

Self-attainment in Richard Wright's Native Son and Alice Walker's The Color Purple

تحقيق الهوية في رواية رتشرد رايت ابن الوطن ورواية أليس والكير اللون الأرجواني

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الملخص:

تتناول الدراسة مشكلة البحث عن تحقيق الهوية هي ليست وليدة اليوم لكنها ظاهرة قديمة. تشرح الدراسة كيفية البحث وتحقيق الهوية وأيضاً المراحل المتتالية التي اتبعتها كل من بطلي الروائين لإيجاد هويتهم الحقيقية، كما تذكر الدراسة أسباب الشعور بانعدام الشخصية الفعلي، وتذكر منها الحالة الاقتصادية للعوائل الأفريقية - الأمريكية والخدمة، اللون، وأن تكون من أصول أفريقية، كذلك تشرح كيف تؤثر كل هذه العوامل على تصرفات الأمريكيين - الأفريقيين. الكلمات المفتاحية: رتشرد رايت ابن الوطن، أليس والكير اللون الأرجواني، الأمريكيين - الأفريقيين، الهوية و انعدام العدالة.

Abstract

The problem of searching for identity is not a contemporary phenomenon, but it is an old one. This research shows how to search and achieve one's self-attainment. It also shows the gradual steps which each of the protagonists follow to find his/her real identity. It per points the causes of identity erosion such as the black families' domestic slates, slavery, color, and being of African origins.

Key Words: Richard Wright's Native Son , Alice Walker's The Color Purple, Afro- Americans, Identity and Injustice.

Self-identity is not a modern social question since it has resounded in Negroes' minds as they "forcibly left their homeland ... for slavery in the United States."

(V.P.Noronha, IV). The aimless wandering of people from place to place highlighted the theme of the search for self-attainment as it becomes vital for their living under such circumstances. In his book *The Invisible Man*, Ralf Ellison states that "if you don't know where you are, then you probably don't know who you are" (IV). It is also a question of a place in this world and how this place affects the individual to perceive his or her national and international identity.

The Afro-American literature tackles various forms of identity, black American's vision of Africa, and their American stay. Afro-American authors deal with the problem of self-attainment in their writings, reflecting the truth about the history of the blacks. Lack of self-identity is the inevitable impact and reflection of violence, oppression, and discrimination that the black-faced in the white American society. It left shadows on the Afro-American self-esteem and made them accept their inadequacy. The colonizers succeeded to convince the colonized that they are just monstrous citizens of the second degree due to some devastating actions and forms of racism as narrated in *Native son*.

Although the question of identity and searching for self-attainment are discussed clearly in Afro-American literature, Wright and Walker seem to share some similarities and differences in this respect. This chapter explores the idea of self-attainment and the relationship between Wright's and Walker's ideas about self-identity, bringing to light the lived and living experiences and problems of the protagonists in both novels *Native Son* and *The Color Purple*. The lack of self-attainment can be clearly seen in the characters of the two novels. For example, Bigger Thomas, the protagonist of *Native son*, is one of

those lost characters, who embody the racially Negro mentality as well as psychology. The other character who lacks identity is Celie, the protagonist of *The Color Purple*. The Protagonists in both novels have different levels of awareness of their position. Those levels change throughout their respective stories as they attempt to determine what is important to them. Wright is still woven in the web of the white image of America. He is unable to overcome this image, so he falls into despair and violence. Meanwhile, Walker presents a nostalgic and romantic presentation of black beauty and represents Africa in a glory which white literature has been deliberately ignorant of.

Native Son talks about Bigger Thomas, a poor, uneducated black boy. He wakes up in his family's house ,which consists of one room in the South Side of Chicago. He sees a big rat running across the room and he kills it. Bigger grows up under the climate of harsh racial prejudice in America during thirties, so that he has no control over his life. His mother asks him to work with the Daltons, a rich white family, but he refuses and joins the gang. Bigger's daily existence is defined by anger, fear and frustration toward the whites. Then he starts to work with the Daltons as a chauffeur. Later, he accidentally kills Mary the daughter of the Daltons and this leads him to his doom.

The Color Purple tells the story of Celie, a black teenager who raised in rural Georgia. She narrates her life through writing letters to God. She suffers from her step father's(Fonso) domestic violence and abuse and she tells no one but God about this. She becomes pregnant for the second time at the age 14. Then she married Mr.__(Albert)who treated her in the same bad way. Celie begins to build a new relationships with other black women (Shug Avery, Nettie and Sofia) who help her to be strong and fight

oppression. The Color Purple traces the gradual steps which Celie follow to develop her new identity and life.

