

**Empowering Black Women through Female Solidarity: A Magical Realist and  
Gynocritical Analysis of *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem, Mama Day* and *The Color  
Purple***

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Empowering Black Women through Female Solidarity: A Magical Realist and Gynocritical

*Analysis of I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem, Mama Day and The Color Purple*

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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### Declaration

I, hereby, declare that this work has been written by me except for the references and quotations which have been cited properly. I declare that this paper has not been submitted to any other institution formerly or presently. Furthermore, I have maintained all the academic codes and integrity while writing this research paper.

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## Approval of Supervisor

I certify that this dissertation satisfies all the requirements to be approved and accepted for the completion of Master of Arts in English.



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### Abstract

This dissertation aims to identify the subversive writing techniques adopted by the black female authors to empower their black female protagonists. Maryse Condé in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, Gloria Naylor in *Mama Day*, and Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* demonstrate how their victimized black female protagonists unify with other afflicted black women to challenge the stereotypical ideologies of patriarchal society and reconstruct their future. In the first chapter, the analysis of *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* through the theories of Showalter's gynocriticism, Hart's magical feminism and Bowers' magical realism help understand how Tituba utilizes her voice, her medicinal knowledge, and her connection with female ancestors to initiate black resistance. In the second chapter, the theoretical understandings of black feminism, magical realism and female rivalry by Arndt, Bowers' and Springer respectively aid to explore the transgressive nature of Cocoa's relationship with George, the reconstructive aspects of Cocoa's attachment with her grandmothers and the cataclysmic result of Ruby's rivalry with Cocoa in *Mama Day*. In the final chapter, this paper incorporates the theoretical perspectives of feminist satire, lesbianism, female consensus, and self-respect by Krefting, Atkinson, Hamer and Neville, and Dillon respectively to analyse the strategies used by the black female characters in *The Color Purple* to resist male domination and reclaim their individuality. Overall, this paper attempts to prove that the black female protagonists of these three texts embrace innovative ways to challenge social prejudices and interrupt the continuity of their subjugation to emancipate as a collective.

Keywords: Black Feminism, gynocriticism, subverting patriarchy, sisterhood, emancipation

### Introduction

God topples from the sky, hell's fire fade:

Exit seraphim and Satan's men:

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead. (Plath, lines 10-12)

From a feminist perspective, this stanza from Sylvia Plath's poem "Mad Girl's Love Song" depicts female outrage after keeping their voices suppressed for a long time. Although this poem is written from a white woman's perspective, it can still express the collective feminine desires and frustration. In comparison to the white women, the black women are doubly victimized in the society because of their identity as women emerging from the black community. As a result, a black woman's expression is usually neglected. However, upon reading several black female literatures written by black women, I have observed that these black female writers have attempted to include black women's perspectives in their writings to depict the necessity of black female empowerment. As feminists, they try to speak for these women by keeping them in the position of a subject. Regardless of their colour or ethnicity, women are given a subservient position by the patriarchal society. Nonetheless, these female writers aspire to reconstruct the masculine narrative and express their disagreement concerning the subordinate role of women. As claimed by Cixous, "[w]oman must write her self..." (875). There is a generous amount of literary work written for the women by male writers. However, feminists believe that women should also write for themselves and other women to legitimize their personal experiences as a marginalized group. This concept is directly connected to gynocriticism, a term coined by Elaine Showalter in 1979. Writing is an essential tool to give voice to the suppressed women. So, the writers who aspire to support gender equality have eventually adopted their distinct writing strategies free from the influence of patriarchal perceptions to highlight female consciousness. In this dissertation, I will attempt to prove that, the black female writers subvert patriarchal narrative



in order to offer an agency to their black female protagonists and rise above the impediments caused by patriarchy to reconstruct their lives. These black heroines ensure their emancipation through their rejection of male dominance and the friendship they develop with other black women.

As specimens of black female literature, I have selected three novels titled *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* by Maryse Condé, *Mama Day* by Gloria Naylor and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, as primary texts of my dissertation. In *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, the fictional Tituba depicts the victimization of a black female slave. As a young girl, Tituba witnesses the wrongful execution of her mother, Abena, by the patriarchal society. Tituba herself is mutilated by both white and black men. After marriage, Tituba's black husband, John Indian, often calls her 'Witch' to derogate her identity and passively allows his white mistress, Susanna Endicott, to objectify Tituba. Later, the Puritans make Tituba a target of Salem Witch Trial when she moves to Salem with her white master, Samuel Parris, a racial and religious bigot who labels Tituba as 'evil'. Tituba evades her execution by providing a false confession in the Salem court. In the end, Tituba dies as a revolutionary while leading a black revolt against the white planters after returning to her native land, Barbados. The otherworldly knowledge that Tituba receives from a female Shaman, Mama Yaya, helps her (Tituba) to survive these ordeals inflicted by the hypocritical society. After her death, Tituba uses her magic to communicate with her chosen progeny, Samantha, to ensure the continuance of resistance among black women against male subjugation. Cocoa, the African American female protagonist in *Mama Day*, succeeds to shape her future through the challenging phases that nearly threaten her life. Cocoa is raised in Willow Springs by her grandmother, Abigail, and her great-aunt, Miranda, who are an inseparable part of her life. After migrating to New York, Cocoa struggles for seven years to adjust in the modern environment until George's arrival brings a positive change in her monotonous life. George

and Cocoa's egalitarian marriage allows her to concentrate on her individual goals. On the other hand, when Cocoa's health deteriorates due to Ruby's sorcery, Miranda uses her superior knowledge to rescue Cocoa. Later, Miranda and Abigail aid Cocoa to recover emotionally and physically after George's death. As a result, Cocoa efficiently overcomes the obstacles, and continues to pursue her ambitions to reconstruct her future. *The Color Purple* narrates unpleasant experiences of Celie, an African American heroine whose letters to God and her sister, Nettie, reveal the unsettling episodes of her (Celie) life that she surmounts at the end. Celie's adoptive father, Alphonso, and her husband, Albert, exploit her both sexually and emotionally. Initially, Celie endures their derogatory approach toward her and writes to God for comfort. Nonetheless, Celie observes how Harpo's wife, Sofia, and Albert's lover, Shug, deny patriarchal domination. Eventually, Celie develops self-awareness that enables her to resist male control like Sofia and Shug. In due course, Celie reclaims her self-esteem through her friendship with Shug, Nettie and Sofia. Celie learns to defend her dignity against Albert's hypocritical attitude and denies her unhappy marriage with him. Once a silent sufferer, Celie becomes self-aware, and travels to Memphis with Shug to establish her (Celie's) distinct identity. The introductory letters of *The Color Purple* document Celie's afflicted voice. However, Celie's voice resonates self-contentment when she concludes her letter writing as a successful businesswoman; thriving amidst her family. In *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, Tituba, a native black woman from Barbados, transcends slavery and resists white men's attempt to label her as 'witch'. The African American woman, Cocoa, migrates to New York to secure her individual identity in *Mama Day*. Cocoa's husband and her grandmothers support her to rise above the obstacles caused by the patriarchal society. In *The Color Purple*, Celie develops unity with other African American women and reconstructs her identity free from male influence. I will compare the heroines of these three novels to argue

that the black women can confirm their emancipation by formulating a shield against patriarchal subjugation as a collective.

I have dedicated three chapters for three different novels in this dissertation that incorporate distinct theoretical frameworks to support my arguments. In the first chapter titled “Tituba’s Transformation and Self-healing through Female Writing: Magical Realism and Female Solidarity in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*”, I will demonstrate Tituba’s struggles to ensure the continuance of black resistance amongst her own people before her execution by the white planters. From her own point of view, the fictional Tituba records sufferings in the hands of stereotypical men and white supremacists. I will attempt to argue that the magical realist elements present in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* grants the fictional Tituba a voice to dismantle pre-existing patriarchal narrative that treats the expressions of the oppressed women with indifference. Elaine Showalter’s theoretical framework of gynocriticism delineates the significance of writing produced by women to provide their perspectives a just treatment. On the other hand, magical realism is a narrative mode that is used by the marginalized and cross-cultural female writers to speak for themselves and their female readers. Patricia Hart, who has coined the term ‘magical feminism’, talks about female voices in magical realist narratives that can depict their position in the literary work. For this reason, I will use the understandings of Showalter and Hart to support my first argument. Tituba’s knowledge regarding the supernatural enables her to maintain a bond with her female ancestors, Mama Yaya and Abena. Learning medicinal knowledge from Mama Yaya enables Tituba to transcend both sexual and racial violence. Tituba uses magic to summon the spirits of Mama Yaya and Abena whenever she requires their guidance. After her death, Tituba sustains similar connection with Samantha to carry on her (Tituba’s) unfinished agenda to transcend patriarchal barriers. I will try to prove that Maryse Condé has taken the support of magical realist narrative mode to demonstrate the importance of female

unity for their emancipation as a collective. The communication Mama Yaya, Abena and Tituba maintain between them through magic develops into a friendship. This shared affinity empowers Tituba to initiate the subversion of male subjugation which impedes the growth of black women. In the book *Magic(al)Realism*, Maggie Ann Bowers provides her understanding of magical realism used by the authors in writings. According to Bowers, many feminist writers incorporate magical realist writing technique to express themselves for its ability to transgress and challenge the typical norms. I will utilize Bowers' findings to establish my second claim of this chapter. I will draw a magical realist analysis to argue that female friendship has worked as an instrument to alter Tituba's identity as a victim.

In the second chapter, "Cocoa's Transformation into a Bulletproof Diva in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*", I will assess the factors that facilitate the continuance of Cocoa's individual growth. Cocoa's husband, George, portrays a character uninfluenced by patriarchal prejudices. Cocoa can exert equal authority in her marriage to retain her individuality. After marriage, George does not interrupt when Cocoa decides to complete her higher studies before having children and continue working in a job sector. As a result, Cocoa and George's bond questions a traditional marriage in which the dominating husband controls the choices of his wife. According to Susan Arndt, black feminism challenges patriarchal assumptions and offer choices to the oppressed black women to alter their subjugation. I will apply Arndt's findings to argue that Cocoa succeeds to accomplish her personal goals after marriage without facing any patriarchal barrier because of the reformist male-female relationship she shares with George. Cocoa's grandmothers, Miranda and Abigail, are responsible for shaping her personality. They provide Cocoa guidance and comfort during the tough phases of her life. Miranda's magical ability enables her to save Cocoa from Ruby's possession. Miranda performs a mystic ritual to break Ruby's curse. Later, Abigail and Miranda use herbal remedies to restore Cocoa's health. After George's death, they (Miranda

and Abigail) console Cocoa and motivate her to reformulate her future. Without the presence of any male superior in Day family, the matriarchs, Miranda and Abigail, efficiently secure Cocoa's future. Having male support is not an absolute necessity for Miranda, Abigail and Cocoa to ensure an optimistic future for their family. Maggie Ann Bowers demonstrates the ability of magical realist writing to subvert the unverifiable aspects and attack the prevalent norms. I will incorporate Bowers' concept to prove that, Cocoa's matriarchal family challenges male authority and suggests the efficiency of female friendship to empower an afflicted woman. During Cocoa and George's visit in Willow Springs, Ruby casts a dark spell and threatens Cocoa's life. According to Kimberly Springer, black women can hinder their progress as a collective if they compete for status instead of supporting one another. I will use Springer's findings to analyse Ruby's jealousy towards Cocoa. Ruby's evildoing takes George's life and endangers Cocoa's future. Whereas, Miranda and Abigail's affection and support recovers Cocoa from the damage Ruby causes in her life. So, I will attempt to prove that the contrast between Cocoa's progressive bond with her grandmothers and Ruby's detrimental rivalry with Cocoa in the novel signifies the importance of unity among black women to ensure their emancipation.

In the final chapter of my dissertation, "Celie's Transformation into a Free-Spirited Woman through Female Friendship, Self-Help, and Rejection of Male Supremacy in *The Color Purple*", I will analyse how the protagonist of *The Color Purple*, Celie, completely transforms from a passive being to a self-righteous woman through the support received from other black women. Celie observes Shug's tendency of using satirical expression every so often to derogate Albert's presumed manliness. Indicating Albert's lack of control over her, Shug uses the word 'weak' to insult his manhood. Similarly, when Celie finds her own voice to resist Albert's dominance, she calls him a "lowdown dog" (Walker 180). Later, Celie compares Albert to a frog to insult his hypocritical attitude. In the book *All Joking Aside*:

*American Humor and Its Discontents*, Rebecca Krefting explains how the ‘Jokesters’ challenge the existing social inequality by transgressing the dominant ideology through comic expressions and jokes. Evaluating Celie and Shug’s choice of words on the basis of Krefting’s perspective, I will attempt to argue that these black women take the support of parody to challenge presumed male values. I will try to demonstrate how the inclusion of feminist satire in *The Color Purple* subverts and transgresses male perceptions the same way magical realist writing technique challenges patriarchy in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* and *Mama Day*. Celie develops a strong affinity towards Shug which is completely opposite of how she (Celie) feels for men. Celie and Shug’s shared affection eventually takes sexual and romantic turn. Ti-Grace Atkinson considers lesbianism as one of the ways for the oppressed women to resist male dominance. Hence, Celie’s homosexual interest can be observed as an attempt to deny male influence in her life. Based on Krefting and Atkinson’s understandings, I will try to prove that the satirical remarks of black women towards men and Celie’s homosexual tendency in *The Color Purple* serve to oppose male prejudices. Moreover, according to Jennifer Hamer and Helen Neville, the oppressed black women can develop mutual empathy based on their common experiences as the victims of patriarchal society. Their shared understanding of each other’s sufferings can form an alliance to resist male oppression as a collective. Acknowledging Hamer and Neville’s black feminist observation, I will attempt to prove that the sense of sisterhood between Shug, Celie, Nettie and Sofia is influenced by their shared empathy which ensures their empowerment as a group. Celie’s friendship inspires her to evaluate her passive approach towards life and resist male oppression to reclaim her individuality. However, the motivation Celie receives from other black women cannot ensure Celie’s progress unless she realizes her self-worth and puts an effort to bring positive changes in her life. I will try to prove that Celie’s friendship with other black women would have been insufficient to ensure her personal growth without her

self-initiated attempts. Referring to the importance of fostering ‘self-respect’, Robin S. Dillon says that self-doubt limits and destabilizes personal growth, hence it is important to respect one’s identity as it motivates us to ensure self-actualization (60). I will use Dillon’s analysis on self-respect to establish the last argument of this chapter.

In addition to the theoretical frameworks mentioned above, I will incorporate several secondary sources to support my arguments in the research paper. In “The Contribution of Women’s Writings to the Literature and Intellectual Achievements of the Caribbean: *Moi, Tituba Sorciere and Amour, Colere et Folie*”, Nara Araujo demonstrates how Tituba’s antipathy toward the hypocrisy of white men takes the form of her defiance against patriarchal exploitation. Araujo’s analysis will support my discussion on Tituba’s denial towards the maltreatments of both white and black men in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. bell hooks, in her book *AIN’T I A WOMAN: black women and feminism*, observes that the literary works on women carry a large amount of discriminatory indications. hooks writes that black men’s writings on black women failed to preserve the authenticity of black women’s experiences during 19<sup>th</sup> century as those literary works were revised by the white editors. I will refer to hooks’ argument in this chapter to depict the importance of Tituba’s position as a first-person narrator to validate her personal experiences in the novel. In “Women’s solidarity – and divisions among women”, Ann Whitehead argues that women face physical abuse, sexual assault and brutality due to male exploitation and institutionalized male-female relationships. These violent incidents offer the victimized women a clear premise to unify as a collective. Based on Whitehead’s concept, I will analyse how Tituba, Mama Day and Abena’s friendship comes into being as consequence of their common experiences as sufferers. Iris Marion Young in her article “Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective”, claims that women unify not only because of their femaleness. The experiences they share as members of certain class, race, ethnicity, and/or

religion also determine the like-mindedness they share with each other. I will utilize Young's findings to analyse how Tituba succeeds to create a connection with Samantha despite the generation gap between them.

In *Amazon Odyssey*, Ti-Grace Atkinson delineates women's ideological conflict to either deny male subjugation or remain subjugated in marriage as their identity is determined by men in patriarchal society. In my paper, I will use Atkinson's criticism to analyse how Cocoa's marriage with George in *Mama Day* differs from any typical marriage that enables men to control women's individual existences and choices. In her article "My baby just cares for me: Feminism, heterosexuality and non-monogamy", Victoria Robinson criticizes the way men are offered a privileged position in marriage, allowing them an opportunity to possess their wives. I will refer to Robinson's critical analysis to examine how George's character challenges the patriarchal depiction of a dominating and abusive husband. Sharon Mavin and Gina Grandy, in their article "Doing gender well and differently in management", introduce the term "Queen Bee Syndrome" (224) to address an insecure woman (The Queen Bee) who wounds other women if her authority is challenged. Based on Mavin and Grandy's findings, I will assess the factors responsible to trigger Ruby's jealousy which provokes her to cast hoodoo on Cocoa. In "Female Consciousness and Feminism in Africa", Allison Drew argues that women's awareness and their familiar experiences as an oppressed group can enable them to develop a sense of unity among themselves. Allison's findings will facilitate me to argue that Cocoa's intangible bond with Miranda and Abigail stems from their collective experiences as victims.

