager. Meridian captures her, then bathes and feeds her. When Meridian makes phone calls to find additional assistance for her, the Wild Child escapes, runs out into the street, is struck by a car, and dies. Meridian, Anne-Marion, and other students and neighborhood residents carry the Wild Child's casket, leading the funeral cortege onto the campus grounds. But the president of the college denies them access to the chapel for the services. That night the students riot and chop down the Sojourner, the school's iconic magnolia tree.

In another flashback, Meridian's father deeds sixty acres of his farmland back to the Cherokee who once owned it, specifically to Walter Long's knife. He camps on the parcel for a brief period in the summer then cedes ownership back to Meridian's father. The area, with its serpent-shaped mound, is then made into a historical site that bars blacks. Meridian and her father are no longer allowed access to the pit in the serpent's tail where they experienced the swooning, paralysis, and strange manifestations that are part of their unique family condition.

As a teenager, uninformed about sex, Meridian becomes pregnant, marries, and drops out of school to have a baby boy, which makes her feel indifferent at best. Around the time her marriage to Eddie is dissolving. Meridian notices the presence of white civil rights workers in a black neighborhood. Later, the house in which they are staying is bombed. The incident spurs Meridian to volunteer for the cause. At the headquarters, she meets Truman. Soon they are demonstrating together and getting beaten, arrested, and jailed. Meridian's mother disapproves of Meridian's radical political activities. Unexpectedly, Meridian is offered a scholarship to Saxon College. Her friends attempt to convince her mother that it is a great opportunity for Meridian. Giving up Eddie Jr., Meridian starts school but is plagued with the guilt that always dogs her.

Meridian tries her best to battle loneliness and adjust to college life. After the Wild Child incident, she moves off campus, actively continuing her civil rights protests and demonstrations. She also falls in love with Truman. The two begin dating, but their newfound bliss as a couple is compromised by the arrival of college students-white women from the North who volunteer to assist the movement. Many invoke racial patronage or romantic fetishism of the foreign, black culture that they are fully confronting for the first time. Truman is taken by one of the new arrivals, Lynne, and the two begin dating. Although Truman and Meridian briefly resume sexual relations, Truman continues to pursue his budding relationship with Lynne. Pregnant, Meridian has an abortion and gets her tubes tied. After Lynne leaves, Truman attempts to rekindle his former love for Meridian, asking her to have his children. Meridian, in response, strikes him with her book, and bag, cutting his cheek.

With graduation approaching, Meridian again falls ill, losing her sight and lapsing into oblivion. She stays in bed for a month. Miss Winters, one of Saxon's few black instructors, nurses her back to health. Anne-Marion, who has also been at Meridian's side, eventually concludes that she is incapable of loving Meridian and turns her back on her friend. Truman and Lynne, now married, are living in Mississippi, where her whiteness begins to endanger them and the movement when a fellow rights worker, Tommy

Odds, has the lower half of one of his arms shot off. Increasingly, Lynne is excluded from the marches and meetings. Despite having a daughter, Camara, Truman grows more and more distant from his wife. He drives to Alabama to visit Meridian Newly obsessed with his former lover, he tries to win her back, but Meridian spurns his advances. After the death of Camara, Lynne visits Meridian, whose illness has advanced and claimed most of her hair. Lynne is bitter over the slow dissolution of her marriage and the way her once-idealistic life has turned out. She has come in search of Truman, whose visits to Meridian have become more frequent.

Meridian daringly endures atrocities meted out to her by the White policemen when she protests Harold Bloom calls Meridian "a martyr to the resistance to violence" (Bloom 9). She takes a midnight march in protest against the town's segregated hospital amenities and proceeds along with the other protestors towards the jail where she and her people are beaten by the White police hardheartedly. She is trodden by people, running over her;

One blow knocked Meridian to the ground, where she was trampled by People running back and forth over here. But there was nowhere to run. Only the jail door was open and unobstructed. Within minutes they had been beaten inside. When the Sheriff and his deputies waited to finish them [...] when the sheriff grabbed her by the hair and someone else began punching her and kicking her in the back, she did not even scream[...] (Walker 100)

A common feature that is found mercilessly in the Black community is that the Black men often desert their wives by pushing them into a state of utter poverty and frustrations which make the Black women feel a sense of alienation and separation from society. Their condition of loneliness is caused by maladjustments in the family and social structure. They are more ardent about sex than parenthood. In early parenthood, their immaturity, and lack of knowledge make them unaware that they do not know how to bring up or foster a child. Thus, early marriage leads them to early separation because they are unsuspecting and unprepared for its responsibilities. This separation inevitably causes a deep sense of frustration and alienation in Black women. Meridian also becomes a victim of frustration and disconnection. Because of her ignorance and indulgence in sex, she gets pregnant through Eddie and, thereafter, they get married. But she is forsaken by him soon after she gives birth to a son Meridian dreadfully stands, doubly marginalized, as a deserted wife and as a high school dropout. "She was still only seventeen, A dropout from school, a deserted wife, a mother, and a daughter-in-law" (Walker 89).

