

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
MOHAMED KHEIDER UNIVERSITY – BISKRA
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH LITERATURE



A Stylistic Analysis of Alice Walker's *The Color and Sapphire's Push*.

Thesis submitted in candidacy for the degree of "LMD Doctorate" in the English Language

Option: Language and Literature

Submitted by

Mrs. Anouar BOUZIDI

Supervised by

Professor. Hanane SAIHI

Board of Examiners

Prof. Ahmed Chaouki HOADJLI	University of Mohamed Khider Biskra	President
Prof. Hanane SAIHI	University of Mohamed Khider Biskra	Supervisor
Dr. Abdelnacer BEN ABDERRAZEK	University of Mohamed Khider Biskra	Examiner
Dr. Chahira NASRI	University of Mohamed Khider Biskra	Examiner
Dr. Bdereddine TABBI	University of Setif 2	Examiner
Dr. Wafa NOUARI	University of Batna 2	Examiner

Academic Year 2024/2025

Dedication

I dedicate this PhD thesis to the one who kindled in me the ambition and love of learning and studying since my childhood and who boosted and helped me throughout all these years, to the most important individual in my life, my mother DALILA BARKA, whose love and unwavering support and encouragement has been the bedrock of my life and especially my academic journey. Your tough love challenged me in ways I needed. Thanks for pushing me and for believing in my potential. Thank you for 28 years of patience, love and understanding. May Allah bless your heart and soul.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to my dear family, my father Lazhar, and the most wonderful siblings in the world Hasna and Anis. And little sunshine Alaa and Sidra.

Thank you for believing in me.

I'm also thankful to my loving husband Djallal Boudjellal, your patience, and belief in me have been my guiding light through the challenges and triumphs of pursuing this PhD. To my greatest blessing and my deepest joy, my daughter WATINE whose smile lights up my world.

Finally, I am thankful to myself, for my dedication, resilience, and efforts.

Looking forward to more academic achievements.

Acknowledgments

I thank ALLAH the Almighty for the miraculous opportunities he blessed me with, and the endless prayers he granted me. ,

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Saihi Hanane, for her patience, invaluable guidance, expertise, and unwavering support throughout the course of my research. Without a doubt, this thesis would be incomplete without her presence.

I extend my sincere appreciation to Prof. Houadjli Ahmed Chaouki the head of the CFD for his encouragement and support; my gratitude extends to the members of my jury, for their insightful feedback, constructive criticism, and support.

Abstract

The present research endeavors to shed light on two seminal works in African American literature, *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker and *Push* (1996) by Sapphire. The novels' stylistic scheme, particularly in a comparative framework, received limited scholarly attention. Addressing this gap, the present research investigates how each author employs distinctive linguistic and narrative strategies to articulate similar experiences of oppression, resilience, and identity formation among African American women. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach within a critical/transformational paradigm. The analysis is guided by Leech and Short's stylistic framework, with particular attention to narrative technique, language variety, and figurative expression. As examined through close textual reading, the analysis relies on interpretive examination of selected textual passages to reveal functional stylistic patterns. The findings demonstrate that Alice Walker's stylistic identity in *The Color Purple* is shaped by the epistolary form, sustained use of African American Vernacular English, and figurative language (simile) that produces an intimate and transformational narrative voice. In contrast, Sapphire's *Push* is characterized by stream-of-consciousness narration, repetition, and vernacular language that construct a raw and unfiltered representation of lived experience. Such conclusions reflect the distinct stylistic scheme of both authors; granted that Sapphire colored her literary work with *The Color Purple*, she made certain to manifest a stylistically distinct narrative to affirm her literary identity. This study contributes to stylistic scholarship by extending its application to comparative African American fiction and offers a linguistically grounded perspective on literary influence and divergence.

Keywords: African-American Vernacular English, *Push*, Stylistic Analysis, Stylistic Framework, *The Color Purple*.