Walker presents the negative look which the whites have introduced in their literature about the blacks. Celie's revolting against the "bunch of books. The White folks all over them talk about apples and dogs. "Her response, "What I care about dogs?" (183). Here, she introduces her disgust with racist education by highlighting a white image. Samuel addresses the same condition when he states:

...And of course, the prevailing popular view of Africans at that time contributed to our feeling of amusement. Not only where Africans [African-Americans] savages, they were bumbling, inept savages, rather like bumbling, inept brethren at home. (qtd.inThe image of Africa, 2)

Afro-American women writers have created women characters that pass on their knowledge of life and survival from one generation to the other through their culture and history. Those characters are not perfect, as they try to survive in a society that judges them according to color and gender. They must go beyond the conditions in which they live, and they have to reach a new level of understanding of life. The Color Purple traces the journey of self-discovery and self-development of Celie who is engaged with other women in the novel. "The Color Purple signifies the metaphysical, social and personal rebirth reflected into different shades by her inner self-attainment, which forms the main theme of this novel". (Gibson, 225).

Afro-American women do the best they could do to represent the image of black women's identity and existence and to change the common image attached to the Afro-American women. To do this, change must take place within the black females' psyches and on how they see

themselves. Walker sees the blacks as a part of a larger world that must be saved from destruction. In an interview in 1973, she says,

I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole, of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of black women. ... For me, black women are the most fascinating creations in the world." (Walker. Interviews, 989).

This statement embodies what Walker tries to show in her literary work. She explores the spiritual survival of black people in search for a sense of identity and autonomy.

Walker tells the story of Celie, a barely educated woman who is raped by her stepfather, and then married to Mr. ___ (Albert), who needs a good worker to look after his children. She loses her children and her sister Nettie. She starts writing to God because she becomes completely alone. Later, she develops a community, new members of family such as Shug, her husband's mistress, and Sofia, the wife of her stepson. This communication creates a love relation between these three women. Such love gives Celie the freedom to say what she thinks and to be an independent woman, both in her sense of self and in her creation of life.

Clearly, the idea of searching for self-attainment is in the two novels. It is clear that the two authors adopt the same tools to express it. For example, Language, the same style in depicting living conditions. Other tools the authors used are related to the title, the ideas of support, anger and objectification and how it leads to violence, remorse, blindness, and mimicry. Despite the similarity of all those tools, the two authors remain different Walker focuses on feminism to help black women achieve self-attainment.

Writing styles and the ways the authors approach their themes are also different in the two novels. The tool of language has been used by the two authors who follow specific linguistic features to foreground the theme of search for identity. Wrights' handling of language is useful as well as attractive as it draws attention to his interest in a direct and graphical psychosocial style of writing. He focuses on the dark and violent aspects of life in the rural South during the thirties. To emphasize the theme of realism in his writing, Wright adopts the dialect and black flock culture. His perspective is that language can represent a person and even become an entrance into his life and his surroundings.

The ideological unity of Negro writers and the alliance of that unity with all the progressive ideas of our day is the primary prerequisite for collective work. On the shoulders of white writers and Negro writers alike rest the responsibility of ending this mistrust and isolation.(Wright. Blueprint,49).

Supported by his experience of the reality of the South Side Chicago as well as his own experience, Wright intelligently covers many social subjects and overcomes the linguistic problems of his protagonist. When he works for the Daltons, Bigger uses to answer Mr. Dalton's question in very few words apart from "Yessuh", "Nawsuh", and "Goddamn!". He speaks as the white world wishes him to be. This language, as well as the minor literatures, are the outcomes of lost self-identity. In this respect Frederic Jameson writes:

the cries of pain of isolated individuals against the operation of trans individual laws, the invention of so many private languages and subcodes in the midst of reified speech, and symptomatic expressions... of a damaged subject in their vain efforts to subvert an intolerable social order (507).

Wright mentions the way that Bigger follows in talking to the whites:

Bigger lies on his new bed in the Dalton house for a moment, and thinks about the things, including a gold watch, he'll be able to buy with his new job and income. ... he nearly runs into Mrs. Dalton, who speaks to him briefly, asking if his accommodations are OK and if he needs anything else. Bigger replies in nervous, short phrases—similarly to how he behaved with Mr. Dalton and when Mrs. Dalton asks if Bigger would like to go to night school while employed in the house, the way Green did, Bigger says he's not sure, that he hasn't thought about it. (Wright. *Native*, 386).