In *Feminisms Redux*, Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, the author of the book chapter "Introduction From Gender In African Women's Writing", analyses black female writings in her literary work. Nfah-Abbenyi observes that the black female writers aspire to reinterpret and destabilize the patriarchal diction and primordial practices that identify black women



inaccurately. In my paper, Nfah-Abbenyi's concept will support me to argue that Celie uses writing to deconstruct male assumptions and challenge men's tendency to derogate her in *The Color Purple*. In *Pulling Our Own Strings*, Una Stannard, the writer of the chapter "Why Little Girls Are Sugar & Spice and When They Grow Up Become Cheesecake", criticizes how food and women are treated similarly by men. Stannard ridicules men's tendency to sexually objectify and exploit women the same way they (men) consume food. Referring to Stannard's criticism, I will analyse how Celie becomes a pawn of Alphonso and Albert's sexual assaults due to their hypocritical mindset and self-proclaimed masculinity. In *AIN'T I A WOMAN: Black Women and Feminism*, bell hooks claims that white women abuse their presumed superior class in the white patriarchal society and take on oppressor's position to subjugate black men and women. hooks argues that the white female writers pretend to support sorority and unity between black and white women. However, they (white female writers) fail to acknowledge black women's experiences in their writings. Based on hooks' findings, I will delineate the failure of Sofia's relationship with her white mistress, Miz Millie. In my paper, I will refer to hooks' critical perspective to draw a contrast between Sofia's servitude to Miz Millie and Celie's shared sisterhood with Sofia, Shug, and Nettie. In *Woman's Embodied Self: Feminist Perspectives on Identity and Image*, J.C. Chrisler and I. Johnston-Robledo analyse the way people construct self-concept. They argue that our bodies enable us to acquire an insight into the world and ourselves. As a result, the body becomes the core of self-knowledge and individuality. J.C. Chrisler and I. Johnston-Robledo's understandings will support my claim that Celie initiates the reconstruction of her identity only after accepting her individual self. Based on their analysis, I will argue that Celie's acceptance of her own sexuality and bodily features enable her to regain confidence and resist male dominance.

I believe that my research is unique from similar researches on this topic because I will attempt to show that the female protagonists of the three novels reach the common goal of subverting patriarchal oppression and reconstructing their individual identities by utilizing diverse tactics. In *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, Tituba uses magic to create a link with both her female ancestors and successors to ensure the continuity of black female resistance. Cocoa secures her individuality by forming a positive and progressive bond with a male partner who does not conform to twisted patriarchal ideologies in *Mama Day*. On the other hand, Celie, Sofia, Shug and Mary Agnes, the black female characters of *The Color Purple*, attack toxic masculinity by using female humour and forming an alliance among themselves. Despite being black female authors writing about black women, the writers of these three novels have focused on manifold ways which may all lead to black women's freedom. Maryse Condé in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* and Gloria Naylor in *Mama Day* have adopted magical realism as a writing style to challenge the prevalent stereotypical norms; Whereas, Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* has assimilated parody into the narrative to challenge the presumed masculinity. The focus of my dissertation will be to show how these three black female writers amalgamate diverse methods to show the emancipation of the black female protagonists and advocate for the idea of sisterhood in their narratives.

## Chapter One

Tituba's Transformation and Self-Healing through Female Writing: Magical Realism and  
Female Solidarity in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*

“I can look for my story among those of the witches of Salem, but it isn't there” (Condé 149). In *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* Maryse Condé has reconstructed the story of a black Caribbean slave woman with her own imagination. Condé's protagonist is denied a place in the documented history and provided a negative image because of her skin tone and gender. In this novel, the fictional Tituba is given a voice so that she can retell the historical Tituba's story from a survivor's perspective. Tituba's story is ignored and unwritten in history because she was a woman of colour. However, the fictional Tituba challenges the validity of the documented history by narrating her story from a first-person viewpoint. Tituba takes control of the narrative to provide the readers an alternate perspective that is not manipulated either by patriarchy or white supremacy. The novel starts with Tituba mentioning how she came to existence as a product of rape and a representative of colonial, racial and gender violence. Since childhood, Tituba has witnessed and endured the mutilation of her family, fellow African people and herself. As a black slave woman, she was often reduced down to an object and termed as evil. Nevertheless, Tituba learns to use magic for healing and communicate with the spirits under Mama Yaya's guidance. Acquiring this mystic knowledge enables victimized Tituba to resist every oppression and die as a revolutionary. Condé has used magical realist narrative technique to propose that black women can alter their subservient position if they are encouraged and provided the relevant tools.

In an interview, Condé was asked about her interpersonal relationship with Tituba, the protagonist of her novel. In reply, Condé said that she was so intensely engaged in an interaction with Tituba that she felt Tituba's presence when writing the novel (qtd. in Condé

200). Furthermore, Condé was asked whether she was inspired by Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*, to which she remarks on the typical ignorance of a white male writer regarding a black woman's perspective. Elaine Showalter has reflected on the limitation of male writing in depicting female experience in a branch of feminist study termed as gynocriticism. In "Killing the Angel in the House: The Autonomy of Women Writers", Showalter states, "Beyond androgyny, women have a lot to say" (353). In other words, patriarchal narrative cannot entirely represent female psyche. Additionally, bell hooks, in her book *AIN'T I A WOMAN: Black Women and Feminism*, writes that the literatures written on black women were loaded with both sexist and racist remarks. Even, black men's writings on black women were manipulated by their sexist supposition and the 19<sup>th</sup> century black women's writings were revised by the whites (10). So, a black woman requires to insert her own understanding in the writing to assert her individual identity. Which is why, in *I, Tituba*<sup>1</sup>, Condé adopts Tituba's voice to allow her a self-expression so that she can convey her emotions to the readers. In the novel, Tituba takes control of the narrative to tell her undocumented story which received an indifferent treatment from the male dominated society. However, Condé has found no historical existence of the real Tituba from Salem Witch Trial apart from the mention of "a slave originating from the West Indies and probably practicing 'hoodoo'" (qtd. in Condé 215). Therefore, she has used magical realist narrative technique to go beyond factual reality and create fictional history of Tituba. Patricia Hart coined the term "magical feminism" to set out "magical realism employed in a femino-centric work, or one that is especially insightful into the status or condition of women in the context described in the work" (qtd. in Blackwell 141). In *I, Tituba*, Tituba is a black female 'witch' who is condemned by several demographic groups of the society- white males, white females, puritans, black males and even white children whom she nurses back to good health with her

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<sup>1</sup> From now on, I will write *I, Tituba* as a short form of *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*.

heartfelt affection and medicinal knowledge. To cope with this alienation, Tituba creates an alternative reality for herself through magic to establish a connection with other subjugated women in the narrative. In this chapter, I will argue that in *I, Tituba*, black female writing subverts patriarchal narrative to prioritize the suppressed voices. I will also attempt to prove that magical realism validates Tituba's existence as opposed to the historical 'non-existence' of a black female victim of the infamous Salem Witch Trial and consequently turns her into a collective consciousness against the male dominated society. Furthermore, I will focus on Tituba's interaction with other female characters to prove that sharing their frustrations and experiences with each other establishes a female support system and solidarity between them.

From the very beginning, Condé gives Tituba absolute control of her story as a first-person narrator, which is evident in the novel's title, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. In the title which reads like a statement, Tituba asserts her individual identity by initially mentioning her own name and then letting the readers know the identity that was imposed upon her by the society. Tituba was born as a slave and a result of rape when being doubly marginalized both as a black and a woman. She defines the source of her birth as an "act of hatred and contempt" (3) and through this comment, Tituba reflects on her frustration toward the violence done to her mother, Abena, by a white male. According to Araújo, Tituba's antagonism toward white male authoritarianism originates as "a legitimate defensive reaction to harassment and abuse" (223). Tituba was only seven when she saw her mother being unjustly hanged because of the crime she did not commit. Although, in Tituba's words, Abena was only trying to protect herself from the attempt of sexual assault by the white man. Tituba watched her mother's dead body hanging from the tree. She describes her trauma by repeatedly uttering, "They hanged my mother" (8). This reference makes it evident that Condé utilized first person narrative voice to express Tituba's personal and intimate emotions. As a first person story teller, Tituba authenticates the intensity of her grief. She

acknowledges that the “terror and mourning” (8) that she feels within herself after witnessing Abena’s execution will have a lasting impact on her. Tituba’s mother suffered because she was a black slave woman. So, Abena’s story represents colonial brutality. Tituba also narrates the misfortune of the slaves in Barbados in details, “I saw men go home covered in blood, their chests and backs striped in scarlet” (7). Her description challenges the narrative of the white colonizers, giving an insight to the insufferable oppression endured by the black slaves. Therefore, by taking control of the narrative, Tituba scrutinizes colonial violence while demonstrating the mutilation of the African people by the white planters.

Tituba communicates her consciousness to the readers through her first-person narration which had no place in the history written by the colonizers. *I, Tituba* rejects white male superiority through a feminist remark by Mama Yaya, an influential black female character, that, “...man is not the master riding through his kingdom on horseback” (9). This Nago woman provides Tituba a shelter and helps her to survive. After Mama Yaya’s death, Tituba isolates herself from a community dominated by men, specifically ‘white’ men. Tituba states that, during that time, she was happy (11), which expresses her capability to grow while staying away from the plantations, free from the oppression of the planters.

Nevertheless, the novel does not suggest the requirement of any man for Tituba’s survival. Rather, a black man, John Indian’s arrival indicates a catastrophic turn in her life through Abena’s repetitive weeping, “Why can’t women do without men?” (15). Mentioning the fate of the so called ‘witch trial’ of Salem, Dukats argues that, “The witch craze was, in fact, a campaign of terrorization against women who exhibited power or defined themselves outside the parameters that patriarchy had set” (747). This resonates both Mama Yaya and Abena’s warning toward Tituba to create her own identity, free from the influence of men. In the novel, John Indian addresses Tituba as “little witch” (Condé 17), a remark that she finds derogatory. In response to John Indian’s comment, Tituba defines a ‘witch’ as a person with

an ability to "...heal, a superior gift of nature that inspires respect, admiration, and gratitude..." (17). Whereas, John Indian uses the term 'witch' to offend Tituba's dignity. Later, John Indian expresses his desire to refute the society's claim that Tituba is a witch by accepting her as "my [his] woman" and teaching her prayers (18). Through his statement, John Indian indirectly objectifies Tituba as socially unacceptable because she is a 'witch' and not a Christian. Tituba's acknowledgement, "I knew I should have fled" (18) indicates that John Indian made Tituba feel controlled almost the same way as the white men, validating Mama Yaya's earlier claim, "Men do not love. They possess. They subjugate" (14). Nevertheless, Tituba fails to subdue her desire for John Indian and accompanies him to Carlisle Bay, a residence of the whites. However, she admits that it was an act of "Madness and betrayal" (19) because both her mother and adoptive father were mutilated by white men. Tituba was powerless against her longing for John Indian but she denounces the white male authority by confessing her "Remorse. Shame. Panic. Fear" (20) before moving to the white community.

Tituba's encounter with John Indian's mistress, Susanna Endicott, depicts the victimization of Tituba by a white woman. Tituba uses her voice to portray Susanna's attempt to use her presumed superior status in the society as a weapon to oppress Tituba. When it comes to the marginalization of women by the patriarchal society, we categorize all women in one group as victims. However, the black females are often objectified by the white females on the basis of the assumed racial hierarchy. Although white men turned slavery into an institution, the white women were benefitted by a new "hierarchical social status" which was a direct result of slavery. The white mistresses treated the black men and women inhumanly to sustain their status and assert their superiority over the black slaves (hooks 153). In the novel, Tituba deciphers Susanna's mistreatment toward her by articulating, "She stared at me as if I were an object of disgust" (Condé 21). It is apparent in Tituba's words that

Susanna Endicott discriminated Tituba based on her skin colour as Susanna ordered Tituba not to touch her food “with the discolored, waxy palms” (21). Furthermore, Susanna and her friends objectified Tituba during their conversation, ignoring Tituba’s presence at the door. Their treatment made Tituba feel like an outcast, unworthy to have an existence as Tituba describes, “They were striking me off the map of human beings... Tituba only existed insofar as these women let her exist” (24). Tituba narrates that these white women made her feel non-existent, powerless and menial. By expressing her feelings, Tituba depicts the inability of white women to treat black women with respect. In *I, Tituba*, her voice advocates for the injustice and othering done to black women by the white women in the novel. So, Tituba as the narrator of her story, categorizes herself as more vulnerable than the white women in the society.

Tituba’s writing stresses on the white community’s tendency to distort the truth. In *I, Tituba*, Susanna asks Tituba whether or not she is the daughter of Abena, the lady who has murdered a planter (26). Tituba opposes Susanna’s question by replying, “She didn’t kill him... Just wounded him” (26). Tituba’s narration highlights the fact that she had to ‘correct’ Susanna’s idea as her question indicates that Abena’s tragedy was altered to represent the white man as a victim when in truth, Abena was the victim of the planter’s sexual assault. Moreover, Abena did not kill the planter rather injured him in her defence. So, Tituba’s own expression helps the readers to understand that her actual story cannot be accurately portrayed through the lens of white patriarchy. According to Cixous, “I write woman: woman must write woman” (877). Therefore, a black woman, especially Tituba herself, is required to tell the readers about her sufferings for an unadulterated representation of her condition.

Tituba unravels her sufferings as a black woman while living in a Puritan community under the subjugation of her new master, Samuel Parris. She is disapproved and disregarded in the society since she is a non-Christian and a black slave woman. Consequently, Tituba



becomes the victim of othering done by both white men and children. Tituba's description of Parris's treatment depicts her sufferings as a victim of religious bigotry. Depending on Tituba's statement, Samuel Parris is a racist and religious extremist. In describing Parris' aversion to black skin colour, Tituba quotes him, "I know that the color of your skin is the sign of your damnation..." (Condé 41). As stated by Parris, black skin apparently symbolizes the evil. Therefore, Tituba is not accepted in the Puritan society. In Parris' home, Tituba is also tormented because of her non-Christian identity. In the novel, Tituba describes that Parris had forced her to recite Christian prayers and when Tituba refused, he hit her (41). Tituba suffered physical violence because of her supposed inferior status as a black female slave and a religious minority. Whereas, Parris misuses his assumed supremacy as a Christian white male to victimize Tituba. In response to the forceful recitation of prayers, Tituba says, "Why should I confess? What goes on in my head and my heart is my business" (41). Her articulation questions the self-righteousness of the Puritans and portrays her agony in unwillingly saying the prayers that she neither understands nor believes in. Rahming interprets this behaviour as a Puritan stereotype by remarking on their limited knowledge,

[...] by reducing the universe to the limited contents of their puritan consciousness-in effect adhering to essentialist notions of moral and social reality-these villagers accept as certain and irrefutable the epistemological structures that both derive from and undergird this worldview [...] their way of knowing is predicated not on the pliability of experience but on the rigidity of puritan dogma. (28)

Therefore, Tituba is not inherently an evil 'witch'; rather, the Puritans abuse their religious doctrine to portray her negatively. Additionally, Tituba is addressed disrespectfully by a white child, Abigail, the minister's niece. The way Abigail entitles Tituba as a "Poor, ignorant Negress" is dehumanizing (Condé 44). Tituba is such a neglect in the society that she is not even spared the victimization caused by a white child. So, Tituba's account of her

experiences in Boston discloses the objectification, physical abuse and verbal offense she received both from the white men and children, an exposition of truth that a white narrative would have ignored to note.

Tituba's unbearable suffering turns vivid as she mentions the self-managed abortion of her child, as she elaborates the reason behind killing her child in the womb. She tells her readers about the execution of an old woman who was accused of being a witch. After witnessing this injustice done to another woman, Tituba was compelled to retrospect her mother's execution. She conveys her trauma through her speech, "...I felt the desire to scream... out my suffering, my revolt, and my powerless rage. What kind of a world was this that had turned me into a slave, an orphan, and an outcast?" (Condé 49). Her expression gives away her frustration over the indifferent world that has determined such misfortune for someone like her. She questions the legitimacy of the basis on which people like her are enslaved and categorized as rejects to suffer throughout their lives. Even little Abigail claims that the death penalty was deserved by the old woman (49). Shortly after this incident, Tituba decides to terminate her pregnancy as she declares, "There is no happiness in motherhood for a slave" (50). Since childhood, Tituba has seen other slaves murder their infants to save their babies from the misery that they endure as slaves. According to Abdullah, "[...] a slave, who has no identity, the act of suicide, abortion and infanticide are all various forms of resistance and assertions of suppressed identity" (89). So, the abortion can be evaluated as Tituba's reaction to the brutality of slavery. It can be observed as her resistance against slavery, preventing it from infecting her future generation. As Tituba recounts every phase of her life, the torment of the black women becomes more pronounced to the readers. Likewise, it is observable that if a third person narrator replaced Tituba, the proper representation of her grief and sufferings would have been compromised.

Tituba provides her perspective as a victim while scrutinizing the judges of Salem as the actual evils, corrupting the ideology of the community. After Tituba arrives in Salem, the people start identifying her as “Satan’s deputy” (Condé 71). Ironically, the Puritans were the ones spreading actual evil in the society by subjugating and brainwashing the women and children. In that regard, Tituba stresses on the Puritans’ attempt to involve children in their conspiracy against the blacks. Tituba quotes Betsey, “...You’re a Negress, Tituba... You are evil itself” (77). Ironically, Tituba’s narration reveals no legitimate cause for the whites to objectify her as a ‘Negress’ while associating this supposed derogatory identity to an evil. It is hypocritical of the puritans to twist meaning to persecute the black women. Additionally, the Puritans sexually assaulted Tituba to get a false confession from her. Tituba depicts this atrocity in her narrative voice, “One of the men sat squarely astride me and began to hammer my face with his fists...Another lifted up my skirt and thrust a sharpened stick into the most sensitive part of my body...” (91). Tituba is afflicted by this physical abuse and sexual assault since, she is tagged as an “Antichrist” (91). Tituba’s description of the assault criticizes the feigned ‘morality’ of the Puritans. Later, Tituba provides a performed confession as anticipated by Samuel Parris (106). After her trial in Salem court, Goodwife Parris visits Tituba where she was kept chained in a barn. Goodwife admits to Tituba that she was misguided and acknowledges the witch trial as “A plot by Parris and his followers...” (107). Furthermore, Tituba addresses Judge Danforth as a “filthy racist” (109). Tituba’s narration suggests that the Salem Witch Trial was a result of both racial and religious bigotry. hooks explains, “The Salem Witchcraft trials were an extreme expression of patriarchal society’s persecution of women. They were a message to all women that unless they remained within passive, subordinate roles they would be punished, even put to death” (30). Likewise, Tituba’s storytelling implies that she was not doing any evil through witchcraft. Rather, this false claim was used as an excuse to mutilate the blacks, particularly the black

women as they were the weaker target. Therefore, she is a victim whose only fault was being born as a black woman.