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General Introduction

Literature has consistently been a source of amusement for readers and a constructive journey for academic researchers; reading perplexing lines, thinking outside the box, living the character, and pushing toward a new outlook on the text is a pleasantly draining experience. Nonetheless, to establish a profound interpretation of a literary text, it is crucial to know the ropes of linguistics, dissecting language, and exploring its various aspects, which offers a rewarding adventure into the profundity of the text and the author's mind. The connection between literature and linguistics has given rise to the field of stylistics, a world that examines how authors use language to create meaning in literary texts. This research is an engagement with stylistic analysis to explore language choices in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Sapphire's *Push*, and to evaluate how these choices express the authors' ideas and shape abstract notions within the texts.

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of the intensive critical attention dedicated to *The Color Purple* and *Push*, existing scholarship has predominantly approached these novels from thematic, feminist, socio-historical, and ideological perspectives. While these studies have yielded valuable insights, they have largely overlooked a systematic stylistic comparison of the two works. Specifically, there is a noticeable absence of research that examines how the authors' stylistic choices, particularly figures of speech and linguistic patterns, function as meaning-making mechanisms that shape narrative voice, reinforce thematic concerns, and articulate resistance.

In the available literature, Sapphire's *Push* is frequently discussed in relation to Walker's literary influence; this relationship has not been rigorously explored through a stylistic lens that evaluates points of convergence and divergence in language use and expressive strategies. The lack of comparative stylistic studies addressing how both authors employ African

American Vernacular English and rhetorical devices to construct distinct yet interconnected narrative styles constitutes a significant gap in the literature.

Accordingly, the problem this research addresses lies in the underrepresentation of stylistic analysis in comparative studies of *The Color Purple* and *Push*. By integrating literary interpretation with linguistic scrutiny, this research seeks to fill this gap by identifying and analyzing the stylistic features that distinguish and connect the two novels, thereby clarifying how stylistic choices contribute to meaning, ideology, and artistic originality in African American women's writing.

Aim and Objectives

This thesis aims to conduct a comparative stylistic analysis of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Sapphire's *Push*, examining how each author uses figures of speech and linguistic features to represent African American women's experiences of oppression and resistance, and how these stylistic strategies shape narrative meaning and thematic expression.

To achieve this aim, the study pursues the following objectives:

1. To identify and categorize the figures of speech employed by Alice Walker and Sapphire, using Leech and Short's checklist as a systematic framework.
2. To analyze how these stylistic devices contribute to meaning-making and reinforce the thematic concerns of oppression, resilience, and identity in both novels.
3. To compare the frequency, function, and stylistic patterns of figures of speech in the two novels, highlighting points of convergence and divergence.
4. To examine the role of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in constructing character voice, cultural authenticity, and resistance within the narratives.
5. To assess the influence of Walker's stylistic and thematic legacy on Sapphire, identifying which stylistic strategies are adopted, adapted, or innovated in *Push*

Research Questions

To reach the aforementioned aim, it is crucial to highlight the questions guiding this research. The central research question directing this study is

1. How do the stylistic choices and figures of speech employed by Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* and Sapphire in *Push* contribute to the representation of African American women's experiences and the broader socio-cultural contexts in their narratives?

Other significant questions seminal to the research are:

2. How do Alice Walker and Sapphire employ figures of speech in *The Color Purple* and *Push*, and what stylistic functions do these devices serve within the narratives according to Leech and Short's checklist?
3. How do these stylistic devices function to convey meaning, reinforce themes of oppression and resilience, and shape narrative voice?
4. What similarities and differences emerge in the use of figures of speech between the two authors, and what do these reveal about their respective stylistic strategies?
5. How is African American Vernacular English (AAVE) employed in the novels, and what role does it play in constructing character voice, authenticity, and resistance?
6. In what ways does Sapphire's *Push* reflect, adapt, or diverge from Alice Walker's stylistic and thematic legacy?

Rationale of the Study

Our research is motivated by the need to reevaluate *The Color Purple* and *Push* from a stylistic standpoint; the striking literary similarities between the two narratives stimulated an

interest in building a comparative portrait of the author's styles. This study seeks to fill the gap between literary philosophies and linguistic certainty by illuminating the stylistic devices employed by Alice Walker and Sapphire and their impact on the broader interpretation and appreciation of the texts.