Wright shows the way Bigger speaks furiously to Mrs. and Mr. Dalton. By using this language by that charter, the author wants to show Bigger's social class and the way he looks to Afro-American individuals. In this sense, the language reveals the power of the speaker and shows the identity of the addressee as is looked at by the speaker. He believes that; "the aim of writing is to carry life to the state of a non-personal power" (Gee, 654)

Wright uses many techniques in his writing such as capital letters, neologisms, and expressions which gives the novel additional power in delivering the messages perfectly. Deleuze states that:

For the entire novel, ... Wright's style is complementary.

The language itself is not a dialect but a 'foreign' language within the major language, with regional intonations, neologisms, an estranging use of capitalization, and a frequency of clipped, arid expressions. (657).

On the other hand, Walker uses some literary techniques, rural language, and symbols to depict the struggle of young

Afro-American women not only to search their identity but also, to liberate themselves. She attempts to show the Afro-American women's social relationships, living states, and spiritual pursuits. Walker aims to object to racial segregation and discrimination against black women's spirits. Therefore, she uses love as a defense to help Afro-American women to stand by themselves and amidst the struggle in her society by her men. It is noticeable that Walker perfectly uses the epistolary technique in *The Color Purple* where she uses the usual form of the letters. This technique adds greater realism to the story as it mimics work in real life. This genre of novel was popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Walker focuses more on establishing various relationships with the reader as Celie is able to communicate freely without the author's involvement. The author was an outsider which means that the author does not have to filter the language of the characters." This contributed to the realism which is often perceived in epistolary fiction as the "artless" language. This made it easier to believe that these words had not been filtered by a narrator" (Perry 13). Walker attempts to articulate the blacks' voice when she makes Celie tells stories by faithfully recording the dialogue between the characters. (Jørgensen, 36). Throughout the novel, the protagonist has the right to control and change the style, presentation, motivation, location, and action of other characters. Ruth Perry says that: "The epistolary novel was the perfect vehicle for stories of romantic love because its very format demanded a subject matter in which emotional states were most prominent" (qtd. In ,*Women, Letters and the Empire...* 18).

There is some sort of similarity between Walker and Wright; While Walker uses the black folk language and the

deep Southern dialect to reflect her own culture and the Afro-American identity, Wright uses the standard English. Celie uses her own language which lacks standard English grammar which reflects Walker's fight for both her feminine and Afro-American identity. Celie decides that she speak naturally. However, after she starts her business her friends start to advise her to learn how to speak properly and in a way similar to the language of the White so people don't recognize her as different or think that she is stupid. She refuses to use the language of white people because she wants to keep her own identity and autonomy by sticking to her language . She says "My mind run upon a thought, git confuse, run back and sort of lay down"(Walker. *The Color*, 215). Here one can see the grammatical errors in Celie's language such as the verb run up, git and run which lack the right form. It is worth mentioning here that the grammatical errors that appear in Celie's first and last sentences are meant to prove that Walker uses the daily southern dialect to assert black identity through the language. In this respect Mills says; "Celie tries to write as she speaks... Celie's letters are the model of spoken language."(74)

Celie refuses to use Standard English, and her use of language is connected to an important theme of *The Color Purple*, which is finding the courage to speak in the Southern dialect without being ashamed of it. This is just the opposite of Bigger of *Native Son* who is ashamed of using his own language with white people. She asserts her selfhood through her spoken language. She learns to love herself and the others. This is the thing that Bigger cannot do. He never engages with anyone and hates all people around him including himself.

As the plot of *The Color Purple* progresses, Celie's letters get more and more subtle in vocabulary, sentence

lengths, and style. For example, Nettie's letters to her display the cultural change. It has been noticed that Celie's language gets improved as she becomes mature. Her quest is for independence, freedom, and literacy." I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here" (207). This letter shows the linguistic features of Celie's speech and the way she uses the correct grammatical forms of verbs has developed. In addition, she manages to say I am here and this is a strong sign of self- identity.

Social context is another tool that has been used by the two authors to stress the theme of searching for self-identity. Wright succeeds in having a great influence on Afro-American literature, in terms of the white and black relationships. For the first time, he observes that an Afro-American could be a major writer with an international fame. Unlike any other protagonist, Bigger is from the lowest ring of society and does not have any romantic element of a common hero like Celie. As expected from anyone living in Bigger's social context, he is frightened, violent, hateful, less confident, and resentful, and this case is just the opposite of Celie. All of these feelings are just the product of the white society in which he was raised. So, he is a real native son.