Tituba differentiates her life as more ill-fated than a black man by demonstrating the misfortune that she has endured as a black woman. She was objectified and abandoned by her black lover, John Indian. Tituba says that he would not have hesitated to tag her as a 'witch' for his own survival if the situation demanded (Condé 110). Ironically, while Tituba struggled with her life, John Indian somehow escaped the oppression. Tituba laments, "Good for the gallows, I was wearing myself out in bondage while my man was striding around his new estate in leather boots with a conquering air and assessing his wealth" (130). Tituba was persecuted, imprisoned and enslaved; whereas, John Indian has married his mistress, one of the richest white women in town. Tituba draws the comparison between her life and John Indian's life to show that Tituba suffered more than him as she is a black woman. Moreover, after returning to Barbados, Tituba is mistreated by another black man, Christopher. Tituba narrates how he insulted her by addressing Tituba as nobody special but an ordinary "Negress" to expect a special treatment (155). The word 'negress' was used by the whites to dehumanize Tituba. Now, the same word is used by Christopher to entitle her as inferior to him. Later, the black resistance against the planters failed and Tituba was executed on account of Christopher's betrayal. Tituba's relationship with John Indian and Christopher demonstrates the maltreatment she has received from black men. It indicates that black women cannot expect security, respect or support even from black men. In describing the marginalization of black women in the white community, Frances M. Beal uses the term "double jeopardy" and claims, "...the black woman in America can justly be described as a 'slave of a slave'" (168). In Beal's words, the women are doubly exploited by the white colonizers and their white mistresses since the objectified black men can still sustain their patriarchal domination on black women. Similarly, *I, Tituba* depicts the mutilation of Tituba

by the black male slaves alongside the white masters. So, having the authority over her story, Tituba portrays the discrimination that a black woman faces within her own community.

Tituba's first-person narration depicts the hostile situation endured by black women in every layer of society, which I have analysed so far on this chapter. Tituba is a victim of male prejudice, white supremacy and slavery. Nonetheless, Tituba resists her victimization through her friendship with other women. Tituba is raised by a shaman, Mama Yaya, who shares her supernatural knowledge with Tituba. Mama Yaya's teaching enables Tituba to use magic for healing and self-assertion. Both Mama Yaya and Abena's spirits guide Tituba as she tries to challenge her misfortune. Later, when Tituba decides to terminate her unwanted pregnancy using 'herbal properties', Mama Yaya's friend, Old Judah, mysteriously appears to rekindle Tituba's magical abilities. Evidently, Condé incorporates magical realism with female solidarity to subvert the 'traditional' patriarchal reality and create an alternative narrative which favours women's intimate emotions and desires. The magical realist writing technique used by Condé in this novel acts as a shield against the racial and patriarchal oppressions by allowing Tituba to assert her own individuality from the perspective of an oppressed minority- a black woman living under the dual domination of colonialism and patriarchy. According to Bowers, "The characteristic of magical realism which makes it such a frequently adopted narrative mode is its inherent transgressive and subversive qualities. It is this feature that has led many postcolonial, feminist and cross-cultural writers to embrace it as a means of expressing their ideas" (63). In *I, Tituba*, magical realism acts as a tool to dismantle the patriarchal depiction of a black woman. The patriarchal society entitles Tituba as a 'witch' in an attempt to disregard her individuality. Interestingly, the term 'witch' itself is a feminine one, indicating that, consciously or subconsciously, the patriarchal society associates the supernatural ability with women. This tendency of the white male colonizers essentially otherizes women, especially black women, from the privileged social class. As a

reaction, the magical realist technique unifies the subjugated female voices by creating an alternate narrative space for them to sororize, heal and grow. In the next section of this chapter, I will interpret Tituba's reliance on female spirits and supernatural healing to argue that, in *I, Tituba*, magical realism acts as a link between generations of subjugated black women to break the cycle of their endurance.

Mama Yaya's guidance and inspiration have provided Tituba a scope of self-exploration. Mama Yaya sheltered Tituba, a seven years old orphan, when she was expelled from the plantation. Having no guardian, Tituba would have failed to survive without the "solidarity among slaves" (Condé 8). Tituba is not a direct descent of Mama Yaya. However, the ancestral connection between them is sealed by their sufferings as black women. Alike Tituba's parents, Mama Yaya's husband and sons were "tortured to death" (8) by the whites. So, Mama Yaya and Tituba share a mutual understanding of grief. Mama Yaya herself is an outcast because of her association with the supernatural. Nevertheless, her powers enable her to help the people in need. Mama Yaya uses her metaphysical ability to determine her own identity and aids Tituba to assert hers by sharing her knowledge. Mama Yaya's words, "You will suffer during your life ...But you'll survive" (9) have motivated Tituba throughout her life. Her experience empowers her to guide young Tituba. During her lifetime, Mama Yaya has witnessed the ability of white men to terrorize the slaves. In that regard, she suggests Tituba to resist male authority as Tituba deserves respect like everyone else (9). By teaching Tituba about the healing properties found in herbs, Mama Yaya passes down her ancestral wisdom to help Tituba survive the odds. Mama Yaya's remark, "The dead only die if they die in our hearts [...] A few words are enough to conjure them back and [...] to make themselves useful" (10) indicates the capability of the forebearers to lead and support their children. Instructed by Mama Yaya, Tituba uses her powers to heal and console her own people. Accordingly, she acquires the opportunity to be 'seen' and understood by them. Mama Yaya

failed to accomplish certain things in life. Nonetheless, the journey ahead of Tituba is secured by the insights on life that Mama Yaya has provided her. After Mama Yaya's demise, her spirit continues communicating with Tituba to offer her guidance, inspiration and comfort. In Tituba's venture for emancipation, Mama Yaya prevents her to be consumed by revenge and advises her to heal people through her powers (29). Tituba's statement, "Mama Yaya... [convinced] me that in the end nothing would be able to destroy me. In short, Mama Yaya brought me hope..." (84) indicates her contribution in transforming Tituba to a resolute woman. Therefore, Mama Yaya's affinity for Tituba assists her to defy the victimization of herself and other black women as a collective.

The exchange of acknowledgement between Tituba and Elizabeth Parris has united them for mutual support. Elizabeth is Tituba's mistress and the wife of Samuel Parris. In spite of belonging to the privileged social class, Goodwife Parris is subjugated by her husband as she is a woman. On the other hand, Samuel Parris dominates Tituba as his slave. So, Tituba and Elizabeth find a mutual ground to share compassion with each other. Upon first meeting, Elizabeth expresses her understanding of Tituba's misery by saying, "How cruel it must be to be separated from your own family. From your father, mother, and your people" (Condé 38). Elizabeth's pleasant remark surprises Tituba as she did not receive such gesture of compassion from her former mistress, Susanna Endicott. Eventually, Tituba identifies Elizabeth as a victim like herself and she concedes, "I couldn't tell who was the more distressed, the more terrified, Mistress Parris or myself" (39). The comprehensibility of each other's sufferings takes the form of sisterhood between Tituba and Elizabeth. Elizabeth's daughter, Betsey, becomes a part of their alliance soon. Tituba's comment, "we [Elizabeth, Betsey and Tituba] devised a thousand tricks to be together in the absence of this devil, the Reverend Mr. Parris" (41) indicates that they have found comfort in their friendship. The affection received from both Elizabeth and Betsey makes Tituba feel recognized. In return,

Tituba nurtures them with her care. When Elizabeth's health deteriorates, Tituba "called on the supernatural" (45) to cure her. Likewise, during Tituba's emotional breakdown after terminating her pregnancy, Elizabeth and Betsey "increased their attentions" (52) to comfort her. Additionally, Tituba finds a way to redeem the murder of her unborn child when she heals Betsey from illness in Salem. While rinsing Betsey with the healing water, Tituba says as self-consolation, "...I was purifying myself of the murder of my child" (63). So, Elizabeth, Betsey and Tituba's bonding is reciprocal. Whitehead writes, "Male violence and coercive forms of heterosexuality leading to violence, rape and wife-battering and issues surrounding reproduction and mothering [...] provide women with an explicit basis for gender solidarity" (6). Although Elizabeth is not a black slave woman like Tituba, nevertheless she is also a victim of Samuel's patriarchal domination in form of domestic violence, which enables Tituba to empathize with her and in turn build a mutual friendship. Despite this bonding, their attachment declines once the Parris family settles in Salem due to Samuel Parris' conspiracy against Tituba. Nevertheless, the temporary place of relief and support that Tituba, Elizabeth and Betsey has partaken transforms Tituba. It enables her to survive the trauma inflicted by Samuel Parris.

The brief and mysterious encounter with Judah White assures Tituba of her contribution in the society ruled by men. Old Judah is Mama Yaya's friend and a female healer like her. In Boston, Tituba witnessed the unjust persecution of women who were suspected as 'witch'. Traumatized by this misfortune of slaves, Tituba acknowledges her "sad existence" (Condé 50) and considers aborting her child. Tituba's lack of knowledge about the plants found in Boston put her in a difficult situation to pick the exact herbs required for her scheme. Judah White made her enigmatic appearance in Tituba's assistance. Old Judah taught Tituba "the names and properties" (51) of the plants that grew in the forests of Boston. Tituba's unplanned interaction with the medicine woman confirms the unity amongst the



marginalized women. In Tituba's need, her progenitor, Mama Yaya sent Old Judah to guide Tituba as Mama Yaya failed to come personally. Additionally, Judah White enlightens Tituba by saying, "Men hate us and yet without us their lives would be sad and narrow...we are the salt of the earth" (52). In Judah's words, men's life is given a meaning by women like Tituba who enable them to shape their present and envision a better future. When Tituba felt helpless and clueless amidst the horror prevailing in Salem, Old Judah sent black cats as a gesture of her presence to accompany Tituba in her loneliness (66). Mama Yaya, Old Judah and Tituba are abhorred by the society due to their link with the supernatural. However, they use magic to stay mutually related and resolve their challenges as a group.

A female black slave, Sarah, encourages Tituba to use her powers as a resistance against the whites to avenge the oppressed blacks. Joseph Henderson, Sarah's master afflicted her with inhuman torture. The injury on Sarah's face and her "tiny hand, rough and rigid" (Condé 68) speaks for the cruelty of Joseph Henderson. Sarah's insufferable pain has led her to seek Tituba's aid to punish Joseph. Sarah persuades Tituba to use her magic against the white tormentors. Sarah says convincingly, "Knowledge must adapt itself to society... You [Tituba] are among monsters who are set on destroying us" (68). According to Sarah, Tituba should use her skills to protect her own people. However, Tituba needs to expand the functions of her knowledge to heal the oppressed and resist the monstrosity of the oppressors simultaneously. Sarah's words have resonated Tituba's "innermost thoughts" (68) as if Sarah carried an indication from her ancestors. Sarah is not Tituba's friend but having this conversation with Sarah instigates a desire for revenge in Tituba. Since Sarah and Tituba are both slaves enduring similar misfortune, the urgency of Sarah's voice is better comprehended by Tituba. Consequently, Sarah's plea leaves Tituba in contemplation of a slave revolt in the future. Mama Yaya once instructed Tituba to use witchcraft only for healing and consoling her own people. However, Sarah arouses an interest in Tituba to use her artistry as a defence

against the victimizers. So, having a conversation with Sarah serves as a stimulant for Tituba to realize the necessity of using her powers to prevent the exploitation of the black slaves by their white masters.

Tituba's friendship with Hester guided her to elude death sentence in Salem Witch Trial and seek revenge on her accusers by providing a false confession in the court. Tituba meets Hester in prison. Hester is a black woman but not a slave like Tituba. Understanding their difference in social status, Tituba addresses Hester as mistress. In response, Hester asks Tituba to call her by name (Condé 95). Hester's response to Tituba settles an equality between them. Later, Hester's remark on being an outcast like Tituba (96) indicates their equal share in misery as black women. Tituba learns that Hester's family "believed in sexual equality" (97) and taught her classics. Nevertheless, Hester is imprisoned for committing adultery while "...the man who put [his] child in [her] womb is free to come and go as he pleases" (97). Hester's husband is a participant of the same crime that she is punished for. Ironically, her husband was pardoned while she was convicted guilty. Listening to Hester makes Tituba realize that oppression is a collective experience for the subjugated women. According to Young, "When women group, their womanliness... [is not] ...the only thing that brings them together; there are other concrete details of their lives that give them affinity, such as their class or race position, their nationality, their neighbourhood, their religious affiliation" (737). Tituba's encounter with Hester enables her to realize the sufferings of all women as a whole, as she questions, "Are women condemned to such a fate in this world?" (Condé 98) is a reflection of her concession. Tituba's white mistress, Goodwife Parris, Hester, an educated black woman and, Tituba herself as black slave are equally ill-fated. Furthermore, Hester influences Tituba to avenge herself by saying, "If some of them have wronged you in person, then take your revenge..." (100). Hester suggests Tituba not to be an evil like her tormentors. However, she motivates Tituba to strike her accusers by providing a

false confession that will also reduce Tituba's penalty. So, the alliance Tituba forms with Hester helps Tituba to dodge the death sentence that awaited her after the witch trial in Salem court.

After death, Tituba selects Samantha as her progeny to continue transgressing the span of abusive treatment on women that has been going on for generations. Tituba has developed confidence and mental strength through bitter circumstances in her life. She returns to Barbados when the Jew, Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo, discharges her from slavery. Acquiring freedom from enslavement and reuniting with her fellow people give Tituba a sense of belongingness and hope. Shortly after returning to her native island, Tituba gets involved in a relationship with the leader of the maroons, Christopher. Tituba's newfound certainty enables her to cherish her pregnancy with Christopher's child. Referring to her previous pregnancy, Tituba writes, "For the first time I asked myself whether my child, whose life I had taken, would not after all have given my experience a meaning and a purpose" (Condé 152). It is apparent in Tituba's statement that she is no longer hesitant to bring her child to life. Rather, she contemplates her child's ability to make her life significant and ambitious. Through her utterance, Tituba depicts her expectations from her offspring to salvage her heritage. Moreover, Tituba is determined to alter the destiny of the slaves as she does not want her descendant to suffer like her. Tituba affirms, "No, if the world were going to receive my child, then it would have to change!" (159) because she refuses the victimization of her future generation by the whites. By claiming the world unfit to receive her child, she denounces the stereotypes based on which the black lives are incapacitated in the world. Tituba's future child functions as a driving force for her to try resolving the discriminations and anticipate a habitable society for the blacks. Later, Tituba devises a "general revolt" (161) against the planters with Iphigene, a boy whom she nurses back to health. Despite the "easily predictable" (166) downfall of their rebellion, Tituba is optimistic

that her unborn daughter “would settle old scores” (167) for her. Unfortunately, Tituba is executed by the whites and her biological daughter dies in the womb. However, dead Tituba remains as an inspiration amongst her people as she sustains her interaction with the living through her powers. Indicating other oppressed slaves, Tituba says, “I am nourishing them with dreams of liberty... I have been behind every revolt” (175). Additionally, Tituba singles out a curious girl named Samantha as her representative and prepares her for the journey ahead by disclosing “the hidden power of herbs” (177) to her, since the initiative Tituba has taken to disrupt the spiral of violence on the black women is required to be continued by Samantha as Tituba’s progeny. Previously, when Tituba was young, Mama Yaya had supported her to overcome the challenges as a black female slave. Likewise, Tituba dies as a revolutionary but she ensures its continuation by sharing her ancestry with Samantha. Comprehending the cause of the present suffering of the blacks, Tituba anticipates, “I can understand the past, read the present, and look into the future...there will be an end to all this [suffering]...What is one life in relation to the immensity of time?” (178). Noticeably, Mama Yaya is Tituba’s connection to the past, while her present experiences enable her to acquire an insight into the upcoming future. Tituba concludes her story with an optimistic tone because the three generations of women- Mama Yaya, Tituba, and Samantha- collaborate to liberate themselves and bring constructive changes in their lives.

My research in this chapter attempts to prove that Condé’s fictional Tituba’s control of the novel’s narrative allows her an expression that was denied to the historical Tituba by the colonial representation of Salem Witch Trial. I have also tried to show that the use of magic in the novel unites the women from three generations to defend their subordination as a team; while Tituba’s friendship with other oppressed women contributes in Tituba’s transformation. The magical realist narrative technique of *I, Tituba* offers Tituba an agency to write her personal experiences in the novel. The historical Tituba’s voice, which was

suppressed by the documented reality is provided a credibility through the expressions of the fictional Tituba. *I, Tituba* challenges the patriarchal representation of female experiences. Subsequently, Tituba uses her control over the novel's narrative to expose the injustice done to herself and other repressed female characters. As a result, Tituba's storytelling validates her personal expression from the perspective of a black female slave, contradicting the vague colonial portrayal of a slave's endurance. Moreover, Tituba demonstrates her victimization by her white mistress, Puritan master, black lovers, and the white children. So, her writing rejects male authority and reveals how she became an easy target of verbal insult, mental trauma, and sexual abuse within the grasp of the men and white society. Through her narration, Tituba highlights the repugnance of the whites for the black slaves, driven by which, they wrongfully accused Tituba of being an evil 'witch' to persecute her. In other words, Tituba's story scrutinizes the discriminatory treatment she has received from the whites and indicates their failure to address a black slave woman's version of truth.

Nevertheless, Tituba also describes the process of her change into a resilient individual amidst her sufferings. Initially, Tituba's writing offers her perspective as a victim. However, her voice acquires strength, confidence, and deliverance as her story progresses. Tituba talks about the influence of Mama Yaya, Old Judah, Goodwife Parris, Sarah, and Hester in her personal growth. In that regard, Tituba's description accentuates the contribution of other subjugated women, facilitating her transformation by offering her relief, guidance, and motivation. Alike Tituba, the African American protagonist, Cocoa, from Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* struggles to overcome the obstacles of her life. Although Cocoa is not victimized by her male partner, she has different challenges to surpass. Cocoa shares an inseparable bond with her grandmothers, Miranda and Abigail, the same way Tituba shares with Mama Yaya and Abena. When Cocoa's life is threatened by Ruby's hoodoo, Miranda's magical power and Abigail's care facilitate her (Cocoa's) recovery. In the second chapter of my

dissertation, I will analyse Cocoa's relationship with her grandmothers to discern its importance in her emancipation.

