



“ELETHIA” AND “A SUDDEN TRIP HOME IN SPRING”:

ALICE WALKER’S WOMANIST RESPONSE

TO THE ISSUES OF BLACK PEOPLE*

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Abstract

*Alice Walker (1944-) has brought a new dimension to black feminism with her theory of womanism, which she explains in *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden* (1983). She aims at achieving universality by extending her struggle to all people around the world, regardless of race, gender, and ethnical differences. According to Walker, it requires people to acknowledge their history, matrilineal descent, and black and non-black authors' works inspiring them to struggle. She represents her womanist understanding in “Elethia” and “A Sudden Trip Home in Spring” in her collection entitled *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981). The title character of “Elethia” and Sarah in “A Sudden Trip Home in Spring” face their problems and realize how to struggle against them. Thus, analyzing Walker's selected stories, the study indicates that she presents a womanist way out for black people in the racist society through Elethia and Sarah.*

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“ELETHIA” VE “İLKBAHAR’DA EVE ANİ YOLCULUK”: ALİCE WALKER’IN SİYAHİLERİN SORUNLARINA KADINCI CEVABI

Öz

Alice Walker *Annelerimizin Bahçesinin Arayışında* (1983) adlı eserinde açıkladığı kadıncılık kuramıyla siyah feminizme yeni bir boyut getirmiştir. Amacı; ırk, toplumsal cinsiyet ve etnik farklılıklara bakmaksızın mücadelesinde dünyadaki tüm insanları kapsayarak evrenselliğe erişmektir. Bunun için, Walker’a göre, insanların tarihini, ana soyunu ve onlara mücadele etmeleri için ilham veren siyahi ve siyahi olmayan yazarların eserlerini tanımaları gerekir. Walker, *Kadının Hası Kolay Ezilmez* (1981) başlıklı eserindeki “Elethia” ve “İlkbahar’da Eve Ani Yolculuk” başlıklı iki öyküsünde kadıncı anlayışını temsil etmektedir. Walker’ın kadın sorunlarına ilişkin evrimleşen duruşunu yansıttığı için adı geçen öyküler çalışmada incelenmektedir. “Elethia” ’nın başlık karakteri ve “İlkbahar’da Eve Ani Yolculuk” öyküsündeki Sarah sorunlarıyla yüzleşirler ve onlarla nasıl savaşabileceklerini anlarlar. Böylece, çalışma, Walker’ın seçilen öykülerini inceleyerek, yazanın Elethia ve Sarah adlı karakterleriyle ırklı toplumda siyahilere kadıncı bir çıkar yol sunduğunu göstermektedir.

Keywords: Alice Walker, Siyah Feminizm, Kadıncılık, Elethia, Sarah, “Elethia”, “İlkbahar’da Eve Ani Yolculuk”.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many women of color were subsided into silence from the emergence of feminist activists in America in the late 1800s to the birth of black feminism in the late 1900s. Fuelled by the Civil Rights era (1954-1968), women’s struggle to get out of the boundaries of the patriarchy imprisoning them to their home was embodied by new and different activists of feminism such as Radical, Marxist, Liberal, and Lesbian feminisms and organizations such as the Women’s Liberation Movement. However, they were mainly concerned with the rights of

white and middle-class women rather than all women regardless of their classes, genders and races. As Smith implies, such a kind of theory or practice, devoid of complete freedom and emancipation does not refer to feminism, but “merely female self-aggrandizement” (1982: 49).

In addition to the feminist movements, the Black Liberation Movement, aiming for liberation of all black people, was also “a predominantly masculinist” movement (Eaton, 2008: 1). Black men’s gendered statements were used to be accepted without criticism in the Black Liberation Movement. As noted by bell hooks¹, “[t]o speak against the grain was to risk punishment. One’s speech might be interrupted or one might be subjected to humiliating verbal abuse” (1992: 45). When they made choices going against the prevailing societal conception of black woman’s obligations, they were labeled as ‘crazy’. hooks claims: “Fear of being seen as insane may be a major factor in keeping black women from expressing their most radical selves. Just recently when I spoke against the organizers told folks I was ‘crazy’ ” (1992: 54). It is clear in these words that many black men in the movement insisted on the inequality of black men and black women. Evidently, the black women in the movement felt sexually discriminated. Therefore, both the racial discrimination of the Women’s Liberation Movement and the sexual discrimination of the Black Liberation Movement against women hindered black women from crying out for their own rights.