Bigger's character is a slave black man who is violent criminal and coward. The powerful, racist society look at him as a prototype of his race . Wright shows how Bigger's character is shaped by his racist background.

Bigger is not born as a violent criminal, but he becomes so because of the unforgiving world of racism and poverty in the American society. Wright uses the symbol of a rat in the opening scene of the novel to convey this idea. The powerless rat is a product of his environment. The rat is not

inherently bad, but it is stuck in a few options city. It is a symbol of Bigger himself. The rat scene is foreshadowing Bigger's confrontation with racism forces in the American society, and he has been killed. Though he is unable to kill those virulent forces in the American society itself, he manages to kill them in himself when he kills the rat which symbolizes him. (qtd.in Gee, violence and identity... 16).

Wright here shows Bigger's living conditions inside the ghetto and the rat symbolizes Bigger himself who lives in a city which leaves him but few options . He hates his life and his family because they suffered just like him and they couldn't do anything to help them improve their life. He killed the rat and he has been also killed later.

Wright reflects Bigger's inner feelings and his deep fear of the society in which he lives:
There was just the old feeling, the feeling that he had all his life, he was black and had done wrong, the white men were looking at something with which they would soon accuse him. It was the old feeling, hard and constant again now... (Wright. Native,219).

Here Wright does not only mention what Bigger feels, but also how every black man feels and looked at as being guilty for the mere fact of being black. On the other hand, Celie is living in the same conditions. In fact, she may be suffering more than Bigger for being a black woman. Opposite to Bigger, she never hates her family or even becomes violent. Black women are suffering from social injustice for being black and also domestic violence and labor for being a woman. The worsening living conditions under which the black family lived make the suffering so tense especially for the black women. This is just the case with Celie, who lives in her step-father's house

and suffers from his ill treatment. When she is married to Mr,___ who does not love her but wants a good worker to take care of his children. So her life is miserable:

Everybody say how good I is to Mr. ___ children. I be good to them. But I don't feel nothing for them. Patting Harpo back not even like patting a dog. It more like patting another piece of wood. Not a living tree, but a table, a chiffe robe. Anyhow, they don't love me neither, no matter how good I is. (Walker. The Color,17).

Here , Celie appears talking about how she is treated well by her husband's children compared to the treatment she receives from the other. She explained how she was violently treated. The symbolism she uses to highlight the ill treatment is interesting. She figures herself as a tree since the tree is silent and immobile and can be used later as wood. She wants to say that she is not treated as a human being but rather as a thing or just an object in the house. Hers is the typical living conditions of almost all the black women.

The third tool that walker and wright use to address the question of self-identity is the title of the novels themselves. Normally the authors choose the titles of their novels that square off with the nature of the protagonist of the novel. This is because it could give a deeper look into the relationship between the characters and the environment. Wright's choice of the title of the novel is not haphazardly done. He just revolts against the reality of that American society. A native son is the product of the country in which he is born and raised. From the title of Native Son, one begins to think of "nativism". But one can see the tension between Bigger as a native son and his lack of rights and personal freedom. In this respect Elie Wiesel says;" The very title of the novel, Native Son, instantly makes the reader think about ideas of "Nativism" and "territory". The

local, cultural and social forces have determined his identity and created him. Consequently, if he is a monster, it is not his fault but it is the American society that should be blamed. This is exactly what Max, the lawyer, argues in Bigger's defense. "The title is a slam on American society. Bigger . . . was born and raised as a black man in the U.S., so he is a product of the country. Local cultural and social forces shaped and created him."(Shmoop. editorial).

Another dimension can be added to the title of *Native Son* which "proclaims the identity of Bigger Thomas as discovered by the novelist himself. Bigger might have doubts over his Nationality whether he is an African or an American. The novelist pronounces him to be an American ,a *Native Son*, so the search for identity made by Bigger Thomas comes to an end in the minds of the novelist and his readers "(ELAKIAM, and NIRMALA, 220) .

The title of *The Color Purple* serves as an important symbol. It displays how Celie suffers oppression throughout her life but is still able to see the beauty of the world around her "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it. People think pleasing God is all God cares about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back."(Walker. *The Color*, 734). A purple color of agony and pain, Walker also uses purple in a field of flowers to represent the beauty of life. Hence, Celie has a new better experience. Walker uses the purple color of the lavender to cover black woman's self with a particular kind of sensitivity. She makes Celie perceive the purple color of lavender while she is walking through the fields admiring God's creation and as Shug wants to explain that God wants to please people not just himself. Purple maybe the color of desire or of accomplished womanhood.