## Chapter Two

Cocoa's Transformation into a Bulletproof Diva in *Mama Day*

“They say every blessing hides a curse, and every curse a blessing” (Naylor 78). In *Mama Day*, Gloria Naylor's heroine, Cocoa, an orphan black woman and a widow undergoes a process of self-discovery through the life-altering phases of her life. Cocoa's conflict with the novel's villain, Ruby, intimidates the harmony of her marriage. However, the process of her personal struggles solidifies her relationship with the matriarchs of her family and she transforms into her best version. The inclusion of magical realism in *Mama Day* enables Cocoa's dead husband, George, to interact with her from his grave, formulating a narrative that provides an insight into their marriage. The New York segment of the novel represents the rational world and describes both George and Cocoa's effort to make necessary adjustments in their marriage as co-partners. Cocoa's relationship with George challenges a conventional marriage rooted in patriarchy. Unlike the patriarchal assumption, George is not a dominating husband rather supports Cocoa in her individual interests. Therefore, Naylor's portrayal of George's character can be observed as a feminist expectation of a male partner. As Cocoa and George are equal partners in their marriage, hence, Cocoa does not confront any patriarchal barrier to accomplish her goals. I claim that Cocoa's marital bond with George in *Mama Day* subverts patriarchy and gender stereotypes. I will concentrate on the mutual dependency between Cocoa and George to analyse his contribution in Cocoa's personal growth. On the other hand, Cocoa's life in Willow Springs concentrates mostly on her relationship with her grandmother, Abigail and great-aunt, Miranda. Cocoa is raised by them without a man's support. Miranda is a medicine woman who is addressed as 'Mama Day' in Willow Springs. Miranda is a dominant individual in the community as her superior knowledge exceeds science. Moreover, the magical realist elements of *Mama Day* become more pronounced when the novel's setting shifts to Willow Springs. The prevalent mysticism

in the environment of Willow Springs links only the dominant women of the community. As a result, George's efforts to rescue Cocoa from Ruby's spell turn invalid as both Miranda and Ruby's abilities overpower his. Later, Miranda's connection with the supernatural enables her to neutralize Ruby's hoodoo and save Cocoa's life. The female figures in Willow Springs appear more powerful than men to bear a greater impact in another woman's life. I will evaluate Cocoa's affinity with her grandmothers and Ruby's rivalry with Cocoa to prove that jealousy among the women leads to a destructive outcome whereas female solidarity offers a scope of healing and prosperity for them.

In *Mama Day*, Gloria Naylor has delineated an ambitious heroine, Cocoa, who migrates to a foreign land to pursue her career. Cocoa is a resolute, confident and straightforward woman. Since the beginning of her courtship with George, Cocoa is above board regarding her expectations from him. After marriage, Cocoa denies to conceive a child and continues her higher education. So, Cocoa independently determines her identity and desires from life. Jones has used the term "Bulletproof Diva" to describe "A woman whose sense of dignity and self cannot be denied" (qtd in Springer 1072) and her definition fits Cocoa's characteristics. Consequently, it is likely that Cocoa has married George, envisioning the possibility of an egalitarian relationship with him. George's character challenges the male discourse and unlike the subservient wives, Cocoa executes equal authority over him. Susan Arndt claims that numerous African feminists strive to determine alternative opportunities for women to overcome their oppression by dismantling the patriarchal language and narrative technique (32-33). Additionally, Allison Drew states that African feminism attempts to "transform pre-existing gender relations to allow women and men equal rights and opportunities" (7) within a specific social context. Likewise, Naylor has suspended patriarchal domination and violence to disrupt the traditional idea of marriage and provided Cocoa an opportunity to thrive in her relationship with George. In this chapter, I will argue



that Cocoa's marital bond with George subverts patriarchal depiction of a male partner which epitomizes a positive and progressive male-female relationship. Despite George and Cocoa's strained initial interaction, they eventually develop a friendship beneficial for each-others' maturation. Unlike most controlling and judgemental men, George values Cocoa's individual choices. As a result, George and Cocoa's reciprocal marriage enables Cocoa to concentrate on her personal growth after marriage instead of conforming to any patriarchal ideology. Moreover, the prevalent supernatural context of Willow Springs and the matriarchal Day family demonstrate female dominance. In Willow Springs, George serves more as a caregiver to Miranda, Abigail and Cocoa. Nevertheless, Cocoa's potential ally, Miranda, and the malevolent villain, Ruby, have more influence on Cocoa's life than George. George's logic and rationality fail to save Cocoa, whereas, Miranda's mystic power restores Cocoa's health from Ruby's lethal spell. Therefore, the magical realism incorporated in *Mama Day* empowers the female characters to depict their impact on each other as a collective. Nesrin Yavaş talks about the use of magical realism in *Mama Day* to re-conceptualize the collective past to "empower black women through temporal and cultural changes" (253). Furthermore, Drew emphasizes the idea of female consciousness to formulate solidarity based on common experiences and oppression (8). As a result, the myth of Sapphira Wades' contribution in emancipating her predecessors, Miranda and Abigail, by resisting slavery in the past has indirectly affected Cocoa's life. Miranda and Abigail have witnessed the misfortune of the women who were born before Cocoa in the Day family. Their acknowledgement of the past misery solidifies their bond with Cocoa and they consider securing a better future for her. In addition to Miranda's contribution in shaping the future of the women in Day family, she serves as a healer and Shaman in her community. Miranda's alliance with Bernice indicates that she uses healing properties to aid the women of Willow Springs. Correspondingly, I will argue that Cocoa's relationship with Abigail and Miranda functions as a catalyst in Cocoa's

maturation. I will evaluate Miranda's contribution in Cocoa's physical and emotional recovery to establish the significance of female friendship in empowering the afflicted women. Nevertheless, Kimberly Springer claims, "Competition, vying for status, and degraded self-worth can be Black women's worst interpersonal enemies" (1072). Indicating the failure of Black female solidarity, Morgan terms the envious women responsible for their own oppression as "Chickenheads" who disrupt the progress of the ambitious women (qtd in Springer 1073). Likewise, the insecure and malicious female character, Ruby, threatens Cocoa's marriage and her future. Although the malice spread by Ruby compromises George's life, Miranda's wisdom salvages Cocoa's future. In response to Ruby's aggression, Miranda retaliates and executes her superior knowledge to mutilate Ruby. On the other hand, Cocoa's long suppressed insecurity and competition toward George's ex, Shawn, leads to an unhealthy outburst that nearly weakens the mutual respect between George and Cocoa. Therefore, the novel represents a vicious cycle of female rivalry. Nonetheless, I will draw a contrast between the catastrophic outcome of Ruby's jealousy towards Cocoa and the recuperative effect of Miranda's affinity in Cocoa's life. Hereafter, I will attempt to prove that Miranda, Abigail and Cocoa's relationship symbolizes the success of collective black sisterhood and confirms its ability to abolish female rivalry within the group.

Marriage is one of the patriarchal institutions. The prevalent male diction has normalised female subordination in marriage. It is typical for a woman to settle for a subservient position and sacrifice her individual accomplishments to concentrate on her domestic responsibilities. Atkinson talks about women's "psychological dilemma" to either resist the oppression or accept their inferior position in marriage (104). Atkinson argues that "A woman's very life as a human being depends upon her attachment to, her identification with, her counterclass—men" (105). As a result, women instigate their own oppression by accepting male domination in marriage. However, Naylor has subverted the patriarchal

concept of marriage in *Mama Day* to suggest the possibility of co-dependency between a man and woman. In the novel, George and Cocoa are allowed equal control of the narrative to share their separate perspectives as well. Their marriage promotes mutuality as they compromise, adjust and evolve together to sustain a healthy bond. After marriage, Cocoa does not require to alter her lifestyle to match George's expectations rather she continues focusing on her career and individual attainments. The absence of male authority in George enables Cocoa to secure her individuality after marriage. George discourages patriarchal values as he is sensible toward Cocoa's expectations from him. As a result, George's attributes attack the male stereotypes and alter the idea of marriage that can benefit female interests. During their courtship, George brings positive changes in Cocoa's life. In August 1999, Cocoa revisits George's grave in Willow Springs. The magic realist elements present in the novel allow Cocoa to interact with George even after his death. Their non-verbal interaction retrospect their marital past and reveals its significance in Cocoa's life. Cocoa moved to New York to expand her possibilities. However, the new city makes Cocoa feel alienated and she continuously struggles to adjust for seven years until she meets George through an interview. On their first date, George indicates that Cocoa is "shallow and a bigot" (Naylor 63) because she has a surface level understanding of New York. George helps Cocoa to rediscover New York, enabling her to overcome her stereotypical treatment of the city. During one of their explorations in New York, Cocoa admits, "Standing there under and over all that incredible space, I saw how small and cramped my life had been" (98). George enables Cocoa to simultaneously acknowledge both Willow Springs' heritage and New York's culture which broadens her perspective to thrive in the modern world. On the other hand, Cocoa and George's relationship is reciprocal. Cocoa influences George to become less arrogant and more giving. Roaming across New York with Cocoa reignites George's interest for this town and Cocoa becomes more self-sufficient in his presence. Recalling the influence

of their New York visits, George tells Cocoa, “You weren’t becoming different, you were going back to the way you were...[and] I was so busy enjoying the change in you, I didn’t notice it in myself” (100). After rediscovering New York with George for several days, Cocoa admits that he has already turned her into a better woman (104). Cocoa’s remark confirms that she decides to marry George because he complements her.

George motivates Cocoa to inspect her flaws and exceed her previous self. During their courtship, George realizes that Cocoa is headstrong, insensitive, childish and irrational. Additionally, Cocoa is spontaneous and quick to give up whenever any situation goes beyond her control. However, George challenges Cocoa, tests her limits, and makes her work for what she wants. He denies Cocoa an immediate outcome and insists her tolerance. Even, Cocoa’s letters to her great-aunt, Miranda, reveals that she has finally met a potential male partner. Appreciating George’s arrival in Cocoa’s life, Miranda says to Abigail, “She’s [Cocoa] hard-headed and she’s spoiled, and this is one who won’t let her have her way. I’m starting to like him already [...] it’s gonna take a strong man to do her” (Naylor 109). According to Miranda, a sensible husband like George can guide Cocoa to correct her mistakes for personal developments. During the initial stage of their courtship, George simply ignores Cocoa’s irrational demands as constant assurance of his fondness for her. George denies to provide Cocoa a version of himself she demands rather insists her to accept his actual self. Cocoa has an immature perception of a relationship and expects George to prioritize her over everything else in his life. George urges her to understand that his work, his health, and Monday nights are important to him. Initially, Cocoa tags George as “insensitive and selfish” (121) instead of accepting his individuality. Nevertheless, George’s sensibility and persistence encourages Cocoa to respect their separate interests. Instead of asserting control over Cocoa, George inspires Cocoa to understand his passion for football and consider the Monday nights for him. He avoids talking and cuddling with Cocoa to make

her come to terms with his expectations (124). Eventually, Cocoa starts to complain less and understand George more through their attempt to create a balance in their relationship. Cocoa shares her personal life with George and unwillingly accepts his reluctance to do the same. Cocoa admits to George, “[...] since I refused to think of my life anymore without you in it, this was just the way it would have to be” (127). Cocoa’s remark indicates that she is ready to accept the differences between George and her personality. Likewise, George eventually decides to express his own insecurities to Cocoa. So, George and Cocoa develop mutual understanding and respect to help each other improve in individual level. George and Cocoa’s courtship sustains because of their willingness to compromise for each other. Additionally, George and Cocoa’s attempt to make required adjustments promotes equality between them. George does not subordinate Cocoa rather inspires her to evaluate her faults. As a result, Cocoa independently undergoes the process of self-exploration which benefits her interpersonal relationships in the future.

Unlike any typical marriage, George and Cocoa’s relationship does not conform to the asymmetrical distribution of authority. While having a conversation with Miranda over the phone before marrying Cocoa, George tells her, “She [Cocoa] has all I have” (Naylor 136). After listening to George, Miranda is assured that he intends to share his life equally with Cocoa. Miranda explains George’s claim to Abigail by stating, “If he [George] got a life [...] he’s saying that life can open itself up for her. You can’t ask no more than that from a man” (136). Miranda’s statement reflects on the expectations of a woman from her male partner. Cocoa and George’s marriage shows the promise of compromising and sharing between them. Since George does not have a family, having a female partner “in itself was a challenge” (141) for him. After marriage, ensuring Cocoa’s comfort becomes George’s priority. George purchases books to understand Cocoa’s menstrual cycle so that he can understand the reasons behind Cocoa’s mood swings better. Whenever Cocoa acts annoyed,

George tries to figure out its cause as his simple aspiration is to make Cocoa happy (142). George alters the patriarchal portrayal of a dominating and ill-treating husband. According to Dreyer, “In male-dominated societies women are socialised to accept negative images attributed to them by others [...] and internalise this in the form of a negative self-perception which detracts from the possibility of having a meaningful life” (2). Contrarily to this patriarchal practice, George functions as a caregiver and asserts a sense of equivalency between Cocoa and himself. George says to Cocoa, “Living with a female: a day-to-day balancing act, and I really enjoyed the challenge. Because the times I got it right, your being different made all the difference in my world” (Naylor 143). In contrast to a patriarchal mindset, George aspires to be a supportive and compassionate husband to Cocoa. In recent days, an aspiring woman denies to get married contemplating the barriers she might face concerning her future goals. Robinson argues that, “Marriage is rooted in a discourse of monogamy that privileges the interests of both men and capitalism, operating as it does through the mechanisms of exclusivity, possessiveness and jealousy” (144). Nevertheless, George’s marriage with Cocoa portrays a standard male-female relationship that would interest an independent woman. It is observable that Cocoa is a self-sufficient woman whose life is not manipulated or determined by George. Cocoa’s commitment to George facilitates her personal life but she does not rely on George to shape her future. George shares the domestic chores with Cocoa, so she gets sufficient time to focus on her own accomplishments. George earns sufficient to require Cocoa’s salary for financial support. However, Cocoa continues her job to assert her individuality. Furthermore, Cocoa denies George’s desire to start having children shortly after marriage and gets her history degree instead. This proves that Cocoa makes independent choices regarding her life and her career. When Cocoa quits her job, she tells her friends, “No, he [George] wasn’t forcing me. I was hardly the type to be chained to a stove barefoot and pregnant. I’d be starting school in the

fall” (Naylor 148). It is evident in Cocoa’s statement that George’s presence does not threaten her personal choices and individuality. The mutual dependency between George and Cocoa suggests a progressive relationship between them. During the Thanksgiving, George prepares breakfast for Cocoa and she spends the afternoon watching football with him before cooking dinner together (159). According to Miranda, George worships the ground Cocoa walks on (170). In other words, George is a facilitator in Cocoa’s life, not her rescuer. As a result, George and Cocoa’s relationship disassembles the patriarchal diction of a conventional marriage between a dependent female and male subjugator.

After going to Willow Springs with Cocoa, George establishes a sense of unity with the matrons of the Day family. Commenting on Cocoa’s grandmother, Abigail’s affection for him, George states, “no woman had ever called me her child” (Naylor 176). George returns Miranda and Abigail’s fondness for him with respect and gratitude. George’s arrival makes Miranda happy and she says, “It’s good to have a man in the family again” (178). Her remark sheds light on the possibility of coexistence between men and women long as it excludes patriarchal influence. This is contrary to the notion of “patriarchal terrorism”, which Johnson defines as “a product of patriarchal traditions of men’s right to control ‘their’ women, is a form of terroristic control of wives by their husbands that involves the systematic use of not only violence, but economic subordination, threats, isolation, and other control tactics” (284). Miranda observes that George is kind and compassionate, unlike the typical men. Therefore, any other man but George would have failed to convert Cocoa into her best version. Miranda says, “A woman shouldn’t have to fight her man to be what she was: he should be fighting that battle for her” (Naylor 203). According to Miranda, a woman’s relationship with a man should not compromise her actual self, rather, he is expected to expedite her individuality. She notices the potential in George to complement Cocoa. Nevertheless, Miranda admits that men were more stereotypical during her time and George is a rare exception in the present as

well. That being the case, many young women decide to stay unmarried and alone as claimed by Miranda (203). Her comment does not promote misandry. However, it can be evaluated as a resistance against the patriarchal notions that creates a conflict in a heterosexual relationship. George's rejection of male stereotypes enables him to formulate a friendship with Miranda and Abigail. George offers Miranda and Abigail domestic help. He paints the house, fixes the garden, cleans Miranda's rugs, and willingly performs other household chores to aid the matriarchs. In response, Abigail feeds him peanuts and Miranda massages his aching shoulders after a tiring day. Commenting on Miranda and Abigail's control over George, Cocoa tells him, "They had you under their heels and you were purring" (217). Cocoa's statement highlights the feminine quality in George's character that transcends the gender binary. His sensitivity allows him to become a component of the sorority that Miranda, Abigail and Cocoa share.

George intends to protect Cocoa in any situation that threatens her wellbeing. When Ruby's spell endangers Cocoa's life, George attempts everything within his capability to relieve her. Even, Miranda realizes that she requires George's assistance along with her magic, "So [that] together they could be the bridge for Baby Girl [Cocoa] to walk over" (Naylor 285). Her contemplation confirms that Miranda requires to guide George to ensure success as he alone cannot restore Cocoa's health. According to Tucker, "[...] Miranda depends on George's belief in himself, his ability to work with his hands, his resolve to hold on to what he loves, to never let Cocoa go" (182). Miranda's desire to cooperate with George accentuates the necessity of mutual dependency between men and women. Miranda and George's joint efforts are crucial for Cocoa's recovery because George's belief in Miranda's connection with the supernatural can facilitate the completion of Miranda's healing ritual. Miranda instructs George to bring whatever he finds inside the nest of the biggest chicken in her coop and join Miranda along with it in the "other place" (Naylor 295). However, George



depicts the task as “mumbo-jumbo” (295) and denies to trust Miranda’s capabilities. Despite his inability to comprehend Miranda’s instructions, George performs the task in his desperation to save Cocoa. Unfortunately, his reluctance to act in unison with Miranda leads to his failure to protect Cocoa. Nonetheless, George’s selfless act to aid Cocoa alters the gender hegemony. As stated by Cowart, “Naylor proposes a radically feminist revision of traditional patriarchal narrative. In *Mama Day* she implies that humanity will achieve its redemption only by restoring the proper mythic/religious relations between the sexes” (64). George has inspired Cocoa to be considerate and rational during their four years of marriage. During his stay in Willow Springs, he builds an attachment with Miranda and Abigail. Later, George fails to execute Miranda’s instructions but his willingness to act in unison with Miranda confirms the mutual dependency between them. This competent relationship between George, Cocoa, Miranda, and Abigail challenges the tendency of patriarchal society to determine men as dominant and women as submissive. After George’s death, Cocoa marries a man who is respectful towards her choices. Cocoa’s second husband did not object when she named her youngest boy after George. Similarly, he does not complain when Cocoa visits George’s grave. As a result, Cocoa’s selection of supportive individuals further confirms the kind of amity she desires from her male partner. Therefore, Cocoa’s relationship with George denotes a criticism of patriarchal values and offers an alternative male-female relationship that resonates feminine interests.