Encountering black men’s gender discrimination and white women’s racism, some black women, who broke their silences against injustices, formed black feminism to deal with their problems in the leadership of Barbara Smith (1946-) by getting support from Black Liberation and Women Liberation Movements of

¹ bell hooks uses consciously the initials of her name and surname in minuscules to state her ideological stance against all kinds of authorities.

the 1960s and as a reaction to them in 1973. Since then, black feminism has become a way for black females to look for their place in society dominated by white people addressing the issues which are pertaining to the everyday lives of black women and women of color, but ignored by the Feminist Movements and Black Movements.

2. FEMINISM AND/VERSUS ALICE WALKER’S THEORY OF WOMANISM

An African-American author Alice Walker (1944-) who is regarded as one of the milestones in Black Feminist Movement also observed that neither The Women’s Liberation Movement nor Black Feminism was enough for all women to stand upon their feet in the racist and sexist society. As observed by Lorde, “Black Feminism is not White Feminism in Black Face” (1984: 60, capitalization original), and the black feminists appealed just to women of color excluding white women.

Walker thought that second-wave feminism could not achieve cooperation among all women including young, queer and non-white ones. During the 1980s and 1990s, third-wave feminism was initiated mostly by women of color as an essential differentiation from the second-wave feminism. Since then, the categories for which women struggled have been broadened. They have dealt with various issues from national health care, child care, sexuality, sexual self-esteem, intergenerational problems, balancing family and work to gender justice. With her later changing stance among feminist theory, from black feminism to a universalist perspective, Walker is also included in this category, as a third-wave feminist.

Within her work, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens* (1983), Walker constructed her theory of womanism by affirming her reputation as a womanist on theoretical grounds. She has provided a new dimension for both feminism and

the Civil Rights movement with her theory of womanism. Her inclusion of struggle extended to all people around the world, and her purpose was to achieve universality regardless of race, color, gender or any ethnical differences with her theory of womanism. Walker first used the term “womanist” in her short story “Coming Apart” which she wrote in 1979. She gives its different definitions at the beginning of *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens* as follows:

1. From womanish. (Opp. of “girlish,” i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “you acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. Serious.
2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally a universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige and black?” Ans. “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.”
3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. (Walker, 1983: xi-xii)

As may be inferred from Walker’s four-point definition, womanism may be understood as the intersection of race and gender for the sake of being ‘one’ even though the word ‘womanist’ derives from “the black folk expression used by black mothers in relating to their daughter or other female children” (Plant, 2017: 113). As Plant argues, the first three definitions explicate a womanist’s behavioral dimension and engagement with spirituality and struggle (2017: 114). Furthermore, the fourth point suggests that Walker regards womanism as the elaboration of feminism extending its scope to all women loving one another, men, nature and art. In this aspect, Walker may be regarded as “a writer working within the recuperative, archaeological tradition of feminist criticism” (Kaplan, 1996: 125); for instance, she notes that the prominent English feminist author Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) “has saved so many of life” (1983: 14) through particularly her work *A Room of One’s Own*, in which she notes her observation and research about gender discrimination between men and women in society. Woolf’s influence on Walker’s essays and womanism is obvious, as Plant asserts (2017: 108). In this aspect, “reading Walker with Woolf shows how ‘books continue each other’ in a literary tradition that is neither entirely male and Eurocentric nor exclusively female or African American” (Lauret, 2000: 28-29). It may be claimed that the term “womanism” is both an alternative to and an expansion of the term ‘feminism’. Moreover, it is obvious that Walker emphasizes the solidarity of humanity. She universalizes all individual struggles by reconceptualizing all people as ‘people of color’. Therefore, ‘womanism’ does not need to be prefaced by the word ‘black’.

The key terms of womanist theory which are also apparent in Walker’s writings are heritage, motherhood, and acknowledgment of both black and white writers. In Walker’s womanist understanding, a womanist achieves universality

all over the world by following these principles and eradicating the controversial effects of gender and race.

A womanist approach requires people to acknowledge their heritage and history which facilitates them to understand the modern world and sustain their heritage through next generations; for example, Walker acknowledges even her great-great-great-great-grandmother who was a slave for strengthening her activism through her “attitude and courage” (Lauret, 2000: 194). She gets inspired by her ancestors who have enough courage to face her past bitterness. Her activist spirit grows with the strength of this inspiration. The most important factor in her success is that she has not lost her sense of rootedness in the South and her personal consciousness as a black and a woman. Thus, Walker’s interest of her past confirms Davis’s claim that “[i]t is environment that is not without a history of pain but it nonetheless connects generations of black to one another to a wholeness of self and to the old unalterable roots” (1994: 113). She states: “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” (O’Brien, 1973: 192). As a writer, she has the duty of revealing the injustices done to her race and raising her voice against them in her writings. She desires to transfer the strength she took from her ancestors to young black women.