Furthermore, the notion of support is another tool, the fifth in the order, that is used by both protagonists to gain self-realization. For the first time, Bigger's effort in his identity search is supported by a white person. It is an unexpected support from Boris Max, the Jew who he has suffered from the same social injustice and racism in the courtroom. When Max uses an argument to send Bigger to prison instead of sending him to the electric chair, Wright explains Bigger's reflection on Max's argument; "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their beings, but, on the contrary, their social beings" (Nejad, 656).

Although Jan and Mary are so kind to Bigger and try to treat him as their equal, Bigger hates them so much because they force his self-identity into confusion. Nejad says, "at that moment he felt toward Mary and Jan a dumb, cold, and inarticulate hate" (653).

Social grouping against black males raises poverty and suffering. Similarly, black women try to support their families instead of their men (in *Native Son* Mrs. Thomas' son). This idea can be seen in *The Color Purple*, where women support their families through hard work in cotton fields. In this sense, Aime J. Ellis claims that "Social grouping among poor urban black males makes a sense of a world filled to write racial terror" (24). It is the same reason that Bigger joins the gang. ...her son, Bigger is furious about his family, because of their poverty and suffering.

Since he can't help them, he urges to kill himself or someone else. He is the result of pressure in his social position. Additionally, Elizabeth J. Ciner observes that; "The struggle of the individual for self-possession, which is a struggle to be a fully free human, is the strongest

unifying element in Wright's novel" (qtd in "foregrounding the quest", 655)

Celie's new identity is related to Shug's, Sofia's and Nettie's characters. These characters support Celie in her journey for a new identity. Shug is a larger-than-life character who embodies sensuality and independence. She is free from male dominance. Her relation with men is based on her own terms not on theirs. She steps beyond normal boundaries, and this is why Celie wants to imitate her. She becomes a celebrator. She teaches Celie to take pleasure in life, in her body, in the diversity of people, in the beauty of the natural world, and in the love relationships with others. Meanwhile, Bigger does not allow anyone to advise or help him. Sofia is also connected to Celie. She is a strong wise woman who teaches Celie to be strong. And if there is an attempt to demean her, she breaks herself against dehumanization and prejudice. Let's listen to this dialogue;

You told Harpo to beat me, she said.

No, I didn't, I said.

Don't lie, she said.

I didn't mean it, I said.

Then what you say it for? she ast.

She standing there looking me straight in the eye. She look tired and her jaws full of air.

I say it cause I'm a fool, I say. I say it cause I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't.

What that? she say.

Fight. I say.

She stand there a long time, like what I said took the wind out her jaws. She made before, sad now. (Walker. *The Color*, 23).

Celie seems to be jealous of Sofia for being too strong to face Harpo, the thing that she could not with Mr.____. Sofia advises Celie to fight, telling her about her experience with the males of her family. Later Celie and Sofia become friends and Sofia supports Celie through teaching her to be strong to confront anyone.

Nettie is a major character who contributes to the development of Celie's identity. Nettie follows a path different from the others, but the result is nearly the same. She is an educated woman who is more experienced than

Celie because of her journey to Africa. She tells Celie that travel makes her discover things about their family as well as the world.

The alien atmosphere spread in the Daltons' house. Mr. Dalton allows Bigger to enter from the front door, which is a sign that shows him as a supporter of the blacks; when Bigger gets into the house and wondered at 'The splendor of the home, with its elegant furnishing and painting', hence he feels intimidated by the vast difference between this world and his world and he abounds with insecurity and fear. (Wright. Native, 23) .

These words explain the psychological effect of class discrimination on members of society and how class difference could generate fear and psychological instability for the poor.

Violence, as a result of anger and objectification, is another tool that has been used by the two authors. Bigger's reliance on the use of violence can be seen as a practice of his new identity, which he uses it as a means of communication with others. He becomes able to connect with Jan as a human because he kills his beloved. Even

when Bessie's body is displayed as an evidence in the court, Bigger feels "a deeper sympathy for Bessie than at any time when she was alive" (331). Finally, he becomes able to connect with her emotionally because Bigger is also objectified. He lastly recognizes that there are others around him who are also suffering like him.

Native son specifies the struggle to create a black identity in a society where blacks are perceived as white" property heart, soul, body and blood" (332). From wright's thoughts in the above-mentioned quotation, one can learn that the rhythms of black life are indifferent and violent. Objectification leads to violence, which is used in a negative way in Native Son. Bigger realizes that violence has become vital for him as a human being. He says, "I didn't know I was really alive in this world until I felt things hard enough to kill for 'em" (429).