Cocoa’s life in the rational world is mainly guided by George. Whereas, Miranda can efficiently assist Cocoa when she stays amidst the mysticism of Willow Springs. The myth of Sapphira Wade, unreal atmosphere, and the powerful female shamans provide Willow Springs a spiritual quality. The magic realist setting of Willow Springs allows the medicine women authority over the men in the community. According to Bowers, when magic realism is perceived “from the position of the ‘other’ and consider that it brings into view non-logical

and non-scientific explanations for things, [then] ...the transgressive power of magical realism provides a means to attack the assumptions of the dominant culture and particularly the notion of scientifically and logically determined truth” (65). So, the matriarchs of the Day family challenge male domination by asserting their control over George. Additionally, Miranda’s ability to salvage Cocoa despite George’s non-performance accentuates her contribution in Cocoa’s retrieval. Based on the folklore, Miranda and Abigail’s ancestor, Sapphira Wade, has resisted slavery and ensured a better future for her progenies. According to Miranda’s father, John-Paul, the candle walk was performed in Sapphira Wade’s memory of resistance during his time (Naylor 111). The history of the Day family glorifies female authority and their influence in liberating the community from slavery. Sapphira Wade has reformulated the future of her female descendants, Miranda and Abigail, allowing them an agency to live a dignified life. Consequently, Miranda and Abigail’s guidance empowers Cocoa to cross the boundary of Willow Springs and thrive in the modern world. Furthermore, Cocoa’s grandmothers function as a constant aid in her individual development. As a result, a sense of solidarity is delineated among the females of the Day family, signifying its importance in the emancipation of women.

Miranda’s wisdom permits her to guide her grandniece, Cocoa, whom she has raised “like her very own” (Naylor 9). Miranda has descended directly from Sapphira Wade. Miranda’s connection with the supernatural gives her an authoritative position in the community. Both men and women of Willow Springs obey her in a way that if “Mama Day say no, everybody say no” (6). Miranda and Abigail have raised Cocoa with upmost sensibility because Cocoa is their ultimate hope. Yavaş claims, “Being ‘the last of the womenfolk come into the Days,’ Cocoa’s survival is paramount to the active reconstruction and rehistoricizing of black women’s history [...]” (252). As a result, Miranda and Abigail have monitored and moulded Cocoa’s personality since her childhood. Thereupon, Cocoa has

grown into a confident individual who is capable of determining her self-sufficiency. In spite of her physical presence, Miranda confirms Cocoa's sustenance in New York environment. When Cocoa returns home instead of joining George's firm, Miranda urges Cocoa to write a letter to George, informing her interest to take the position. Later, Miranda mails the letter on Cocoa's behalf after sprinkling some mysterious powder inside the envelope. The scent of lavender from the powder enlivens George's memory of Cocoa. Before receiving the letter, George was discouraged to reconnect with Cocoa. Nonetheless, the mysterious powder reminds George of Cocoa and he remarks, "As the water ran and the powder finally dissolved from my fingers, it all came back, a movie being played in reverse frame to frame [...] Your [Cocoa's] neck. There was now the faintest scent of lavender on my wet fingers [...]" (Naylor 54). It is evident that Miranda's magic has intervened to secure Cocoa's job. Moreover, the mystic connection that he has felt during his brief encounter with Cocoa at the coffee shop resurfaces after Cocoa's letter to George. As a result, Miranda exhibits her efficiency in manipulating Cocoa's life by performing as a guide and mediator.

Miranda and Abigail's co-parenting can be evaluated as a form of sisterhood among women. Miranda disciplines Cocoa to instigate a sense of responsibility in her. On the other hand, Cocoa's grandmother, Abigail, reduces Cocoa's frustration by offering comfort through her warmth and affection. Unlike Abigail's tenderness, Miranda strictly regulates Cocoa's actions to improve her personality. Cocoa admits that Abigail alone would have failed to raise her properly. Miranda and Abigail together have shaped Cocoa into a qualified woman. Cocoa states, "It seemed I could do no wrong with her [Abigail], while with Mama Day I could do no right [...] together they were the perfect mother" (Naylor 58). Abigail's undivided compassion for Cocoa permits Miranda to enforce discipline without suffocating her grandniece. Likewise, Abigail's tolerance for Cocoa's tantrums offers her a space to live carefree within a limit. Furthermore, Abigail serves as a peacemaker whenever Miranda and

Cocoa's bond is strained. After a year of her marriage with George, Cocoa visits Willow Springs and fights with Miranda because she discourages Cocoa to go beyond the bridge to watch Muddy Waters' play. During the fight, Cocoa becomes agitated and addresses Miranda as "an overbearing and domineering old woman" (156). Later, Abigail tries to convince Miranda that "She [Cocoa] ain't meant it" (157) to mitigate the tension between Miranda and Cocoa. The exchange of acknowledgement and affinity between Cocoa and her grandmothers takes the shape of female friendship. Referring to her attachment with Miranda and Abigail, Cocoa says, "[...] even if hate and rage were to tear us totally apart, they knew I was always theirs" (177) which indicates the presence of an inseparable bond between them.

Additionally, Miranda contributes in sustaining a healthy marriage of her grandniece. After Cocoa's worst fight with George, Miranda advises her to forgive him by stating, "[...] if you care about someone enough, you give 'em a chance to take back the things they may have said in anger" (240). Later, Abigail reveals her "no-nonsense, clinical efficiency" (260) when Cocoa's life was threatened by Ruby. In George's words, Abigail was doing everything within her capability in the absence of a doctor to restore Cocoa's health (260). Similarly, Miranda interacts with the supernatural in Cocoa's advantage. Therefore, Miranda and Abigail's relationship with Cocoa benefits her in every phase of her life.

Miranda is an indigenous medicine woman in Willow Springs, a territory detached from the outside world. Miranda and Abigail's knowledge about herbal remedies provides them an agency to help people. Subsequently, Miranda is more reliable than a doctor in her community. Miranda utilises the healing properties of herbs to restore the health of a woman, Bernice. In her desperation to get pregnant, Bernice has infected her ovaries by consuming unnecessary fertility pills without a medical advice. However, Bernice can still have a baby after recovering from the infection because she has been taking herbal tea prepared by Miranda (Naylor 87). Miranda's concern for Bernice's wellbeing seals their unity. On the

Contrary, Miranda's adversarial relationship with her neighbour, Ruby, disrupts the concept of sorority among women. Unlike Miranda, Ruby practices hoodoo to execute her evil intentions. Ruby's curse on Cocoa initiates a rivalry with the Day family. Ruby intends to sabotage Cocoa and George's marriage because she is envious of Cocoa's healthy marriage. Ruby's desperation to diminish Cocoa's personal progress leads to a devastating outcome in both Cocoa and her life. The aftermath of Ruby's antagonism criticizes the conflict among women and its liability to hinder their emancipation as a collective.

Ruby's unhealthy competition with both Cocoa and Frances disrupts their potentials individually. Ruby's toxic relationship with Junior Lee and her personal failures have turned her malevolent in nature. Her husband, Lee, has married Ruby for her wealth. Ruby has sabotaged Lee's previous relationship with Miss Frances to redirect his interest in herself. Frances complains to Miranda that Ruby is messing with Junior Lee's mind by mixing potion in his food (Naylor 90). Presumably, Ruby has murdered her first husband because he cheated on her. Likewise, her second husband, Lee, is a drunk who gambles and frequently visits the prostitutes (69). Ruby has a history of failed marriages which explains her tendency to sabotage another woman's life. Mavin and Grandy terms this tendency of female rivalry as "Queen Bee Syndrome", stating, "The Queen Bee is commonly constructed as a 'bitch' who stings other women if her power is threatened" (224). In her desperation to possess Junior Lee, Ruby corrupts Frances' sanity as she ignores Ruby's warning to maintain her distance from him. During one of her visits to Willow Springs after marriage, Cocoa decides to spend her Saturday night beyond the bridge where Lee is also going. Ruby feels insecure and decides to get rid of Cocoa. Miranda senses Ruby inching across the woods, collecting castor beans, nightshade, and snakeroot to device a new spell suitable for her evildoing. Sensing Ruby's jealousy, Miranda warns her, "Ain't no hoodoo anywhere as powerful as hate. Don't make me tangle with you [...]" (Naylor 157). As a result, Ruby's intention to harm Cocoa

provokes an enmity with Miranda. Nonetheless, “What goes around comes around” (162), and Ruby has started facing the consequences of her deeds. At nights, Junior Lee sneaks out of the house and drives beyond the bridge to meet an anonymous woman. Ruby’s magic cannot reach that far so she can only wonder and lose her mind. Noticeably, she is facing the same misery that she has caused in Frances’ life. Ruby’s inability to appreciate another woman instigates malice in Frances, Miranda, Cocoa, and her own life. The people of Willow Springs fear and despise Ruby for her envious nature. However, Ruby continues committing evil that upsets the peacefulness of Cocoa’s marital life with George.

In *Mama Day*, Naylor has brought Ruby as a female antagonist to show the catastrophic outcome of jealousy among women. In contrast, the intimate bond between Cocoa, Miranda, and Abigail acts as a vibrant example of the rejuvenating aspects of female friendship. Ruby’s rivalry with Cocoa and Miranda begins to take shape when Cocoa visits Willow Springs with George. After Cocoa and George’s arrival, Ruby interrupts the Day family dinner by coming to meet George along with her husband, Lee. Ruby tells George, “You’re one of us, ’cause you married one of us. And Cocoa is our own” (181). Apparently, Ruby’s words are pretentious because she is not a well-wisher of Cocoa. Contrarily, Ruby envies Cocoa because she has everything that Ruby can possibly wish for: an independent identity and a caring husband. Unlike Lee, George is successful in his individual accomplishments, and complements Cocoa as a husband. Ruby’s denial to let Cocoa continue a better life than her leads to devastating consequences. Ruby casts hoodoo to create tension in Cocoa’s marriage. As a result, Cocoa starts acting blunt which triggers frequent fights with George. Eventually, Miranda starts sensing death everywhere which indicates that an imminent danger is about to threaten a member of the Day family (226). Later, Ruby catches Junior Lee flirting with Cocoa. Although Cocoa is not least flattered by Lee’s attempt, but it provides Ruby a strong motif to sabotage Cocoa’s healthy marriage. The absence of mutual

understanding between Ruby and Cocoa creates hostility between them. Ruby pretends to be empathetic and invites Cocoa to her house. Ruby massages an unknown solution into Cocoa's scalp, makes tight braids and asks Cocoa to burn the loose hairs after returning home (246). Ruby's bizarre act hints at the dark ritual she intends to perform. Consequently, Cocoa's health deteriorates after meeting Ruby. Everything around Cocoa starts feeling like "A whirl of confusing echoes—visual, emotional, verbal" (259) to her. Cocoa's declining physical state is the result of Ruby's contempt for Cocoa. On the other hand, Cocoa expresses similar hatred for George's previous lover, Shawn, during her worst fight with him. Cocoa addresses Shawn as "your [George] precious redhead with freckles" (234) to provoke a fight with George. Cocoa's envy towards Shawn reflects on her self-doubt. The tension between Cocoa and Shawn challenges Cocoa's marriage as she hits George's head with a vase to release her frustration. So, George and Cocoa's fight can be observed as the unpleasant outcome of Cocoa's insecurity. Similarly, Ruby is finally held accountable for her actions. Miranda reveals her intention to punish Ruby by saying, "You play with people's lives and it backfires on you" (261). Her statement suggests that every act of hatred misfires and causes equal damage to the attacker. Therefore, her claim criticises female rivalry.

George's death and Miranda's revenge on Ruby validate the popular phrase, 'as the call, so the echo'. Ruby's curse on Cocoa endangers her life. In response to the damage that Ruby has caused in Cocoa's life, Miranda denies Ruby a chance to redeem herself. Miranda sprinkles some enchanted powder around Ruby's house while she is hiding inside. Subsequently, a thunder explodes Ruby's house twice, destroying her wealth and fatally burning her. Observing the way Ruby's own deeds have retaliated, George comments, "It seemed that she'd had a host of sins, going back several years, so the destruction of everything she owned and the burns on her body was her getting her due" (Naylor 274). Ruby is punished but the course of her spell is irreversible. Miranda's supernatural abilities rescues

Cocoa. Nonetheless, George's life is compromised in the process. As a result, George's death symbolizes the extreme outcome of female jealousy. Evidently, Ruby is responsible for her own downfall as she has misused her power to threaten the lives of other women. As the upshot of the ongoing exchange of contempt among women, Frances loses her sanity, Miranda mutilates Ruby and Cocoa suffers personal loss. Whereas, the consensus shared by Cocoa, Miranda and Abigail reinstates the vitality of Cocoa's future. Miranda encourages George to assist her in Cocoa's recovery as "[...] she recognizes his strength and seeks to convert it to her ends. That is, she asks him, in the name of his love for Cocoa, to suspend his scepticism and serve her" (Coward 71). Likewise, when George acts sceptical of Miranda and Abigail's capability to reclaim Cocoa's wellness, Cocoa expresses her faith in her grandmothers and tells George, "[...] these were the women who raised me – I would trust them with my life, and so whatever Mama Day had done, it was for a good reason" (Naylor 273). Subsequently, it is Miranda, Abigail, and Cocoa's shared empathy and togetherness that expedite Cocoa's recovery. Later, Miranda and Abigail's endurance enables Cocoa's self-actualization after George's death. Thus, Miranda, Abigail and Cocoa's relationship restores the continuity of female solidarity that Ruby attempts to jeopardize.

Miranda, Abigail and Cocoa's relationship evolves when Ruby executes her power to disarray the harmony of the Day family. Miranda and Abigail spend sleepless nights to nurse Cocoa during her sickness. The shared sense of sisterhood between Miranda and Abigail again serves its usefulness to ease Cocoa's sufferings. Abigail relentlessly monitors Cocoa at home while Miranda frequents the other place to devise a cure for Cocoa. Observing the "[...] slump in Abigail's shoulders and the dark circles under her eyes" (Naylor 264), Miranda prepares herbal tea to withdraw Abigail's tiredness. On the other hand, Miranda untwists Cocoa's braids, cleans the poison infecting her scalp, and applies an ointment over it. Miranda is willing to sacrifice her own life if it ensures Cocoa's recovery. Miranda and



Abigail have fought for Cocoa's life when she belonged to them. After marriage, Cocoa is George's responsibility. Nonetheless, Miranda is willing to fight for Cocoa again and sacrifice her life if required (265). Apparently, Miranda and Abigail intend to protect Cocoa in every phase of her life. After George's death, Cocoa starts to believe that her life has ended with him and considers committing suicide. However, Miranda offers Cocoa a reason to rebuild her life. Referring to George's death, Miranda tells Cocoa, "There ain't no pain – no pain – that you could be having worse than what that boy went through for your life" (302). So, Miranda encourages Cocoa to regain confidence in herself and shape her future in George's absence. After returning to New York, Cocoa finds it impossible to accept the disrupted order of her house and Miranda urges Cocoa to deal with her trauma instead of wasting her time crying. Nevertheless, Miranda avoids comforting Cocoa because crying is a natural process of grieving. Instead, she waits for Cocoa to stop lamenting for herself someday. According to Miranda, "she's [Cocoa] gotta get past the grieving for what she lost" (308) to overcome her misfortune and re-establish hope for her future. Miranda's guidance enables her to mature and compensate for her personal loss. Thereupon, Cocoa's grandmothers have taught Cocoa to meditate tolerance which aids her emotional recovery. Eventually, Cocoa's grief subsides and she moves to Charleston to support her self-exploration. Her second marriage indicates that she has accepted the past loss and considered reshaping her life with whatever good that the present offers her. Furthermore, Cocoa stops evading George's memory, considers preserving it, and starts visiting George's grave to sustain her connection with him. It is apparent that, Miranda and Abigail's presence in Cocoa's life has ensured her physical and emotional recovery from Ruby's aggression. Additionally, the struggle to reformulate Cocoa's future strengthens the bond between Miranda, Abigail, and Cocoa. For this reason, their integrity challenges the continuance of hatred among women. At the end of the novel, Miranda says, "Some things change [...] some

things are yet to be” (312). Her observation indicates that human life is not linear and our actions determine change in the present consequently, affecting the future. Likewise, uprightness among women can eradicate the possibility of conflict. Furthermore, the mutual understanding can solidify their bond to facilitate their individual identity formation, hastening their advancement as a collective.