The second point which is given significance in womanism is matrilineage as may be sensed from Walker’s knowledge of even her great-great-great-great-grandmother. In womanist understanding, mother-child relationships fortify the bond among generations. Having a daughter called Rebecca, Walker always hopes that her metaphorical motherhood will help overcome her oppression and she generalizes this relief for all generations: “We are together, my child

and I. Mother and child, yes, but *sisters* really, against whatever denies us all that we are” (Walker, 1988: 362). Motherhood, sisterhood and all other kinds of spirituality among women provide them with enough motivation that is necessary to combat oppression. She always respects all black mothers who “were not saints, but Artists; driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release” (Walker, 1983: 233).

The last tenet in the theory of womanism is reading both black and white authors who write about their struggles and sufferings. Walker is inspired by the courage, endurance, and patience they have exposed throughout history. As noted by McMillan, in the womanist understanding, black women’s literary heritage facilitates a woman to find the answers to all questions about her past (2007: 179). Particularly, the slave narratives of black ancestors foster her belief in escaping for badly needed freedom for the soul, because this old slave generation “forbidden by law to read or write, kept alive the creative spirit among their people and passed on to their daughters that ‘living creativity’, the ‘notion of song’” (Sadoff, 1990: 201). In this regard, reading these narratives enables black women to benefit from that creativity.

3. A WOMANIST APPROACH TO WALKER’S ‘ELETHIA’ AND ‘A SUDDEN TRIP HOME IN SPRING’

Walker is the author of the renowned novel *The Color Purple* (1982), which brought her both the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1983. The novel represents a collection of all the themes with which Walker deals in her previous works. She depicts the harsh life in her works reflecting her reaction to persecutions against blacks since they landed in America. She says “growing up in the south I have a very keen sense of injustice a very prompt response to it”

(Brewer, 1981: 14). Therefore, it may be claimed that her fiction expresses the outrage that she feels about the injustices in American society.

You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down (1981) is one of Walker's short story collections, reflecting her changing attitudes about black woman phenomenon. Unlike her another short story collection *In Love and Trouble* (1973) in which she portrays mostly passive female characters, suppressed by racial and gender discrimination in the society they live in, it covers activist black women undergoing an awakening of national and humanist consciousness and rebelling against the oppression in action or thought. She aims to present a womanist response to some black feminist issues through this collection. The protagonists in *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* are mostly educated and aware or become aware of the ways of struggle consciously. They face their problems and look for solutions to them. Indeed, not all protagonists are ideal characters. Although some of them fail, Walker seeks to point to the reader how to stand against discrimination in society and to achieve unity and solidarity. In womanist understanding, the way of being able to reach the point of universality goes through seeking and applying solutions. The title character of Elethia and Sarah in 'A Sudden Trip Home in Spring' in the collection represent the idealized characters, who break and go over the bonds reconciling with their native culture, history, and ancestors to be able to combat against discrimination, not only against themselves but also all women and black people. The characters decide to follow the path of becoming a unity with the world. They portray Walker's authorial mission of raising the consciousness of equality asserting her notion that "everything has equal rights because existence itself is equal" (1988: 147).

'Elethia' revolves around the title character that raises her voice against racism in Walker's hometown of Eatonton, Georgia. She works in a restaurant called