The violence is perceived differently in relation to search for self-identity. For example, the Afro-Americans' anger in Native Son acts as a positive force which removes the indifference and humanizes the black identity. The novel illustrates that the blame is not on the part of the blacks, but it is rather the objectification of whites that determines the promotion of the black personality through anger which generates violence. Kadeshia Mathews describes violence as "a necessary component of Bigger's identity. However, they did not explore the meaning of that violence and the significant role that the whites played in its perpetuation. The white's culpability is a result of losing the black' self-identity."(11). Although the critics see violence as a basic component of Bigger's identity, they do not explain the role of the whites in its perpetuation.

Not only do the whites deprive the blacks of their self-identity perception, they also make an environment that prevents the blacks from being identified as human beings. The whites treat the blacks as mere objects. Violence, which has been often linked to blacks, is the only means that they felt they have to avoid objectification. To the blacks, violence is a way to exercise their independence. In fact, violence became a definite feature of the identity of the blacks and which has, in fact, isolates them from the whites. Objectification prevents blacks from any sense of independence human being, this generates anger. This is clear in the opening scene of the novel.

The treatment that the blacks receive from the whites can be described as dehumanization. Treating every black as a thing indicates that every black has a white owner who rules his movements. This is not only imposed by the whites, but also it is experienced by the blacks, and this is what Bigger explains to Gus when he says, "They don't let us do anything... I reckon us the only thing in this city that can't go where we want to go and do what we want to do." (Wright. *Native*, 21). Here, it can be clearly seen that Bigger classifies himself as a "thing" that does not have an identity. In this respect, Robert Nozick says that when a person determines the actions of others and, "the process whereby they take this decision from you makes them a part-owner of you; it gives them a property right in you, just as.... an animal or inanimate object"(65).

When it comes to interactions, the Whites and Biggers' interactions are not perceived by the Whites "as "inter-subjective" or existing between two conscious human minds"(Gee, 15). His personal identity cannot be actively constructed. His experiences with the whites lead him to feel that he "ain't a man no more" (Wright. *Native*, 353).

Under such conditions, the creation of the black personality as a man being is not possible. Biggers' style of living, thus, can be described as realistic but defiant. This is because of his refusal of objectification in its all shapes. For example, when he refuses to accept that he is inferior to the whites, his shame leads him to kill. The psychologists Brock Bastian and Nick Haslam describe the development of "cognitive responses to interpersonal maltreatment," asserting that:

People enter into 'cognitive deconstructive' states when excluded. This involves an emotional numbing, a reduced empathy, a cognitive inflexibility, and an absence of meaningful thought. (Gee, 297).

Ironically, Bigger's attempts to assert his identity through the act of killing do not lead to what he longs for, namely to find his identity and communicate with others. As a matter of fact, every action is followed with a defiant and unusual reaction and in the case of Bigger the reaction is so tense since the action comes from a black representation. Consequently, Bigger's violent life ends in violent death. *Native Son* also shows white violence as a reaction to Bigger's violence "eight thousand armed men...combed cellars, old buildings, and more than one thousand Negro homes in the Black Belt," (Wright. 256). This reveals that both the whites and the blacks use unjustified violence. However, Bigger's attempts to find a better expression of self-identity are considered a crime of disobedience. Afro-Americans are influenced by the whites' classification of them as sub-humans with no identity. Rejecting their own African identity and refusing the white stereotype picture about them, blacks help the whites to dehumanize them. The brown color skin, the customs, and the unique traditions are all shapes of one's identity.

Bigger's search for his identity is brave. Bigger defies the image the whites attach to the blacks. The whites deny Afro-Americans the power of choice and consequently drive them into an obvious destiny. Afro-Americans are considered as people without brains. They are also considered as intellectually inferior. Even in Bigger's trial, the judge sees him guilty even before hearing his story. Bigger's family, which acts as the basic stone of the society, lacks identity. The absent father and the working helpless mother drive Bigger to struggle to assert his own identity inside the family.

Just like Bigger of *Native Son*, Celie of *The Color Purple* learns the value of motivating anger, but not in a violent way, when she discovers, by the help of Shug, Nettie's letters that are hidden by Mr. _____. Celie becomes angry and wonders how God will accept such wrong deeds, and she stops writing to God and starts to write to Nettie. This anger motivates her positively to leave Mr. _____ and to start a new job and seek a new independent life. Therefore, this anger is a positive step and a good motivation to reach real identity. Contrary to Bigger, Celie does not use violence to shape her identity. Her new job allows her to experience this new identity and makes her recognize her skills, the thing that Bigger cannot do since his violence leads him to his doom.