In this chapter, I have attempted to prove that Cocoa’s marriage with George adds additional benefits for her personal growth as George challenges the exploitative treatment of men towards women. Thereby, the portrayal of his character reflects on the feminist expectations from male partners to promote equality and individuality in marriage. Four years of marriage teaches Cocoa acceptance and compromise. Both George and Cocoa make adjustments to secure their separate identities after marriage. George does not limit Cocoa’s personal ambitions rather supports her to continue higher education. Likewise, when Cocoa decides to keep her job, George shares the household chores to ease Cocoa’s workload. Later, George befriends Miranda and Abigail after going to Willow Springs. He aids the Day family women whenever his assistance is expected from them. In the end, George tries everything in his capability until his death to ensure Cocoa’s treatment. Hence, George rejects the patriarchal values and promote Cocoa’s individual identity formation. Additionally, I have demonstrated the importance of Cocoa’s mutual attachment with Miranda and Abigail to reconstruct Cocoa’s future. Due to Miranda and Abigail’s proper upbringing, Cocoa develops a resolute and confident personality. They support Cocoa to survive in the challenging environment of New York for seven years before George’s arrival. Similarly, Miranda facilitates Cocoa’s relationship with George as a mediator and a guide. When Cocoa is fatally inflicted by Ruby’s curse, Abigail persistently nurses Cocoa while Miranda performs supernatural rituals to restore Cocoa’s health. Abigail and Miranda’s unyielding affection for Cocoa terminates Ruby’s hoodoo and reclaims Cocoa’s life. Moreover, they offer Cocoa

emotional support to recover from her trauma after George's death. As a result, Miranda, Abigail and Cocoa's integration formulates a support system in Cocoa's empowerment. Furthermore, I have analysed Miranda's resistance against the devastating result of Ruby's antagonism towards Cocoa and showed the efficiency of female support system to prevent intragroup conflict. Ruby engages in a competition with Cocoa because her husband, Junior Lee, flirts with Cocoa. The devastating outcome of Ruby's spell takes George's life and nearly sabotages Cocoa's future. Nonetheless, Miranda avenges Cocoa by condemning Ruby for her evil deeds and brings stability in Cocoa's life. As a result, Miranda and Abigail's inclination to guard Cocoa from Ruby's hostility confirms the significance of female friendship to aid a victimized woman. This chapter establishes the influence of Miranda and Abigail to foster the self-empowerment of Cocoa, an African-American heroine. Female friendship allows Naylor's protagonist to find solace in the most difficult phases of her life, while the incorporation of magic realism within the narrative allows her to connect with her beloved even after his death. In the next chapter of my paper, I will critically assess the elements that promote self-actualization of another black female protagonist, Celie, in *The Color Purple*. Unlike Cocoa, Celie initially lacks ambitions to secure her individuality, and gets mutilated by black men. Luckily, the black women in Celie's life offer her support and motivation to resist male oppression. Just like Cocoa's relationship with Miranda and Abigail, Celie's shared sisterhood with other black women offer comfort and guidance to rehabilitate her (Celie's) future. In the final chapter, I will analyse the mutual relationship between the black female characters in *The Color Purple* to demonstrate how it promotes and expedites their liberation.

## Chapter Three

Celie's Transformation into a Free-Spirited Woman through Female Friendship, Self-Help,  
and Rejection of Male Supremacy in *The Color Purple*

“[...] I see and hear you clearly, Great Mystery, now that I expect to see and hear you everywhere I am, which is the right place” (Walker 10). In the preface of her novel, *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker talks about her Black-American heroine, Celie's “rebirth into strong feelings of Oneness” (10) that offers Celie an opportunity to reclaim her individuality. The novel begins with Celie's letter to God that reveals her victimization by her adoptive father, Alphonso. He limits Celie's free existence and forces her into an incestuous relationship with him. Moreover, Celie's misfortune leads her to an unhappy marriage with her husband, Albert, who is mostly addressed as ‘Mr. \_\_\_’ in the novel. Albert treats Celie as an object, replicating Alphonso's attitude towards her. Both Alphonso and Albert exploit Celie's vulnerability and demand her conformity to their unfair treatments. As a result, Celie lacks self-efficacy and seeks temporary relief in her letters to God. On the other hand, Celie's friendship with the women contradicts her relationship with the men. Celie's interpersonal relationships with Shug, Nettie, Sofia, and Mary Agnes allow Celie a safe space to recover from men's hostility and inspect her inaction. Celie, Shug, Nettie, Sofia, and Mary Agnes can relate with their personal misery; hence they develop mutual concern for one another. In *The Color Purple*, Celie is initially depicted as a sufferer who manifests an abundance of prosperity in her life by embracing her inner spirit at last. Noticeably, Celie writes her first letter to God as a victim whereas, Celie expresses her gratitude to “Dear Everything” (259) in her concluding letter as a reformed individual. Eventually, Celie asserts her individual identity, becomes financially self-sufficient, regains the ownership of her parental home, and reconnects with her lost sister, Nettie. However, the reconstruction of Celie's future is a controlled process, influenced by her personal awareness and interaction with individuals.

*The Color Purple* starts with Celie's letter to God, quoting the warning of her adoptive father, Alphonso. In the first line of the novel, Celie writes, "*You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy*" (3). Evidently, Alphonso has asked Celie to stay silent regarding his evildoing unless she wants her mother tortured to death. His admonition to prevent Celie from publicly disclosing her physical exploitation by him indicates the extreme state of Celie's victimization through patriarchal agency. Celie's letters to God can be observed as her desire to escape her trauma by telling her unfortunate experiences to a listener. Alice Walker has coined the term "womanism" that aims to "speak to all women and especially to black women" (Nfah-Abbenyi 122). In this regard, Nfah-Abbenyi writes about the black female writers who "have sought to 'subvert and demythologise indigenous male writings and traditions which seek to label [them]'" (117). Correspondingly, Celie's letters written to God and especially to her sister, Nettie, serve as her reaction to male subjugation, indicating her attempt to create a space for self-expression. In the novel, the black female characters use a comic tone every so often to address the male characters. Observing Harpo's lack of presumed masculinity, Celie identifies Harpo as "weak in will" and "scared" (Walker 28). Later, Shug labels Celie's husband, Albert, as a "weak little boy" (45) to attack his so-called manliness. Moreover, Celie remarks on a man's resemblance to a frog to insult Albert indirectly (230). Gloria Kaufman writes, "*Female* humor may ridicule a person or a system from an accepting point of view [...] while the *nonacceptance* of oppression characterizes feminist humor and satire" (13). Accordingly, Rebecca Krefting writes about the "Jokesters" who seek to "unmask inequality", pinpoint the stereotypical social norms responsible for the marginalization of a group, destabilize the standardized beliefs by "joking about it", and "[offer] new solutions and strategies" (2). As a result, Celie and Shug's mocking tone can be observed as one of the tools to subvert the typical masculine traits. Additionally, Celie seeks compassion and understanding in her romantic involvement with Shug as Celie's marriage

with Albert lacks these. Celie senses emotional and physical attraction towards Shug which she does not feel for any man. On the other hand, Shug defines Celie as a “virgin” (Walker 74) after learning about Celie’s unsentimental marriage with Albert and helps Celie to explore her sexuality. Eventually, Shug and Celie develop a homosexual relationship between them. Ti-Grace Atkinson writes, “[Lesbianism] is the association by choice of individual members of any oppressed group – the massing of power – which is essential to resistance” (132). Therefore, Celie’s homosexuality indicates her denial to stay with a man. In this chapter, I will argue that the feminist satire and homosexual reference incorporated in the novel delineate women’s revulsion against the mortifying upshot of male supremacy. Celie’s detest for men makes her feel comfortable only around women. So, Celie develops a friendship with Sofia, Shug, and Mary Agnes. Celie’s exchange of letters with Nettie and her reciprocal relationship with the black women allow her an opportunity to deny subjugation. Jennifer Hamer and Helen Neville write about black women’s need to “reach consensus” (23) regarding the factors that sustain their inferiority to ensure change and a continuing integration among themselves. Black women need to acknowledge the source of their victimization before they can unify and reformulate their lives. The black female characters in the novel are vulnerable to the same prejudicial norms that threaten their individuality. Subsequently, they form a sisterhood based on support and empathy. An alliance can be developed among women who group together to renounce men (Atkinson 136). So, Celie, Sofia, Nettie, Mary Agnes, and Shug’s common goal to transcend the patriarchal barriers takes the shape of black female unity. I will prove that the corresponding friendship between Celie, Shug, Sofia, Nettie, and Mary Agnes implies the necessity of the black women’s collaborative effort to accomplish their shared desire for emancipation as they cannot ensure that separately. Celie’s interaction with other female characters allows her a relief from an unhappy and abusive marriage. However, Celie’s maturation is supported by self-help as

well. Noticeably, Sofia, Nettie, and Shug are already assertive enough to make an effort for their personal improvements. Contrarily, Celie and Mary Agnes lack adequate motivation to alter their misfortune. Nonetheless, they get inspired by Sofia, Nettie, and Shug to initiate their personal growth. Initially, Celie ignores the suggestions that she receives from Nettie and Albert's sister, Kate, to resist domestic violence. Celie disregards Nettie's advice by confessing that she only knows how to survive (Walker 18). Similarly, Celie expresses her submissiveness in response to Kate's instruction, saying, "I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (22). Robin S. Dillon writes, "Deep and enduring shame and self-contempt, unremitting doubts about one's worth [...] such things constrict and deform lives, frustrating the quest for self-fulfillment and self-realization" (52). As a result, male diction and the stereotypical norms corrupt women's idea of self-worth to sustain their victimization. Correspondingly, Celie is misguided by Albert and Alphonso's derogatory treatment and yields to their control as she lacks self-validation. The black women in Celie's life inspire her to fight for herself. Nevertheless, Celie's attempt to challenge her objectification involves her willingness and active participation to conquer her passivity. Dillon observes that "self is worthy of respect, [and] deserves attention [of] one's own" (60). Therefore, "[self-respect] encourages us to take seriously our complexity and fragmentation" and to realize the necessity of "self-construction" (Dillon 60). I will argue that Celie's personal efforts to reclaim her selfhood enable her to resist male authority, reformulate her self-image, and secure her future. Alongside Celie's friendship with the black women, her self-help to recognize her worth has equal contribution in rehabilitating her inner strength.

Celie starts facing male violence from an early age. Celie is only fourteen years old when her adoptive father, Alphonso, begins assaulting her. Demonstrating Alphonso's cruelty on her, Celie states, "He never had a kine word to say to me" (Walker 3). When Celie's mother falls ill, Alphonso rapes Celie and compels her to stay silent and get accustomed to

his aggression (3). Unfortunately, Celie is impregnated by Alphonso and Celie's mother dies yelling and cursing her for the unintended pregnancy. Despite that, Celie has to conceal Alphonso's identity when Celie's mother urges her to reveal the father of her illegitimate child (4). Celie's restrained expression reflects on the terror that Alphonso provokes in her. Alphonso sabotages Celie's relationship with her mother by suppressing Celie's voice. As a result, both Celie and her mother are the victims of Alphonso's exploitative treatment and ignorance. Moreover, Alphonso murders Celie's first child, the product of his rape (4). Annoyed by Celie's second pregnancy, Alphonso labels Celie as an "evil" who is "always up to no good" (5). Consequently, he sells Celie's little boy, intending to get rid of his unwanted baby. Apparently, Alphonso denies Celie her sexual and reproductive choices. Alphonso treats Celie like a sexual object. Una Stannard mocks, "[...] food and women should become interchangeable commodities and sexual equivalents [...] The food she serves is herself, and she, like the food, wants to be swallowed by the man [...]" (qtd. in Kaufman and Blakely 170-171). Correspondingly, Celie's unwilling incestuous relationship with Alphonso consumes her. Besides, Alphonso beats Celie to control her and she admits that her mother's downfall is also an outcome of his stereotypical values. Celie relates to her mother's misery and concedes, "I felt sorry for mama. Trying to believe his [Alphonso] story kilt her" (Walker 7). Additionally, Alphonso denies Celie proper schooling as he intends to subjugate her and limit her life within the household's margin. When Albert approaches Alphonso to seek Nettie's hand in marriage, Alphonso persuades him to marry Celie instead. Noticeably, Alphonso can no longer tolerate Celie and targets Nettie to exploit next. So, he tries to convince Albert to choose Celie and tells him, "She [Celie] ain't fresh tho, but I specs you know that. She spoiled. Twice" (9). Alphonso's comment echoes Sheila Ballantyne's character, the primitive man, who says after his wife's childbirth, "I just can't stand her no more! She lie there alla time havin babies, got no use for me" (qtd. in Kaufman and Blakely



161). Ironically, Alphonso has raped Celie and it is discriminatory to identify her as ‘evil’ and ‘spoiled’. However, Alphonso uses these terms to derogate Celie’s identity. Furthermore, Alphonso threatens Celie’s individuality by manipulating Albert’s perception of her. Alphonso demeans Celie’s identity while trying to convince Albert to marry her. In Alphonso’s words, “[...] I got to git rid of her [...] She ugly [...] She ain’t smart either [...] But she can work like a man” (Walker 10). Evidently, Alphonso observes Celie as an object and exploits her human identity. Likewise, based on his choice of words, it is observable that Celie is given in marriage more as a domestic help than as a wife. According to Alphonso, Celie matches the qualities of a presumed good wife as her lack of intelligence makes her vulnerable to Albert’s dominance. Alphonso represents the male prejudices that impede Celie’s personal growth. Thereupon, Celie’s letters to God criticize patriarchal values and invigorate her defiance against male subjugation.

Celie’s husband, Albert, is another representative of a stereotypical male. Comparing Albert to Alphonso, Celie says, “My little sister Nettie is got a boyfriend [Albert] in the same shape almost as Pa [Alphonso]” (Walker 6). Albert’s initial decision was to marry Nettie and it takes him an entire spring to consider Celie instead (11). Alphonso puts Celie on display for Albert “Like it wasn’t nothing” (12) when Albert desires another glance at her before marriage. So, Celie is treated like a product by these two vicious men. Observing Celie’s marriage with Albert, Nettie comments, “It’s like seeing you [Celie] buried” to which Celie responds, “It’s worse than that” (19). Albert exploits his authority to persecute Celie without any remorse. He beats Celie and glorifies his prejudicial male values to justify his misdeeds. He acts ignorant towards Celie’s sexual preferences while having intercourse with her as well. One day, Albert responds to his son, Harpo’s question regarding Albert’s physical abuse on Celie which reveals his corrupted ideology. Albert replies that he considers himself fair-minded to beat Celie for her stubbornness as she is his wife (23). Hamer and Neville claim,

“[...] poor black women are more likely to be sexually harassed, beaten and raped [...] because they lack resources to escape the violence inflicted upon them” (24). Albert suggests Harpo to assert his physical power to subdue his wife, Sofia. Albert claims that the wives should be made aware of their husbands’ ascendancy and “[n]othing can do that better than a good sound beating” (Walker 35). Therefore, Albert ensures the continuation of patriarchal abuse through his son. Albert’s house does not feel like her own house to Celie. Her statement, “It not my house” (44) indicates that Albert makes her feel alienated which restricts Celie’s individuality. On the other hand, Harpo gets manipulated by Albert and tries to subjugate Sofia. Sofia tells Celie that she had to fight against her father, brothers, male cousins, and uncles throughout her life (39). Sofia concludes, “A girl child ain’t safe in a family of men” (39). Sofia’s statement can be evaluated as a strong criticism of male stereotypes that obstruct female empowerment. Later, Sofia gets imprisoned “for sassing the mayor’s wife and hitting the mayor back” (179). Sofia spends almost twelve years separated from her children and enslaved by the mayor and his wife, Miz Millie. Sofia is mutilated as she denies to become Miz Millie’s maid, and strikes the mayor back for slapping her. According to Hamer and Neville, “institutionalized ideologies of patriarchy, racism, and heterosexualism” promote “...a system in which men are privileged over women, whites are privileged over those of color...” (26). Nonetheless, the aftermath of Sofia’s denial to become a white couple’s maid criticizes white supremacy. Additionally, Albert’s previous wife, Annie Julia is another victim of patriarchy. After her marriage with Albert, Annie Julia’s family abandons her. On the other hand, Albert starts cheating on Julia openly and shamelessly while beating her at times. Disgraced and unloved, Julia considers seeing another man who murders her in the end. Contemplating Annie Julia’s misery, Shug tells Celie, “Sometimes I wonder what she [Julia] thought about while she died” (Walker 112). Later, Shug suggests Celie to resist Albert’s dominance, saying, “You have to git man off your

eyeball, before you can see anything a'tall" (177). Therefore, Shug encourages Celie to reject her marriage to ensure individuality.

The characterization of men in *The Color Purple* serves as a feminist satire on patriarchy. Harpo tries to mimic Albert to regulate Sofia's life. Harpo beats Sofia, intending to make her listen to him. However, every time Harpo beats Sofia, he ends up with more injuries than her. As a result, Harpo starts eating like a glutton to become strong like Sofia (62) but she continues leaving him beaten. Harpo complains to Celie while crying, "I try to beat her [Sofia], she black my eyes. Oh, boo-hoo [...] Boo-hoo-hoo" (61). So, Harpo's unmanly character ridicules and counteracts male supremacism. On the other hand, Shug does not spare an opportunity to mock Albert's self-proclaimed manliness. During her illness, Albert brings Shug to his house to ensure her treatment. Instead of appreciating Albert's gesture, Shug insults him when he holds her hand one day. Shug recoils from Albert's touch, calls him "crazy" and declares, "I need me a man" (45). Apparently, Shug's words are sufficient to objectify a man who instigates fear in other women. Albert ensures Shug's recovery during her stay in his house, intending to impress her but she develops affection toward Celie instead. Later, Shug takes another opportunity to mock him. When Shug expresses her desire to have Celie in her concert, Albert immediately starts muttering, "My wife [Celie] can't do this. My wife can't do that" (69) and continues objecting until Shug silences him by making a parodic remark. Shug responds to Albert, "Good thing I ain't your damn wife" (69). Moreover, Shug compares Albert to a "jackrabbit" (245) to insult his indifference during intercourse with Celie. Gloria Kaufman writes, "Feminist satire [...] seeks to improve us by demonstrating – through devices of irony, of exaggeration, of sarcasm, and of wit – our human folly" (14). Likewise, Shug's sarcastic expression can be observed both as a defence and criticism towards the stereotypical men. It is noticeable that Albert initially wanted to marry Shug but failed because of his own cowardice. When Albert

unwillingly marries Celie, she [Celie] becomes his easy target to subjugate. Nevertheless, Shug observes Celie's passive approach towards Albert's victimization and considers confronting his hypocritical attitude in Celie's support. Shug uses sarcasm to express her relief of not being Albert's wife, effectively demeaning his inflated sense of self-worth. Additionally, Celie denies to continue her marriage with Albert after ensuring her individuality and financial self-sufficiency. Celie observes positive changes in Albert's behaviour. Appreciating Albert's efforts, Celie writes to Nettie, "He [Albert] ain't Shug, but he begin to be somebody I can talk to" (Walker 250). Nevertheless, Celie disapproves Albert's interest to continue their marriage. Celie tells Albert, "[...] men look like frogs to me. No matter how you kiss 'em [...] frogs is what they stay" (230). According to Celie, a man never transforms into a fictional prince charming, hence it's impractical to expect anything better from him. In her satirical poem, "Sterner Stuff", Sue Held writes, "I wanted to wed the impossible he. / I wanted to wed what I wanted to be. / I wanted to marry-o marry-o me" (qtd. in Kaufman and Blakely 125). According to Sue Held's poem, solitude is better than heterosexual marriage for women. Likewise, Celie considers staying alone as Albert cannot take Shug's place in her life.