‘Old Uncle Albert’s’ (Walker, 1981: 27). It is only for white customers although black people, especially black women, work in the kitchen. It features in its window a dummy black man called ‘Uncle Albert’ that is “an elderly, kindly, cottony-haired darkie, seated in a rocking chair” (Walker, 1981: 31). The dummy decorates the window of the restaurant and draws attention especially with his teeth. Elethia discovers that his intense smile with its shining false teeth belies the brutality of the life that he led as a slave: “All them teeth. Hell, all Albert’s teeth was knocked out before he was grown” and his pose of willing servitude belies the fact that he refused ever to work in the big house and that he “always broke up stuff” (Walker, 1981: 30). Here, Elethia is aware that the reality is not as it looks; as a former slave he has missing teeth because he has been beaten, and he is a rebel, not a submissive slave. The message here seems that the white men are successful in subjugating a rebellious black man, even after the Emancipation following the example of their “self-righteous” Anglo-Saxon ancestors, who enslaved Africa and America in the first place (Baysal, 2013: 1). This centuries-long oppressive practice explains why and how Uncle Albert felt obliged to be subservient to white people. His escape from his servitude is told to be punished by knocking his teeth out. Elethia sees that “[h]e was not a dummy; he was stuffed. Like a bird, like a moose’s head, like a giant bass” (Walker, 1981: 28). That it was stuffed means that he was once alive and he was killed and then given an artificial outlook. It was shaped according to how the white man wants to see it. She learns about Uncle Albert from an old man who tells her: “The boss man kept them so ignorant of the law, you understand. So he was a mad so an’-so when he found out. They used to beat him severe trying to make him forget the past and grin and act like a nigger” (Walker, 1981: 29-30). Through Elethia, Walker frees the black man with her fictional counterpart of the Uncle Albert dummy which is the figure of Albert Porter who was a black slave, whom only old people can remember. Thus, Elethia illuminates the

“special pride in his [Albert’s] Blackness” underneath his poor and servile image because she admires his endurance against frightful injustices to which he was exposed (Pratt, 2007: 8). One night, Elethia and her friends steal Uncle Albert and burn him in the garden of their high school. After burning the dummy, they keep his ashes. “And for each of them what they knew and their reaction to what they knew was profound” (Walker, 1981: 29). She joins the army with her friends and they learn “skills that would get them through more than a plate glass window” (Walker, 1981: 30). Their behavior inspires their other black friends to discover other Uncle Alberts: “Everywhere she looked there was an Uncle Albert (and many Aunt Albertas, it goes without saying)” (Walker, 1981: 30). After going to college, they become aware that learning something useful in life is a must for the survival of blacks.

Although this act of burning seems to be simple, it is a significant rebellion against racism and classism to which black people were subjected. The raising voice belongs to a black girl exploited in her working place by white bosses. However, she breaks not only her own silence but also Uncle Albert’s and all other exploited and discriminated black people’s silences. She rebels against racial discrimination which is reinforced with classism leading to the imbricated oppression over black people. In this aspect, she “save”s Uncle Albert from oppression. Walker attributes the verb “to save” in multiple womanist meanings: to preserve an individual or his/her past through art, to provide an individual with knowledge about his/her past to guarantee the continuation of the national ethos, and to liberate an individual from suppressive violence (Smith, 2007: 70-71). Therefore, in Walker’s words, “to be saved” denotes to have obtained “unself-conscious sense of collective oneness; that naturalness, that (even when anguished) grace” (1983: 264). The old man, telling Elethia about Uncle Albert, “save”s her in the second meaning; providing the knowledge of Uncle Albert’s experience and paving the way for her self-

realization about her past and ensuring the continuity of black people’s history. As Plant notes, knowledge is the mere way to truth and freedom (2017: 214). The knowledge of the past frees her. In this sense, Elethia is “saved” by attaining the national consciousness. She saves Uncle Albert from oppression by liberating the dummy, which represents black people’s history. Thus, her keeping the ashes of the dummy indicates her attempt to “save” both Uncle Albert’s history and the whole black history from being lost and preserve the Black pride and dignity.

It may be concluded that by means of this kind of stories such as ‘Elethia’ depicting rebellious black people, Walker “aims to rid the world of all false stereotypical images of blacks especially men to recover the past rectify its misrepresentations and preserve the truth for future generations” (Davis, 1994: 109). She draws attention to the fact that they suffered and were oppressed in their past to enlighten next generations. Inspiring them through Elethia, the author hopes them to break silences in which their ancestors were forced to be drowned. Drawing attention to the keys of womanism, knowledge of one’s history and ancestral heritage to construct further linkages among generations, Davis notes: “Walker’s individual Elethias understand than breaches may have occurred between succeeding generations but that progress in the present and toward the future depends upon reconstruction of the bridges” (1994: 109-110).

The other selected story entitled ‘A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring’, also portrays another Elethia through Sarah, who is “saved” with the awakening of her consciousness and her sense of responsibility for her nation and who paves the way to establish the bond between the past and the future. The story may be taken as a response to Walker’s widely-read story ‘Everyday Use’ in *In Love and Trouble*. ‘Everyday Use’ highlights the significance of matrilineage and

ancestral lineage in combat with patriarchy and racism. It is taken as a way of passing on struggle consciousness to the next generations. To do this, the story is engaged with the discrepancy of two sisters Maggie, who abides by her matrilineage and Dee, who ignores and rejects it. The educated girl, Dee, seems to have lost her bond to her own family, race, and antecedents. However, the protagonist in 'A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring' Sarah stands out as Dee's antithesis even though they both are educated.