Celie finally finds her own way and stops viewing herself through the eyes of her colonizer, who is mainly Mr. _____ her husband. Mr. _____ is a typical black man who beats Celie just for being his wife. He believes that she must do all the work because she is a woman. "Harpo ast his daddy why he beat me. Mr. _____ say, Cause she my wife. Plus, she stubborn. All women good for—he don't finish. He just tuck

his chin over the paper like he do. Remind me of Pa. (Walker. The Color,22).

Both Mr. ___ and Celie's step-father use linguistic as well as physical violence against Celie.

Harpo, she [Kate, Mr. ___'s sister] say. Harpo the oldest boy. Harpo, don't let Celie be the one bring in all the water. You a big boy now. Time for you to help out some. Women work, he say. What? she say. Women work. I'm a man. You're a trifling nigger, she say. You git that bucket and bring it back full. He cut his eye at me. Stumble out. I hear him mutter some thin to Mr. ___ sitting on the porch. Mr. ___ call his sister. She stay out on the porch talking a little while, then she come back in, shaking. Got to go, Celie, she say. She so mad tears be flying every which way while she pack. (28).

This statement explains how black men often treat their women. Mr. ___'s sister tries to help Celie but Mr. ___ refuses this and punishes her. Celie realizes this fact and begins to reject such treatment by showing anger towards Mr. ___. There are some obvious grammatical issues such as the use of the infinitive form of the verb. Also pronouns such as he and she have been used by walker to assert the black dialect, which lacks the linguistic roles, to reflect the lack of identity.

Celie rejects the objectification and the imposed roles and she stops doing what they tell her to do and starts to do what she wants to do. In this respect, Shug advises her, "You got to get man off your eyeball, before you can see anything at all. Man corrupts everything," (179).

It can also be stated that the notion of remorse is another factor that both authors tackled to, as an avenue for a real identity. Cognitive deconstruction has been experienced and

manifested in Bigger's relationships when he says "I wasn't in love with Bessie...I don't reckon I was ever in love with nobody...You had to have a girl, so I had Bessie" (Wright. Native, 352). Bigger cannot hate or love. His attitude towards his girlfriend does not involve understanding nor human connection, but rather as "one object observing and interacting with another "(Gee,15). This is the same with Mr.____ who does not consider Celie as a human being and he treats her like an object. Celie also regrets her weakness, and when she discovers that Mr.____ was hiding Nettie's letters she wonders how God allows this. She regrets that she was writing to God alone to tell him about her agonies. Remorse leads her to start a new life, to engage in a new society, and seek a new identity. In Letter 73, Celie addresses Nettie: "I don't write to God no more. I write to you" (Walker. The Color,192)

Remorse is another venue for searching self-identity. Bigger does not see himself as an independent human, and this is why he fails to understand that his behaviors have considerable consequences. He never thinks about the effects of his decisions. In addition, he is totally unaware of Bessie's sadness or cheerfulness. Rather, it leads him to remorse , regret and, then passionate understanding of others. This is just the case with Mr.____, who finally regrets his behaviors toward Celie and becomes her friend and collaborator. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, the Psychologist, assures that "Remorse stems from a potential for empathy," indicating that "Remorse is... concerned with the other [rather than] ... the self". (21).

Remorse creates the primary positive relation for Bigger because it imposes upon him sharing the pain of others and link it to his own.(Gee,18). The outcome of this remorse is "a reciprocal emotional process...occurs between

two people... demonstrating that they are part of the human universe”(Madikizela , 26). Bigger’s remorse for his violence generates some positive relations which eventually reverse his objectification and identifies him as a human. In the final parts of the novel, Bigger finds peace through exploring his new human identity, though this is not enough to save him from death.

When Max leaves Bigger for the last time, Max’s eyes are "full of terror" but Bigger says to himself "all right" "what I killed for, I am...what I killed for must’ve been good" (Wright. *Native*, 429). This statement shows that Bigger has a progress, but he is also unable to reach a complete understanding of what it means to be a human being. He feels responsible for his violence, which he describes as a "good" thing that happens to him.

Bigger now feels like a real human who can make independent decisions. He develops a new self-consciousness that he does not have before But his perception of his new identity is not complete. He wants to live to understand and to test his new identity; "He felt he wanted to live now...in order to find out...to feel it more deeply...But there was no way now. It was too late” (363).