Celie's homosexual involvement with Shug and the reconstruction of Celie's understanding of God challenge the presumptuous patriarchal values. Celie's sexual and romantic attraction towards Shug confirm her aversion to men. Shug functions as a catalyst for Celie's sexual awareness. Celie confesses, "First time I got the full sight of Shug Avery long black body with it black plum nipples [...] I thought I had turned into a man" (Walker 47). Referring to her physical intimacy with Albert, Celie tells Shug that she only pretends to feel something when Albert does "his business" (74). In response, Shug observes that Celie has remained chaste (74) as she is still unaware of her sexuality. Shug urges Celie to explore her body and "[a] little shiver go[es] through [Celie]" (75) when she stares at Shug. As

claimed by J.C. Chrisler and I. Johnston-Robledo, “The body should be a source of pleasure, the enabler of agency, and the mediator between the world and the self” (11). Therefore, Shug encourages Celie’s sexual awareness which enables Celie to redefine her identity. When Shug and Celie are alone at home, Celie tells Shug about her traumatizing sexual experience with her father in her teen years (Walker 102). In response, Shug keeps Celie in her arms and kisses her tears while Celie cries. As a result, Celie opens up further, tells Shug about Nettie’s disappearance, and concludes, “Nobody ever love me” (103). Subsequently, Shug kisses Celie’s lips to express her love. It is noticeable that Shug and Celie’s intimacy is stimulated by their emotional common-ground. Albert fails to establish such consensus with Celie which discourages her physical and emotional inclination towards him. Atkinson states, “The ‘benefits’ [of lesbianism] are, primarily, a relative degree of independence from the institutional alternatives available to women: marriage, motherhood, prostitution” (133). In other words, the solidarity that women form through homosexual intimacy allows them an opportunity to evade patriarchal oppression responsible for their subordination through mutual comfort and consolation. Thus, Shug and Celie’s homosexual relationship depicts an intolerance for male prejudices. On the other hand, Celie embraces a spiritual journey by recreating her understanding of God. Celie’s maturation enables her to question God’s negligence and she starts writing to Nettie instead. Celie tells Shug, “[...] the God I been praying and writing to is a man [...] Trifling, forgetful and lowdown” (Walker 173). Celie’s disregard for the patriarchal concept of male God depicts one of the phases of her emancipation. She compares God with a prejudicial man who ignores the black women. So, Celie’s scepticism functions as a resistance against male values. Judy Grahn, in her short poem, “You Are What Is Female”, mocks the construction of male image. Grahn writes, “*you are what is female / you shall be called Eve. / and what is masculine shall be called God ... now you understand patriarchal morality*” (qtd. in Kaufman and Blakely 160). Accordingly,

Shug tells Celie, “Man corrupt everything [...] He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon [...] you think he God” (Walker 177). Subsequently, Celie explores the spiritual meaning of her existence to deny biblical patriarchy. Additionally, Nettie writes about Samuel and her reformed perception of God to Celie. Nettie concedes, “not being tied to what God looks like, frees [them]” (233). Therefore, both Nettie and Celie subconsciously challenge patriarchy by rejecting the God who impersonates a stereotypical man.

The patriarchal mindset is intergenerational and halts the distinctiveness of the members who conform to male prejudices. Albert’s father has the ownership of Albert and Harpo’s house. As a result, he exploits his authority to control Albert’s independent choices. Referring to Albert’s failure to marry Shug, she tells Celie, “Albert try to stand up for us, git knock down” (Walker 111) by his father. Similarly, Albert objectifies Harpo and prevents his self-validation. Celie observes that Harpo cannot fight Albert any better than her (28). On the other hand, he blindly follows Albert’s instruction to beat Sofia that ruins their marriage eventually. Likewise, before leaving Albert, Celie warns him, “The jail you plan for me is the one in which you will rot [...]” (187). Ironically, the scheme of patriarchy to victimize the women often backfires and disrupts the harmony among the black men in the novel. Thereupon, the farcical representation of Albert and Harpo subverts the patriarchal depiction of men. Additionally, Nettie’s husband, Samuel, and Celie’s son, Adam, challenge the assumed male values. Nettie and Samuel decide to marry as they share “concern and passion” (215) for each other. At the same time, Adam represents a “sensitive soul” (215) unlike the self-absorbed men. Nettie assures Celie in her letter that Adam will make Celie proud (217). As a result, Adam and Samuel offer an alternative to the typical male characters in the novel.

Celie is a victim of male oppression, so she develops an antipathy towards men. Contrarily, Celie appreciates women and feels connected to them as they do not induce fear in her. Celie confesses, “I don’t even look at mens [...] I look at women, tho, cause I’m not

scared of them” (Walker 7). Celie fears Albert but she adores his sister, Kate, his girlfriend, Shug, and Harpo’s wife, Sofia. Noticeably, Celie’s mother is mutilated by her husband, Alphonso, and dies as a victim. Likewise, Sofia’s mother is subjugated by Sofia’s father. Referring to her mother’s submissiveness, Sofia tells Celie, “[...] she under my daddy foot. Anything he say, goes [...] She never stand up for herself” (39). However, the new generation of women can break this pattern of oppression on them. Celie’s transformation into an individual provides an alternative to traumatic experiences of their previous female generation. Atkinson writes that women need to reject the patriarchal agencies, “[...]so that by organizing together, women can create a counter power block to that of men” (105). Moreover, Atkinson suggests women, “for God’s sake, don’t get married” (105). Accordingly, Nettie mentions about the “friendship among [black] women” and observes that these women “will do anything for one another” (Walker 150-151). Nettie says that the black Olinka women build a support system among themselves as their husbands fail to sustain a mutual relationship with them. Similarly, Celie’s friendship with Nettie, Shug, Sofia, Kate, and Mary Agnes offers comfort and motivation to her. As a result, Celie rejects to be defined by men and pursues her personal goals.

The mutual affection between Celie and her sister, Nettie, serves as one of the key stimulants to Celie’s empowerment. Both Celie and Nettie are victimized by Alphonso, hence their shared misery solidifies their bond. Alphonso signs Celie out of school after her first pregnancy, disregarding her fascination for learning (Walker 11). However, the sisters realize the necessity of education to liberate themselves so they both study “Nettie’s schoolbooks pretty hard” (11). Nettie assures Celie that she “ain’t dumb” (11) and requests her teacher, Miss Beasley, to convince Alphonso regarding Celie’s schooling (12). Nonetheless, when Nettie fails in her attempt, she ensures home-education for Celie. Anything Nettie learns in school; she shares the knowledge with Celie after returning home. Noticeably, Celie and

Nettie's relationship is reciprocal. When Albert starts visiting Nettie every Sunday evening, Celie advises Nettie to concentrate on her education instead of getting married (6). Moreover, Celie tries to protect Nettie from the same abuse that Alphonso inflicts on her. Suspecting Alphonso's evil intentions to physically exploit Nettie, Celie starts dressing fancy to shift his attention from Nettie (9). Later, Celie willingly marries Albert to protect Nettie, ignoring the misfortune that awaits her. Celie's intention is to free Nettie from Alphonso's grasp, bring her to Albert's home, and manage a way to escape with Nettie (11). As planned by Celie, Nettie flees from Alphonso's home to settle in Celie's place. During her stay, Nettie enables Celie to acquire an insight on the outside world. Nettie ensures Celie's basic literacy skills and "everything else she think [Celie] need to know" (18). Additionally, Nettie encourages Celie to resist domestic violence by letting Albert and his children know "who got the upper hand" (18). Nettie suggests, "You [Celie] got to fight" (18). Apparently, Celie helps Nettie to continue her education, transcend female victimization, and follow her ambitions. Likewise, the education offered by Nettie qualifies Celie to communicate her thoughts. The exchange of letters between Nettie and Celie facilitates the formation of Celie's self-awareness.

Celie's written expression enables her to assert her individuality. In the beginning, Celie seeks rational explanation for her sufferings from God. Addressing God, Celie writes, "Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me" (Walker 3). Her letters to God can be termed as the initial stage of her self-expression. Celie writes letters as she wants to be understood. The idea of having God as a listener provides Celie a temporary relief from her unhappy marriage. Celie tells Nettie, "long as I can spell G-o-d I got somebody along" (19). In order "[...] to channel psychic energy, women [...] need writing as an escape-valve for their desperate need for self-expression" (Showalter 345). Accordingly, it is evident that Celie desires to write down her thoughts to assert her denied voice. In her first letter to Celie, Nettie writes, "You've got to fight and get away from Albert. He ain't no



good” (Walker 114). Nettie is aware of Albert’s downside so she encourages Celie to get away from him. Nettie informs Celie that she [Nettie] has received advanced education to join the black missionaries, Samuel and Corrine, who intend to promote schooling in Africa (119). Nfah-Abbenyi states, “[...] women are now writing about women and bringing not only their points of view but lived experiences as women to their writing” (117). Likewise, writing to Celie allows Nettie a scope for self-exploration. Nettie admits to Celie that it feels similar to skipping a prayer when Nettie does not write to Celie, hence whenever Nettie skips writing to Celie, Nettie feels “locked up in... [herself] and choking on... [her] own heart” (Walker 117). Certainly, the sisters require a way to interact with each other to liberate their inner voices. Through her letters, Nettie alters Celie’s perspective regarding the fate of black women. Nettie enlightens Celie about some existing black people who are not cruel like Alphonso and Albert, or subjugated like Nettie and Celie’s belated mother (119). Nettie informs Celie that Corrine and Samuel’s adopted children, Olivia and Adam, are actually Celie’s. Moreover, Nettie tells Celie about Harlem, a territory situated in New York for the coloured people. Celie learns from Nettie’s letter that the black people in Harlem “live in such beauty and dignity” (121). As a result, Celie realizes that black women have a flexible destiny and she can reconstruct her life like Nettie. Thereupon, Nettie’s letters encourage Celie to inspect her present condition in comparison to the evolved black women. In one of her letters, Nettie writes to Celie that Alphonso is not their real father (159). So, Nettie and Celie’s interaction through letters broadens Celie’s perspective, and allows her to discover the truths concealed from her. Ultimately, Celie finds her personal voice and writes back to Nettie, “I don’t write to God no more, I write to you” (173). Apparently, Celie prefers writing to Nettie instead of God as her interaction with Nettie is soul-searching and reciprocal. As a result, Celie’s personal growth accelerates when she starts addressing her letters to Nettie as God’s replacement. When Celie gets tired talking to herself, she writes to Nettie (236).

Therefore, exchanging letters with Nettie offers Celie an opportunity to reclaim her individual expression.

Albert's sister, Kate, encourages Celie to acknowledge her worth as a person. Celie's brief meeting with Kate leaves a positive impression in Celie's conscience. During her short visit, Kate recognizes Celie's vitality and comments, "Brother [Albert] couldn't have done better if he tried" (Walker 21). According to Kate, choosing Celie as wife is a sensible decision made by Albert. Besides, Kate convinces Albert to buy Celie new outfits and take Celie to the store. After purchasing a blue attire, Celie remarks, "I can't remember being the first one in my own dress. Now to have one made just for me" (21), and tries to express her gratitude to Kate. Noticeably, Kate's humble gesture has a lasting impact on Celie. Kate makes Celie feel recognized and instigates a sense of distinctiveness in her. Moreover, Kate assures Celie that she deserves much more from life (22). Kate even suggests Harpo to help Celie with the household chores. Consequently, Albert asks Kate to leave his house when Harpo complains to him. Before leaving, Kate advises Celie to fight Albert and Harpo. Kate tells Celie, "I can't do it [fight] for you. You got to fight them for yourself" (22). Dillon argues, "self-understanding can be self-respecting rebellion against subordination", hence "striving to understand oneself is reclaiming oneself from oppression" (64). Likewise, Kate motivates Celie to acknowledge her value and defend her own dignity as nobody else can support her better than Celie herself. Kate helps Celie to realize that she needs to resist her subjugation instead of taking comfort in her confessions to God. As a result, Kate inspires Celie to contemplate her reliance on self-help.

Celie's growing sense of individuality enables her to appreciate Sofia's assertiveness. Sofia is Harpo's wife. The day Sofia comes to meet Albert, he claims that she is unsuitable for his "young and limited" son (Walker 31). In response, Sofia asks Albert mockingly, "What I need to marry Harpo for? He still living here with you" (32). Sofia uses her voice to

resist Albert's objectification. Sofia informs Albert that Harpo is incapable to provide her a stable life. Moreover, Sofia rejects Harpo in front of Albert, saying, "[...] Harpo, you stay here. When you free, me and the baby be waiting" (32). Sofia returns back to her house leaving both Harpo and Albert dumbfounded. Evidently, Sofia takes control of her relationship with Harpo, and despite her pregnancy, she decides when to marry him. Furthermore, Sofia has an unyielding personality, challenges Harpo, and acts on her own will. Albert encourages Harpo to beat her but Harpo's bruised face indicates that Sofia beats him back. Ridiculing Harpo's inability to restrain Sofia, Celie comments, "I don't specs you [Harpo] had a chance to see if you could make Sofia mind" (36). It is noticeable that Sofia's attributes intimidate Celie as she is nothing like Sofia. When Albert beats Celie, she turns passive like wood (23) whereas, Sofia fights back Harpo like a man (37). Driven by jealousy, Celie advises Harpo to beat Sofia (36). Nonetheless, when Sofia confronts Celie regarding this matter, Celie admits to Sofia that she has acted on her envy because she cannot do things that Sofia can (39). Celie's confession to Sofia confirms that Celie has started observing Sofia to inspect her own flaws. On the other hand, Celie reminds Sofia of her mother as both of them are victims of the same hypocritical male society that Sofia is now fighting against. Subsequently, Celie and Sofia find a space for mutual empathy which settles a sense of sisterhood between them. Additionally, Sofia motivates Celie to resist Albert's abuse by suggesting Celie to "bash [Albert's] head open" (40). Similarly, Celie warns Harpo that Sofia is one of the women who cannot be physically abused (61). Celie's changed behaviour toward Sofia indicates her maturation. Later, Sofia tells Celie that Harpo's behaviour has started exhausting Sofia as "He don't want a wife, he want a dog" (62). Certainly, Sofia knows that she is not obliged to serve Harpo, and leaves him in order to deny him any control over her life.

Evidently, Sofia's relationship with her white mistress, Miz Millie, contrasts her relationship with the black women. Miz Millie oppresses Sofia solely on the basis of her racial prejudice, bypassing her subjugated position as a woman. Despite themselves being women, the white women usually exploit the black women to sustain their presumed white supremacy, creating an interracial conflict among them. The white women inherit this false sense of power from the patriarchal white society. In this context, Miz Millie receives agency from her husband to enslave and victimize Sofia, a black woman. As a result, the prospect of mutual understanding between the women of different races is disrupted. bell hooks claims, "[...] white racial imperialism [has] granted all white women [...] the right to assume the role of oppressor in relationship to black women and black men" (123). Correspondingly, Sofia and Miz Millie portray hostile relationship. Miz Millie enslaves Sofia and keeps her separated from her children for five years. During Christmas, Miz Millie decides to drive Sofia to her home (Walker 96). However, when Sofia sits beside the driver's seat in the car, Miz Millie makes racist remark. Miz Millie taunts, "Have you ever seen a white person and a colored sitting side by side in a car, when one of 'em wasn't showing the other one how to drive it or clean it?" (97). Moreover, Miz Millie allows Sofia only five minutes to meet her children before she urges Sofia to drive her back home, whereas, Miz Millie promised Sofia an entire day with her children. Apparently, Miz Millie threatens Sofia's personal life. Addressing the "white feminists", hooks writes, "They could pay lip-service to the idea of sisterhood and solidarity between women but at the same time dismiss black women" (9). Likewise, Sofia regains her individualism only after reconnecting with Odessa, Celie, Shug, and Mary Agnes. Sofia reclaims her vitality when she integrates with these black women. Sofia's sister, Odessa, takes care of Sofia's children when she lands in prison. After returning home from the white couple's house, Sofia regains her self-esteem with the support received from Odessa, Shug, Celie, and Mary Agnes. Sofia confronts the mayor's daughter, Eleanor Jane,

and tells her, “Some colored people [are] so scared of whitefolks” (Walker 240) that they pretend to like Eleanor Jane’s baby boy. Sofia denounces white superiority by telling Eleanor Jane that Sofia has nothing to offer but “kind feeling” (241) to her. Certainly, Sofia has reclaimed her voice through the agency ensured by her friendship with Celie, Odessa, Shug, and Mary Agnes. Thereupon, Sofia’s mutual sisterhood with them confirms the requirement of unity among the black women.