In these stories, visiting home is used as a significant motif, according to McMillan, symbolizing the bond to the roots and national ethos of an individual (2007: 179). Sarah's attitude is different from Dee's in their returning home. Sarah remembers her responsibilities for her nation and ancestors at her father's funeral and feels she must not avoid the reality of being black and must feel dignified about it, not shameful. The daughter's grief at her father's death is contrasted with her anger caused by her father's sufferings by his blackness, which she avoids to confront; for instance, in her boarding school in New York, she paints human figures. However, she is unable to paint portraits of black men because she cannot stand witnessing the sense of the defeat in their faces, "the defeat of black forever defined by white" (Walker, 1981: 135). The narrator says:

She found black men impossible to draw or to paint; she could not bear to trace defeat onto blank pages. Her women figures were matronly, massive of arm, with a weary victory showing in their eyes. Surrounded by Sarah's drawings was a red SNCC² poster of a man holding a small girl whose face nestled in his shoulder. Sarah often felt she was the little girl whose face no one could see. (Walker, 1981: 126)

² SNCC is the abbreviation of "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee", founded in America in 1960 as a nonviolent organization against racist facilities at schools.

It may be claimed that Sarah’s attempt to conceal the suffering on the picture is a way of rejecting her past. In contrast, in womanist understanding, the artist is expected to collect and protect the past through art to convey it to the next generations (Walker, 1983: 263). Sarah seems to attain this consciousness at the end of the story. Until that point, she is dismissive about her roots.

Like Uncle Albert and the title character in ‘Elethia’, Sarah also occupies a lower class than her roommate at the dormitory, a white American named ‘Pam’. Pam’s father is one of the richest men in the world, having a private ship, plane, and train. He has such a wealth that Sarah is told not even to comprehend (Walker, 1981: 127). However, Pam seems to be modest and humanist helping poor people and admiring Sarah’s body more than Sarah does. In a womanist manner which is expressed in Walker’s second definition of ‘womanist’ as loving all women sexually/nonsexually, their different cultures and traditions treating them as “[n]ot a separatist” but “a universalist” (1983: xi), she likes her female black friend’s body and regards her difference among white people as “ ‘a poppy in a field of winter roses’ ” (Walker, 1981: 127).

Unlike Pam who is more interested in Sarah’s roots than Sarah herself, Sarah seems to refuse her native land and history at first. She does not want to return to Georgia by leaving New York even though she remembers her grandfather telling the South is the best place to live on the earth and swearing that he expects to die no more than a few miles away from where he was born. It seems that her unwillingness derives from her loss of her mother. Perhaps she may also blame her father for the death of her mother. Although she does not want to go back to her hometown even for her father’s funeral, later she feels she must do it as her responsibility. This may be deduced from her telling Pam about the Southern black author Richard Wright, who is left with his mother by his father. His father has a relationship with another woman and never cares

about his family. Years later, Wright who marries a white woman and becomes a popular artist, visited his father now starving. He feels he has to pay his debt to his father as his son. Inspired by Richard Wright, Sarah thinks that she also must pay her debt to her father, by attending his funeral and fight for her future and her race just like her ancestors. The author depicts the role of narratives in raising an individual's awareness linking her/his present with the past and the future. The change in Sarah is observed in her realization that "before she became a poppy she was a native Georgian sunflower, but still had not spoken the language they [she and her father] both knew. Not to him" (Walker, 1981: 131). She realizes that the lack of communication with her father for years also results from her rejecting her past.

The home trip takes Sarah to her ancestors, matrilineage by reminding her of her history and responsibilities. Her grandmother says to her that children provide an individual with the motivation "to handle the world" (Walker, 1981: 133) implying the significance of new generations in maintaining one's roots in history not to be 'lost'. Thus, she understands that her father's frequent departs for work derived from his love; love of his children and family. Furthermore, she is impressed by her grandfather's standing firmly despite his grief at the funeral. The defeat she has been afraid to see in his face is absent now: "He stood like a rock, outwardly calm, the comfort and support of the Davis family. The family alone defined him, and he was not about to let them down" (Walker, 1981: 135). Moreover, she feels proud of him when he says to her to carve his existence and history in art: "[I]f you want to make me, make me up in stone" (Walker, 1981: 135). At that time, she feels as if "*his face turned proud and brownly against the light*" (Walker, 1981: 135, italics in original). This sight reminds her of her responsibility for her race; she realizes that she owes her presence as the only black at the Northern college to her precedents that struggled for their next generation. " 'One day I will paint you, Grandpa...Just as

you stand here now, with just’ – she moved closer and touched his face with her hand” (Walker, 1981: 135).