Walker and Sapphire challenged conventional literary norms by providing disrupted narratives and highlighting the path toward independence for marginalized women. Sapphire mothered several elements from *The Color Purple* in her novel *Push*, which bears an enormous impact on Precious' story, creating another incentive for this research. The study attempts to refute or validate the common perception that literature contributes to the making of the other, striving to answer whether Sapphire shaped her narrative around *The Color Purple* or not. If yes, what elements did she draw from the prize-winning novel?

Research Methodology of the Study

This study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in interpretive stylistic analysis to examine the stylistic features, particularly figures of speech, employed by Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* and Sapphire in *Push*. The descriptive design is appropriate as the analysis is based on a close reading of literary texts, where meaning is constructed through contextual and functional interpretation rather than numerical measurement.

The research is situated within a critical/transformational paradigm, which foregrounds the role of language in representing and contesting structures of oppression affecting African American women. Within this framework, Leech and Short's stylistic checklist is used as a guiding analytical heuristic, with selective focus on figures of speech as a manageable and theoretically relevant category for comparative analysis.

Textual excerpts are selected through purposeful analytical reading, prioritizing stylistically salient and thematically significant passages. The analysis proceeds through

systematic close reading, applying consistent interpretive criteria across both novels to identify recurring stylistic patterns and to compare points of convergence and divergence in the authors' stylistic strategies. Findings are presented in analytical prose that integrates linguistic description with literary interpretation.

Significance of the Study

This thesis holds significance first on the academic level, where it contributes to the existing body of African American literary scholarship by introducing a systematic stylistic comparison of *The Color Purple* and *Push*, a pairing that has rarely been examined through a stylistic framework. By focusing on linguistic and narrative choices rather than thematic content alone, the study adds a stylistics-oriented perspective to African American literature, demonstrating how stylistic devices function as tools for meaning-making, identity construction, and ideological positioning. The research further highlights the dialogic relationship between Alice Walker and Sapphire, clarifying how stylistic influence operates across generations of African American women writers without reducing Sapphire's work to imitation, thereby addressing an underexplored area in existing scholarship.

Second, the study bears significance on the literary and stylistic level. Through a close examination of stylistic choices, the research moves beyond general appreciation to provide analytically grounded insights into how specific devices such as simile, repetition, epistolary form, first-person narration, and African American Vernacular English shape characterization, emotional intensity, and reader engagement. By foregrounding the functional role of these stylistic features, the thesis demonstrates the explanatory power of stylistics in interpreting complex literary texts, particularly in relation to narratives of marginalization and resistance.

Third, this research holds significance on the pedagogical level. The findings of the stylistic analysis offer a model for integrating linguistic analysis into the teaching of African

American literature, encouraging students to engage critically with literary language rather than approaching texts solely through thematic or historical lenses. By illustrating how stylistic analysis can be applied to extended literary texts, the study reinforces the relevance of stylistics as an analytical tool in literary studies and higher education.

Finally, the academic novelty of this thesis lies in its focused application of stylistic analysis, specifically figures of speech and narrative techniques, to two canonical yet stylistically distinct novels, thereby bridging the gap between literary criticism and linguistic analysis. This approach opens new avenues for future research in stylistics and African American literature, particularly for scholars interested in exploring language, power, and representation in marginalized narratives.

Structure of the Research

The structure of this research is designed to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the research topic. It has been carried out through four chapters, and each chapter provides a detailed scrutiny of the research topic. Chapter one is a synopsis of the theoretical ground on which the analysis of the two selected literary texts is built; it explicitly highlights the notion of style, a brief synopsis of the field of stylistics, and its wide varieties and approaches. The foremost stylistic expressive means are also explored on the phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels to be at the core of the current stylistic analysis.

Considering the current research is an investigation into the style of Black women writers in the US, the researcher estimated the importance of providing an insight into African American women's writings and the way it evolved in form and concerns; in addition to highlighting common themes and the image of women in African American literature. The life and work of Alice Walker and Sapphire, along with the summary of the two novels, are also featured; additionally, a discussion of feminism and womanism is underlined as one of

the pillars in the works of Black women authors. It is also imperative to pinpoint the Epistolary novel, Bildungsroman, Stream of Consciousness, and African American Vernacular English that characterized both novels.