Shug Avery has a remarkable influence in Celie’s emancipation. “The Queen Honeybee” (Walker 26), Shug Avery, is an ambitious singer. Celie gets introduced to Shug in person when she comes to perform in the town (25). Celie observes that even someone as magnificent as Shug is not spared from social condemnation. The preacher of the church objectifies Shug without directly mentioning her name. The preacher labels Shug as “a strumpet in short skirts” (42) who sings for money, and steals another woman’s man. In response to his denunciation, Celie remarks, “Somebody got to stand up for Shug” (43). This is the first time Celie reacts when a man depersonalizes a woman. Nevertheless, Shug has a determined character and challenges Albert every so often. Eventually, Celie starts responding to the exasperating behaviours of men, imitating Shug’s assertiveness. When Albert’s father visits and dehumanizes Shug, Celie “drop[s] little spit” (52) in his drinking water as an act of resistance. In due course, Shug and Celie develop a mutual appreciation for each other. Celie nurses Shug back to good health and Shug composes a song, titled as “Miss Celie’s song” (70) to express her gratitude. Having Shug’s song dedicated to Celie provides her a sense of self-worth. Celie acknowledges, “First time somebody made something and name it after me” (70). Additionally, Shug assures Celie that she will stay in Albert’s house until he stops beating Celie (72). Shug’s determination to safeguard Celie indicates unity between them. Celie says that her life has restarted after Shug’s arrival (77). Shug supports Celie to become defensive against Albert’s injustice on her. Shug retrieves Nettie’s letters

from Albert's trunk for Celie. Furthermore, when Celie discovers that Alphonso is not her real father, Shug assures her unwavering allegiance towards Celie by saying, "Us each other's peoples now" (165). Even, Shug reconceptualizes Celie's idea of God to encourage her spiritual core. Shug tells Celie, "God is inside you and inside everybody else [...] God ain't a he or a she, but a It" (176). Later, Shug takes Celie to Memphis with her to ensure Celie's financial independence. Shug assures Celie, "I brought you here to love you and help you get on your feet" (191). Apparently, Shug's only concern is to empower Celie and make her realize her strengths. Eventually, Celie develops a fascination for sewing pants which she turns into a business with Shug's support. Shug promotes Celie's dressmaking skill, helps Celie to set a factory, and manages female workers to expand her business (193). As a result, Celie can now employ other women and make them self-reliant like her. Therefore, Shug's affection and support ensure Celie's recovery from her past trauma and reshape her life.

Mary Agnes' maturation after meeting Celie, Shug, and Sofia confirms the significance of black female unity. Mary Agnes is Harpo's submissive mistress. Harpo calls her 'Squeak' instead of using her actual name. When Mary Agnes complains about Harpo's indifferent attitude towards her, Celie advises Mary Agnes to reclaim her real identity, rejecting the one determined by Harpo. Celie observes that Harpo will "see [Mary Agnes] even when he [is] trouble[d]" (Walker 80) if Mary Agnes makes Harpo use her original name. Unfortunately, Mary Agnes gets raped by her uncle, the warden of the prison, when she persuades him to release Sofia from jail. After raping Mary Agnes, her uncle justifies his action by saying, "[...] this just little fornication. Everybody guilty of that" (90).

Consequently, Mary Agnes learns to contemplate the nonsensical privilege that men are entitled to, and confronts Harpo for his unfair treatment of her. Mary Agnes experiences an epiphany and asks Harpo, "do you really love me, or just my color?" (90). Harpo replies, "I love you, Squeak" and "kneel[s] down" to embrace her (90). Nonetheless, Mary Agnes

asserts her individuality as advised by Celie, and reminds Harpo, “My name Mary Agnes” (90). Within six months, Mary Agnes recovers from her past trauma of her sexual assault and begins to sing (91). Mary Agnes’ fascination for singing reflects on her desire to ensure a distinct identity. Even, she forgives Sofia for punching her face on their first meeting. Noticeably, both Shug and Celie encourage Mary Agnes to become self-aware. Intending to motivate Mary Agnes to sing in public, Shug comments, “listening to you sing, folks git to thinking bout a good screw” (105). As a result, Mary Agnes ignores Harpo’s refusal, and decides to accompany Shug to Memphis to establish her singing career. Sofia also encourages Mary Agnes to go to Memphis, saying, “Go on sing” (185). Sofia assures Mary Agnes that she will look after her daughter, Suzie Q, when Mary Agnes leaves with Shug and Celie. Therefore, Shug, Celie, and Sofia support Mary Agnes to deny subordination and redefine her identity. The coloured women aid one another as a collective to ensure a hopeful future for themselves.

The formation of Celie’s integrity involves her own efforts. Celie observes the determination of Shug, Nettie, and Sofia which inspires her to inspect her passivity. Before meeting Sofia and Shug, Celie normalized her victimization. Eventually, Celie’s consensus with Nettie, Shug, and Sofia aids Celie to regain her suppressed voice. As a result, Celie’s friendship with these black women serves as a catalyst to her developing senses. However, Celie’s self-acceptance and her individual attempts are equally important to complete her emancipation. Previously, when Kate and Nettie suggested Celie to resist patriarchal violence, Celie ignored them. Celie considered maintaining her submissiveness as she believed that it will ensure her survival. Noticeably, Shug, Nettie, and Sofia would have failed to motivate Celie if she continued to ignore her misfortune. Nonetheless, Celie finds her will to reconstruct her future alike Shug, Nettie, and Sofia. As a result, Celie evaluates her limitations and rejects male authority to initiate the essential process of her liberation. Celie

learns to accept her body which is an important part of her personal improvements.

According to J.C. Chrisler and I. Johnston-Robledo, "People learn about the world and about themselves through their bodies; thus, the body is the basis of subjectivity and self-expression" (3). Similarly, Celie recognizes her abilities and learns the ways to reconstruct herself. Celie confirms the beginning of her empowerment by rejecting her marriage with Albert. When Shug decides to take Celie to Memphis, Albert objects to Shug's decision. Nevertheless, Celie calls Albert a "lowdown dog" (Walker 180) and shocks him as this is the first time Celie uses her voice to challenge Albert's control over her. Celie announces to Albert that she is finally ready to leave him, and "enter into the Creation" over his dead body if required (180). When Harpo tries to interrupt, Celie retaliates by saying, "Oh, hold on hell" (181) and blames him for Sofia's misery. Moreover, Celie defends herself by "jab[bing]" Albert's hand with her "case knife" when he aims to slap Celie (181). It is evident that Celie is no longer a silent sufferer but an evolved individual. Albert tries to discourage Celie's confidence and calls Celie black, poor, ugly, and "nothing [significant] at all" (187). In response, Celie curses Albert to "suffer twice" the pain that he has caused her (187).

Intending to assert her individuality, Celie says, "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly [...] But I'm here" (187). Dillon claims, "[...] I believe that personal/political empowerment comes most directly and deeply from claiming one's intrinsic worth as a person" (55). Accordingly, Celie's unwavering sense of individuality ensures her growth. Celie moves in Shug's apartment in Memphis, and utilizes her sewing skills to become financially independent. Eventually, Celie inaugurates her own factory named, "Folkspants, Unlimited" (Walker 193). Referring to her personal accomplishments, Celie writes to Nettie, "I am so happy. I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time" (194). Subsequently, Celie renegotiates the power dynamic of her relationship with Albert. He fails to recognize Celie when she comes to visit Harpo and Sofia, wearing "Little red flat-heel slippers, and a flower in [her] hair" (196).



Sensing Albert's anxiety, Celie thinks to herself, "[...] I see he feeling scared of me. Well, good [...] Let him feel what I felt" (201). Additionally, Celie's actions reflect on her spiritual maturation. Celie writes to Nettie that her body is aging but her heart feels "young and fresh" (235). Celie tells Nettie that she no longer hates Albert (235) because he is trying to correct his past mistakes. Even, Celie accepts Shug's relationship with Germaine. Celie admits, "Just cause I love her [Shug] don't take away none of her rights" (244). Apparently, Celie has her own identity now and requires nobody's validation. Celie tells Albert, "our own self is what us have to hand" (246) to emphasize on her enablement. When Albert asks Celie to continue her life with him, Celie responds, "I still don't like frogs [men], but let's us be friends" (257). Celie unwillingly married Albert the first time but she refuses to restart her life with him after regaining her individuality. Thereupon, it is noticeable that Celie aspires to support herself and requires nobody to define her identity. Observably, one day at the restaurant in Memphis, Celie receives a fortune cookie that says, "[...] because you [Celie] are who you are, the future look happy and bright" (223). Likewise, Celie's reclaimed confidence and self-respect ensure a positive change in her life. Celie regains the ownership of her house after Alphonso's demise. Moreover, Nettie returns along with Celie's children, Adam and Olivia. In the concluding line, Celie says, "I think this the youngest us ever felt" (261). Certainly, Celie is responsible for reshaping her future; thus, she confirms the happy ending of her story.

In this chapter, I have attempted to prove that Alice Walker's protagonist, Celie, subverts male prejudices through the support and inspiration received from her black female friends. Celie's determination and individual attempts enable her to resist male domination and re-conceptualize her identity. Since her arrival, Shug challenges Albert's egotistical manhood. Shug redefines Albert as a frail boy who is yet to become a man. After observing Albert's tendency to dominate Celie, Shug sarcastically expresses her relief of not being

married to him. Later, Shug suggests Albert to become considerate towards Celie's sexual desires, and mocks him for acting like a "jackrabbit" (245). So, Shug relies on her wit to demean Albert's hypocritical attitude. Similarly, Sofia injures Harpo whenever he tries to beat Sofia. When Harpo tries to showcase his pretentious manliness, Celie makes a funny remark regarding his failure to subjugate Sofia. Eventually, Celie learns to confront Albert regarding his inexcusable behaviour. Celie identifies Albert's resemblance to a "frog" (230), and mocks his inability to modify his personality. As a result, the parodic expression of the black female characters attacks presumed superiority of the typical men in the novel. Additionally, Shug and Celie develop a relationship that involves romance and sexual intimacy. It is noticeable that, Shug makes Celie feel loved and respected which is complete opposite of what she receives from Albert. For this reason, Celie gets emotionally and sexually attracted to Shug. Thereupon, Celie's preference for a female lover reflects on her detest for the stereotypical men. In the novel, Shug, Nettie, and Sofia are assertive black female characters. Celie gets inspired by them to secure her future. Nettie and Celie's exchange of letters allow them an opportunity to convey their thoughts. Additionally, Nettie, Sofia, and Shug encourage Celie to resist Albert and Harpo's ill-treatments. Similarly, Shug assists Celie to realize her ignored potentials. She supports Celie to become self-reliant. On the other hand, Celie motivates Mary Agnes to reclaim her original identity that Harpo attempts to distort, while Shug helps Mary Agnes to secure her singing career. As a result, Shug, Nettie, Celie, Mary Agnes, and Sofia construct a mutual support system that benefits them in individual level. Furthermore, Celie learns to rely on herself to reconstruct her distinct identity. Celie begins her story as a sufferer but concludes as an accomplished individual. Apparently, she makes an effort to transform herself from a victim to an ambitious woman. Celie's friendship with Shug, Nettie, and Sofia inspires her to inspect her drawbacks and regain her self-esteem. Consequently, Celie takes control of her life, saves herself from

an abusive marriage and establishes her identity as a businesswoman. As a result, Celie's friendship with the black women, and her own efforts ensure her emancipation. It is understandable from my overall analysis in this chapter that the black female characters effectively dismantle patriarchal mindset through their unity. In *I, Tituba*, the Black Caribbean woman, Tituba, uses magic to communicate with her female ancestors for guidance and share her wisdom with her progeny after death. Through this interaction, Mama Yaya, Abena, Tituba and Samantha unify and continue black resistance to ensure the liberation of future black women. On the other hand, Black American protagonist, Cocoa, re-establishes her dignity by formulating solidarity with Miranda and Abigail in *Mama Day*. A similar transformation can be observed in *The Color Purple's* main female characters which enable them to restore their inner essence and find fulfilment.

## Conclusion

My research aims to address the elements which can facilitate individual interests of the marginalized black women. Black women face racial and gender-based stereotypes that position them below the white women in the society. Which is why, it is important to address the social factors that impede black women's interpersonal developments and find an answer to how their subjectivity can be re-established. In this paper, I have conducted my research on three novels that are written by black female authors about the marginalized black female protagonists to disrupt patriarchal narrative and provide an authentic representation of black women's experiences. For my research, I have incorporated several theoretical lenses and established arguments to support the progressive impact of black sisterhood delineated in these texts. In the first chapter of my dissertation, I have utilized the theoretical viewpoints of gynocriticism and black feminism to analyse how Tituba's first-person narrative dismantles male diction and assists her to reclaim individuality in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. Moreover, I have used the critical lenses of magical realism and magical feminism to argue that female friendship enables the victimized black women to avoid repeating the past mistakes of their female ancestors and reconstruct their fate as a collective. In this novel, Tituba is repeatedly traumatized by the hypocritical puritan community and men. However, she uses her magical ability to transcend the attempts of the patriarchal society to derogate and subjugate her. Tituba's connection with her female ancestors enables her to learn from their past and get motivated to disrupt the cycle of violence on black women. My research in this chapter has attempted to argue that the fictional Tituba gets the chance to evade the Salem Witch Trial, unlike the historical Tituba, as she (fictional Tituba) receives support from other black female characters. Tituba attempts to connect with black female predecessors and descendants through magic and succeeds to build an effective resistance against male violence.

My research in the second chapter critically explores whether a progressive male-female relationship can be ensured if men do not conform to patriarchy. Additionally, I have attempted to analyse whether or not a heterosexual relationship always promotes objectification of women. I have used the theoretical perspective of black feminism to analyse Cocoa's marriage with George in *Mama Day*. Cocoa pursues her dreams even after marriage without facing patriarchal barriers as her relationship with George does not comply with patriarchal ideologies. Furthermore, I have used the critical lens of magical realism to assess how Miranda uses her magic to salvage Cocoa, and argue that black female unity is an indispensable element to rehabilitate black women's repressed identity. Additionally, my research in this chapter incorporates Springer's concept of female jealousy to investigate how the absence of friendship between Ruby and Cocoa impedes their growth. Cocoa's life is threatened by Ruby's malice and regains its vitality through the support she (Cocoa) receives from Miranda and Abigail. The shared sense of solidarity between Cocoa, Miranda and Abigail offers a support system to Cocoa which she utilizes to overcome her obstacles.

In the third chapter of my thesis, I have incorporated the theoretical perspective of gynocriticism to assess how the letters written by Celie and Nettie allow them an agency to assert their voices in *The Color Purple*. I have used Krefting's critical viewpoint on female humour to argue that the satirical remarks made by the black female characters challenge presumed masculinity in the text. In an attempt to deny their male partners any opportunity to objectify them, Celie, Shug and Sofia often make sarcastic remarks to intimidate the manliness of their male partners. Moreover, I have analysed Celie's attraction towards women through the theoretical lens of female homosexuality and attempted to prove that Celie's sexual involvement with Shug functions as one of her (Celie's) strategies to deny male influence. Through my research in this chapter, I reached the inference that the black female characters in the text embrace distinctive strategies to subvert male assumptions and

assert their individuality. Since Celie detests men and fails to connect with them, she develops affection towards Shug. Furthermore, I have utilized Hamer and Neville's observations on black women's mutual empathy as theoretical basis to argue that the black female characters in the text find their struggles in patriarchal society as mutual ground to develop alliance and revitalize as a collective. I have also incorporated Dillon's perspective on self-respect to denote how Celie's female friends serve as motivating force for her to regain self-worth and take initiatives to reconstruct her identity. Celie's emancipation is determined by self-aid and her friendship with other black female characters. Celie's friends encourage her to alter her fate and she herself puts an effort to ensure it.

Based on my critical analysis of the three chapters, I have reached the conclusion that black women need to operate as a collective to disrupt patriarchal assumptions. The authors of *I, Tituba*, *Black Witch of Salem*, *Mama Day* and *The Color Purple* endorse the concept of black sisterhood as a solution to the predicaments of their black female protagonists. My findings in this research indicate that mutual understanding among the victimized black women can function as a source of support and encouragement, enabling them to defend their dignity against male dominance.

In order to keep my research specific and relevant, I could not consider several arguments and interpretive approaches in this paper. Although a plethora of researches have already been conducted on *I, Tituba*, *Black Witch of Salem*, this text can still be assessed from other analytical standpoints. The novel mocks the hypocritical society by reconstructing historical Tituba's story and I have focused on fictional Tituba's challenges as a black slave woman in my paper. However, the focus can also be shifted to the black female author to evaluate the experiences of black female writers in hegemonic society that shows preference towards male writings. For example: the text briefly includes Hester, an educated black woman who fails to survive the scrutiny of male privilege. While talking to Tituba, Hester

refers to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and expresses her desire to write a book about an ideal society operated by women. Despite her fascination towards literature and writing, Hester commits suicide to escape her misfortune caused by male dominated society. Future researches can compare Hester to modern black female writers to investigate whether they succeed to write subversive literature or get pressurized to satisfy the expectations of patriarchal society through their writing.

To conduct my research on *Mama Day*, I have mainly analysed the significance of Cocoa's shared empathy with Miranda and Abigail to rehabilitate Cocoa's future. Moreover, I have demonstrated how Cocoa's marriage with George subverts masculinity and facilitates Cocoa's personal development during her stay in New York. There are scopes to evaluate the text from other argumentative viewpoints. For instance: Cocoa is a black female incomer in New York and struggles for years to adjust in white community. Cocoa succeeds to adjust in the foreign environment only after meeting George, a man of her own race. Further researches can be done to investigate whether or not Cocoa feels more connected with her own people, George, Miranda and Abigail, as she is a reject in white community. Future researches can explore how Cocoa's struggles in New York echoes the recent experiences of black female settlers who receive less privileges than native white women due to their African ethnicity.

In the concluding chapter of my dissertation, I have concentrated on Celie's friendship with other black women and the diverse strategies she employs to protect her individuality. Moreover, I have critically interpreted Celie's romantic and sexual inclination towards Shug to argue that her homosexual behaviour acts as one of the methods to resist male influence in her life. There is still more room to explicate Celie's homosexuality from other analytical points of views. Celie's acceptance of her homosexual identity plays a significant role in her emancipation. It enables her to reject Albert and take control of her

partner preference. Further researches can be done to inquire whether or not the novel's homosexual references encourage the lesbian black women to accept their queer identity and disrupt the heteronormative ideas that benefit men in the society.

The patriarchal system and white colonialism thrive by controlling the dominant ideologies and social structures, enabling men to exploit women. In these three texts, Tituba is a social outcast in a puritan community, Cocoa feels alienated in New York city, and Celie finds it difficult to adjust in Albert's home. The prejudicial societies try to constrain their distinctiveness by imposing the predominant rules on them. However, these black female protagonists deny to operate within the barriers set by patriarchy. Tituba, Cocoa and Celie learn from their experiences and think divergently to disrupt the conventional image of passive women. They emancipate as individuals as they show the courage to contradict patriarchal expectations.



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