Just like Elethia, who is moved, in Walker’s words, ‘saved’ by Uncle Albert, Sarah is awakened by her grandfather. To repay her debt to her ancestors, she decides to get over the degrading effects of racism in her college by succeeding in her education, rather than abandoning it. After returning to college, she thinks: “...*I am a woman in the world. I have buried my father, and shall soon know how to make my grandpa up in a stone*” (Walker, 1981: 137, italics in original). Thus, the political and personal attempts are hand in hand in the story. The grandfather’s posture with gravity and endurance to grief and death of a son inspires her to be strong in life, both as a black and as a woman. She becomes determined to draw the people of her race with the image of strength, rather than with the effect of internalized failure on their faces.

It may be claimed that neither Uncle Albert in ‘Elethia’ nor Sarah’s grandfather in ‘A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring’ are the individual victims of the injustices in the society they live in, but representatives of all black people who are collectively oppressed in the society where discrimination functions systemically. Although the activists of the new generation are female in the stories, the older ones are male. This indicates, as Pratt notes, the interrelatedness of black men and women, thus that they are not either black man’s story or black woman’s story but the story of the struggle to attain unity and whole humanity (2007: 17).

To sum up, ‘A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring’ is one of Walker’s narratives, depicting “the journey over geographic space” as “a metaphor for personal growth and in a larger sense, historical transformation” (Willis, 1989: 87). It makes use of Sarah’s return home as a metaphor representing her remembering her spiritual debt for her ancestors regardless of their genders for

integrated generations. Thus, presenting the two dimensions of the ancestral lineage, Walker focuses on the importance of one's maintaining her bonds to her roots.

4. CONCLUSION

Through 'Elethia' and 'A Sudden Trip Home in Spring', Walker reflects the contradictions of black people, who are torn between their history and their responsibility for their nation and whole humanity. She presents two model womanist protagonists, who break the rules, taboos, stereotypes and all borders drawn for black people, as they make radical decisions and stand up to apply them in their lives. Elethia is illuminated by the miserable life of old Albert and decides to fight against the system which has discriminated her and her ancestors in racial and gender terms. Similarly, Sarah realizes the beauty of her blackness through her white roommate and her duty towards her ancestors and the future of her race by getting inspiration from the black author Richard Wright's life story and her grandfather at her father's funeral. They both follow the path of self-realization by doing the things that cannot be expected from them. Both of them are womanist models for people, deciding to stand against discriminations all over the world by 'saving' both themselves and their history from being lost. Therefore, the characters also represent Walker's understanding of being a 'womanist' who stands upon her feet firmly by taking inspiration from her ancestors and conveying it to the next generation and becomes the voice of change and progress for the sake of fraternity in the world.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş

Özgürlükle elde edilen mutluluğun yeri olduğu düşünülen Amerika Birleşik Devletleri çeşitli ırk, köken ve kültürden milyonlarca insana ev sahipliği yapmıştır. Amerikan tarihinin görünen yüzünün arkasında Afro-Amerikalıların, özellikle de siyahi kadınların, özgürlük savaşı bulunmaktadır. Afro-Amerikan tarihi, kölelikten başlayarak, ırkçı ve cinsiyetçi Amerika'da zenci kadınların hak ve daha fazla özgürlük edinmek için verdikleri bir dizi savaşıma tanıklık etmiştir. 1960'lı yıllara kadar sesini duyurmaktan uzak, ırkçı ve cinsiyetçi toplumda yaşamını güçlükle sürdüren siyahi kadınlar, Siyah Özgürlük ve Kadın Özgürlük Hareketleriyle artık haklarını arayabileceklerini sanmıştır. Fakat Siyah Özgürlük Hareketi'nde kadın oldukları için, Kadın Özgürlük Hareketi'nde ise siyahi oldukları için arka planda kalmışlardır. 1973'te Barbara Smith tarafından oluşturulan Siyah Feminizm, siyahi kadınların ırksal ve cinsel kimliklerine attıkları bir tür temel haline gelmiştir.