Bigger goes through a series of events and acts to understand how he experiences his new identity, but he is unable to do this now.

In addition to the several tools discussed above, one more feature that is used by Walker and Wright to convey the search for self-attainment theme is a state of blindness. Lack of a sense of identity in *Native Son's* society comes from the fact that "the blacks are bred to react, observe and obey"(Gee,16). Afro-Americans can gain little power, and this power does not come from following personal goals or rejecting social orders, but rather comes from refusing

dreams and rebelling against imposed limitations. Blindness is working as a shield for the blacks from the horror of the whites' dehumanization. Here Gus mentions self-imposed blindness saying that "Aw, ain't no use feeling that way about it. It don't help none... You'll go nuts... You think too much" (Wright. *Native*, 20). Consequently, Gus chooses to be blind, and he advises Bigger not to think and to be blind in order not to be crazy. Blindness is spread among Bigger's friends and family members, so Bigger becomes ashamed.

Bigger does not agree to a personality-less than human: "he needed but could never have unless he laid his head upon a pillow of humility and gave up his hope of living in the world. And he would never do that" (254).

On the other hand, Celie also chooses to be blind because she is ashamed to tell anyone about her step-father's abuse of her "You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (Walker. *The Color*,1). But later her family and friends help her to realize the truth about the world and not to be blind anymore. She starts a new job and she develops a new self-awareness and a new identity. Walker is just like her protagonist. She transcends her invisibility not only by the means of writing itself but also by perceiving a new color besides black and white which is the same way about social injustice. Nevertheless, Bigger's surrounding society advises him to be blind and not to feel or even try to see the truth. Therefore, it is the society that gives us our identity and helps us to see its importance and overcome any susceptible problems.

Mimicry is also a significant device used by the two authors to emphasize the theme of self-attainment. It means "the imitation of the dress, manners, and language of the dominant culture by the oppressed one". (Bhabha, 85). Even though Bigger refuses to mime any of the white's behaviors

because he hates these practices, he is forced to abandon his own language and way of speech when he was working for the Dalton's. He does not use his Negro words "Yessuh", "Nawsuh", and "Goddamn" for example because he has to speak to them in their own way. And this is a sign linked to the supremacy of the white culture. Walker also refers to the attitudes toward the white culture domination. She speaks about the domination of the white culture over the black fragmented one.

When she leaves her house and liberates herself Celie changes her clothes style and starts to wear like a white woman. She starts a new job by making and selling trousers. All these factors are just signs of mimicking the style of the white American women. By finding her own way of living, Celie starts to love everything around her. She changes herself, her feelings, the way she dresses and the way she looks. She admires Shug's character and wants to imitate her as a free female. Such a psychological and physical development gives her a new identity. This absolutely fits the mimicry technique of the post-colonial theory, and this is what Bigger refuses to do. The cultural changing and the miming of the surrounding environment are obvious in the Afro-American behaviors.

Although it is noticeable that those similar factors were shared by the two authors, yet they remain different in certain respects regarding search for self-identity. Walker highlights the role of women. For example, Walker depicts Celie's agonies using some feminist technique which aims at fighting the marginalized women and male domination in both the white and the black societies. "Walker never mentions her protagonist's name until the seventh letter. She wants to deepen the impression of depersonalization" (Jørgensen, 40).

Walker explains the theme of feminism in her novel through Shug's speech, when she later tells Celie: "You have to get man of your eyeball, before you can see anything at all" (Walker. *The Color*,123). Walker's main point in this novel is the survival of all the people whatever their abilities are. Walker transforms Celie's letters into a source of information about the facts and attitudes towards women's lives. Through her letters, Celie has resisted victimization by using the pen and uses her own language. She is no longer an unwilling victim, but a heroine with significant prerogatives of choice and action. Walker ends her novel happily. With a female sphere, black women share similar experiences and develop strategies against continued female oppression.

Finally, there are many common thoughts in the two novels; man controlled by the social system, man vs. institution, crime, family problems, and class issues. All these thematic threads shape the common life problems at that time. The novels were written during the Post-colonialism era to address such experiences of citizens as migration ,slavery, resistance, suppression, indifference, gender, and race discrimination. Equally, Wright and Walker in their two novels investigate the theme of power, conflict, and relationships between the colonizer and the colonized or the executioner and the victim in terms of the relationships between masters and slaves. Wright and Walker dedicate themselves to the construction of identity . This is related to the Afro-American history and literature which show how oppressed people create their special world and culture and how they re-make their self-Identity.

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