The Black man who finds his purposes disillusioned by the world outside is not able to tolerate this insult and often becomes violent and furious like an animal, beating his wife and children. In blind fury, he mishandles and mistreats his wife only as a commodity. But she has to patiently endure his fury and violence since she is economically poor and dependent on her husband for her identity and her children's survival. She loses her individuality, and, like a speechless animal, bears all these carnages unleashed on her by her husband. The man takes out his frustration on her and proves his manhood. The husband feels extreme satisfaction and pleasure when he beats his wife. He derives more joy in beating his wife, Mrs. Hill, Meridian's mother scolds him a lot. Walker has handled the device to scrutinize the device

of victimization to which Black women are victimized for centuries. She scales down in poignant terms the tragic situation of Black people, especially women, in a xenophobic country. Slavery, which remains a blight, is voluntarily imposed on Black people. Owing to the unrelenting brutal attack on them and the psychological trauma that consequence, black women not only lost their empathy for nature but also their impulse for freedom. They still kept lack knowledge and they are devoid of emotion because of rootlessness. They are forced to see their children with no other option to meet their basic needs like food. By the act of selling their children, Black woman's motherhood is profoundly damaged that they are forced to wear the structure of absence of motherly feeling or killer instinct. Meridian is fully conscious of the pathetic and miserable condition of the enslaved Black women "Meridian knew that enslaved Black woman has been made miserable by the scale of their children" (111).

Selling children is otherwise a heinous crime, but under the oppression of slavery, it has been a traditional process in which most Black women are pushed forcibly. Meridian's great-great-grandmother also had been an injured party under the tyranny of slavery and she felt great agony when her two children were sold away from her when they were very small, not even knowing the meaning of life. "Her mother's great-great-grandmother had been a slave whose two children were solid away from her when they are toddlers" (155). To force a Black woman into unsuitable motherhood and apart from their children is an unprincipled act worse than any offense in the world. Womanhood is complete and ranked glory only when a woman attains the rank of motherhood.

Racial isolation hits the self-respect of the Black people who are not permitted to enter even certain places, where the entry is open only for the White people. The form of segregation is the result of escalating prejudice developed by the white people against Black people for their color or racial convention that projects Black as cursed, beastly, and polluted beings. Meridian herself experiences such discrimination in the ethnic American society. Her parent's traditional land, Sacred Serpent Park, was acquired forcibly by the White administration and that is converted into a reputable public park that is open only to the White people. "When her father went to the Country Courthouse with his deed, the officials said they could offer only token payment, that, and the warning to stay away from Sacred Serpent Park which, now that it belonged to the public, was of course not open to color" (61). It is an act of infringement.

The White people never are hesitant to break the law and the primary rights of colored people. Stealing pleasures or life from the Black people is their prime objective. All government machinery - administration, law, and justice - machinate stand against Black people and they do not regard the Black people as a subject substantial.

Walker's women struggle to create their steady identities by fighting against the grim historical junction of racism and sexism. She remains the heir to the achievements of a new order, thus signaling the transition of women from death to life, from the end to the beginning. She grasps both the potentiality of her society and its intrinsic ignorance. Meridian still, Walker's eponymous champion in the novel Meridian, develops a totality of being, breaking the barrier after a long struggle. To attain self-hood, she had to undergo numerous trials and tests. Meridian's strong qualities

comparable to breeding and pulchritude, remarkable courage and virtue, and innate brilliance and ingenuity - elevate her to a supreme space.

In *Meridian*, Walker categorically demonstrates that victory does not lie in mere contribution in the field, but in fighting well. *Meridian* is not only a participant in the Civil Rights Movement but a real fighter that she survives as a triumphant being, raising from possible destruction. Finally, she discovers all the elements of her indispensable character that were threatened by crossing out.

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