Feminizm ve Alice Walker'ın Kadıncılık Kuramı

Siyah Feminizmi sadece siyahi kadınlara yönelik olduğu için yeterli bulmayan Walker, 1960'lı yılların Siyah Özgürlük ve Kadın Özgürlük Hareketlerinden hem destek alarak hem de onlara tepki olarak, Siyah Feminizm'i de geliştirerek, her ırktan insanı kucaklayan bir kavram olarak 'Kadıncılık' kuramını öne sürmüştür. Dünya çapında insanlar arasında bir beraberlik oluşturmak için bu kuramın kadın-erkek, beyaz-siyah, tüm insanlar tarafından benimsenmesi gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. *Kadıncı* olmasının yanı sıra, Walker, Afro-Amerikan toplumu üzerinde büyük etkisi olan çağdaş Afro-Amerikan kadın yazarlar arasında önde gelen seslerden biri olarak da durmaktadır. Walker, toplumsal cinsiyet ve ırkı birbirine kenetlenmiş yapılar olarak algılar ve zenci kadının sorunlarının bu iki yapıdan kaynaklandığını vurgular. Çalışma, Walker'ı önce Siyah Feminist olarak, sonra tüm kadınlar için yeni, güçlü bir bilinç ve bakış açısı oluşturan *Kadıncılığı* yaşayan bir figür ve destekçi olarak tanımlamaktadır. Öncelikle ataerkil baskısı altındaki siyahi kadınların yaşamının huzuru ile ilgilenen Walker, kadıncılık kuramının temeline belli ilkeleri koyar. Bunlardan en önemlisi, Walker'a göre, kişinin kendi tarihini bilmesi, atalarını tanımasıdır. Çünkü, Walker, kendi geçmişini bilmeyen bir kişinin kendi milli kimliğini düzgün oluşturamayacağını ve tarih boyunca da ezilmeye mahkûm kalacağını düşünür. İkincisi ise anne ve çocuk arasındaki bağıdır. Yapısal açıdan sağlıklı bir toplumun nesliler boyu iyi bir anne-çocuk ilişkisiyle başarılı olabileceğinin vurgusunu yapan Walker, hemen hemen tüm eserlerinde bu noktaya değinir. Kadıncılıktaki üçüncü önemli nokta ise siyahi ve siyahi olmayan tüm yazarların eserlerinden okumalar yapmaktır. Walker'a göre, bir siyahinin siyahi olmayan yazarların siyahiler hakkında

yazdıklarını bilmesi, kendi milleti hakkındaki yanılsamaları ya da saptırmaları görmesi ve bunları düzeltip doğrusunu göstermek için mücadele etmesi açısından önem taşır. Ayrıca, Walker’a göre çoğu beyaz kadının cinsiyetçilik anlamında çektiğinin, siyahi kadınların çektiğinden pek bir farkı yoktur. Irkından dolayı, siyahi kadın yüzyıllardır beyaz kadından daha çok çekmiştir. Erkeklerle düşman olunmaması gerektiğinin altını çizen Walker, erkekleri cinsiyetçiliğe karşı bilinçlendirme konusunda da kadınlara büyük görev düştüğünü belirtir. Bu nedenle, Walker kadıncılık kimliğiyle beyaz-siyah fark etmeden tüm kadınları ve erkekleri tek bir çatı altında birleştirme amacını taşır.

Walker’ın ‘Elethia’ ve ‘İlkbahar’da Eve Ani Yolculuk’ Öykülerine Kadıncı Bir Yaklaşım

Walker, siyahi kadınların ırkçı ve cinsiyetçi toplumdaki sıkıntılarını ele almıştır. 1985 yılında yazdığı *Renklerden Moru* adlı romanıyla Pulitzer Ödülü alan ünlü yazar, atalarından aldığı ilhamı gelecek nesillere aktarmayı amaç edinmiştir. Çalışma için kadıncılık kuramıyla incelenmek üzere ‘Elethia’ ve ‘İlkbahar’da Eve Ani Yolculuk’ başlıklı iki öykü seçilmiştir. Bu iki öykü, Walker’ın on dört öyküsünden oluşan *Kadının Hası Kolay Ezilmez* (1981) adlı öykü kitabından alınmıştır. Bu kitap, Walker’ın siyahi kadın sorunsalıyla ilgili olarak evrilen düşüncelerini yansıttığı için seçilmiştir. Yazımı kadıncılık kuramını geliştirdiği yıllara denk geldiği için bu kitaptaki öyküler eğitimi ve bilinçli kadınların karşılaştıkları güçlülere karşı dik duruşlarını konu edinir. Kadıncılık ve Walker’ın bu bağlamda savunduğu düşünceleri, seçilen öykülerin temel taşı oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma, bu düşüncelerin seçilen öykülerdeki yansımalarını ortaya çıkarır.

‘Elethia’, sadece beyaz müşterilerin girebildiği, mutfağında ise çoğunlukla siyahi kadınların çalıştığı bir lokantada çalışan siyahi bir genç kızın başından geçen olayı anlatır. Başlık kahramanı olan Elethia’nın dikkatini, lokantanın kapısında sürekli duran ‘Yaşlı Albert Amca’ adındaki siyahi bir manken çeker. Dişleri yapay görünümlü bu siyahi adamın bir öyküsü vardır. Yaşlı bir adam, Albert’ın geçmişte beyaz bir adamın köleliğini yaptığını ve sürekli dövüldüğünü söyler. Elethia, zavallı Albert’ın öldükten sonra bile manken olarak hala beyazların hizmetlisi olduğunu düşünür ve bu fikir onu çok rahatsız eder. Bir gece okul arkadaşlarıyla Yaşlı Albert mankenini çalarak lisenin bahçesinde yakıp küllerini saklar. Elethia, siyahi geçmişine sahip çıkan, atalarına sadık siyahi bir genç örneğidir. Yaptığı eylem basit görünse de, siyahilerin maruz kaldığı ırkçılığa karşı ciddi bir isyandır. Yaptığı hareketle, sadece kendi sesini değil, ölmüş olsa da Yaşlı Albert’ın sesini de duyurmuştur. Dolayısıyla, Elethia karakteriyle, yazar gelecek nesillere atalarının mahkûm edildiği sessizliği bozmaları için ilham vermektedir.

Walker'ın çalışmadaki 'İlkbahar'da Eve Ani Yolculuk' başlıklı diğer öyküsü ise Sarah adındaki bir genç kız etrafında gelişir. Sarah kendi ırkının çektiği sıkıntılarla yüzleşmekten çekinmektedir. Beyaz ressamların siyahileri çoğunlukla yorgun ve hüzünlü çizdiğini fark eder ve bu onu üzer. Sarah, Georgia'da yaşayan ailesinden uzakta, New York'ta üniversite eğitimi görmektedir. Oda arkadaşı ise Pam adında, babası çok zengin bir Amerikalı beyazdır. Hem beyaz hem de zengin bir ailenin kızı olmasına rağmen, Pam'ın alçak gönüllüğü Sarah'yı etkiler. Babasının cenazesine Georgia'ya gitmek ise Sarah'ya ağır bir yükür. Çünkü annesinin ölümünden babasını sorumlu tutar ve babasıyla ilgili pek de iyi anıları yoktur. Güneyli siyahi yazar Richard Wright'ın kendisini ve annesini terk edip beyaz bir kadınla evlenen babasını yıllar sonra açlıktan ölmek üzereyken bulup ona yardım etmesinden ders alır. O da Wright gibi babasına evlatlık görevini yapmak üzere cenazeye gitmeye karar verir. Cenazede dedesinin dik duruşundan ve ona verdiği cesarettten etkilenir. Kendi ırkının geçmişinden kaçmak yerine, tıpkı ataları gibi geleceği ve ırkı için mücadele etmesi ve ayaklarının üzerinde durması gerektiği fikrini benimser.

Sonuç

Walker, 'Elethia' ve 'İlkbahar'da Eve Ani Yolculuk' öykülerindeki baş kahramanlarla, kendi tarihleriyle milliyeti ve tüm insanlık arasında kalan siyahilerin düştükleri çelişkiyi yansıtmaktadır. Yazar, bu kahramanlarla iki örnek kadıncı sunmaktadır. Elethia, yaşlı Albert'ın çileli hayatıyla aydınlanıp kendisine ve atalarına karşı ırksal bağlamda ayrımcılık yapan düzenle savaşmaya karar verir. Benzer şekilde Sarah da beyaz oda arkadaşının beğenisiyle kendi siyahiliğine olan bakış açısını değiştirir. Siyahi yazar Richard Wright'ın yaşam öyküsü gibi, babasının cenazesinde dedesinin anlattıkları da kendisine ilham verir ve atalarına ve ırkının geleceğine olan görevini anımsar. Her iki karakter de kadıncı bir kimlikle ayağa kalkar ve dünya çapında ırksal bağlamda ayrımcılık yaşayan herkese örnek olurlar. Böylece, Walker kadıncılık anlayışını bu öykülerle göstermiştir.