The third chapter is the initiator for the empirical analysis of the present research; it exhibits a stylistic rundown of *The Color Purple* and *Push*. The methodological platform for analysis is detailed; the chapter also introduces the stylistic scheme of *The Color Purple* and *Push*, highlighting the figures of speech present in both novels, some of which are metaphors, similes, repetitions, alliteration, and assonance. The excerpts derived from the novels are scrutinized to detect the frequency of the stylistic devices and their power in shaping the authors' style.

The fourth and final chapter is structured to begin with an exploration of key thematic elements of the two narratives, followed by a comparative outlook on the thematic concerns of both authors. The chapter also contrasts the use of African American Vernacular English in *The Color Purple* and *Push*, aiming to uncover how the authors navigate the complexities of language to depict the characters' experiences. Furthermore, we delve into the art of functionality of language, emphasizing the predominant language functions and their contribution to the broader messages conveyed through the narratives. In addition, the chapter discusses the relationship between the stylistic scheme and the thematic concerns of *The Color Purple* and *Push*. Finally, we conclude with Alice Walker's legacy in Sapphire's *Push*.

Chapter One: Stylistics: Core Concepts Revisited

1.1 Introduction

The means of approaching literary texts shifted throughout the centuries; a marriage between two supposedly contrasting fields gave birth to a new discipline that secured the primary attributes of both. Stylistics is the product of a pairing between literary studies and linguistic studies; it draws on both literary interpretation and linguistic description to approach texts. The current chapter is the theoretical ground on which the analysis of the two selected literary texts is built; it explicitly highlights the notion of style, a brief synopsis of the field of stylistics, and its wide varieties and approaches. The foremost stylistic expressive means are also explored on the phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels to be at the core of the current stylistic analysis.

1.2 Mapping the Stylistic Landscape

1.2.1 The Concept of Style

Several dimensions are given to the notion of style by different disciplines from literary criticism to sociolinguistics and especially stylistics, yet there is no one agreed-upon description of what style is and to what or whom do we assign style. The word style itself has always been and still is a perplexing concept to define, for the most part, because it is always related to society, language, or context, subsequently disregarding one major role played by individuals. The latter identifies style as a way of life where every person operates differently, each with his/her way of acting, expressing, and presenting concerns. Individual's talents and competencies to use the language are crucial elements in creating various styles through different social contexts.

Style is frequently recognized as having an important position in the miscellaneous interests of literary studies; In a broad sense, it pertains to "the way in which language is used

in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on "(Leech and Short 10). However, there seems to be no concordant definition of style, considering that there is a great deal of disagreement among writers on style and their different perceptions on the subject. At times, the term has been assigned to the linguistic practices of a particular writer; at other times style has been associated with language use in a specific genre, period, or school of writing (Leech and Short 11). In other words, for literary critics, style varies according to periods, genres, or texts it relates to the way authors depict events, convey ideas, and create characters.

Naturally, the author's word choice, sentence structure, figurative language, and sentence arrangement reflect his/her distinctiveness plus novelty and are all imperative in constructing the meaning of the text. Therefore, style according to Mustafa mirrors the writer's personality as it showcases their personal background, education, insights, and unique approach to presenting ideas, distinguishing them from others. (qtd. in Al-Mi'mar Shaima 19). Taken together, these interpretations maintain that style is a crucial element in distinguishing authors individuality and unique way of communicating ideas, it can be seen as the voice each writer holds, the one that makes up his/her literary personality and creates an incomparable panorama through his/her writings.

1.2.2 The Classical Understanding of Style

Although style was subject to extensive research over the years, the notion of style can be traced back to the 5th century BC, when rhetoric was the dominant art at the time. Rhetoric, generally referred to as "the art of persuasion, was mainly interested in the strategies, approaches, and techniques of influencing the audience. The discipline incorporated five canons (*inventio* , *disposition*, *elocution*, *memoria*, and *pronuntiatio*), which were of great importance in the production of texts, even though their initial aim was to help orators or public speakers to use the language to be convincing and influential to the audience; the

canons extended to be applicable in the writing process. The third of the five canons *elocutio* was concerned with the stylistic elements that are essential in the process of crafting and delivery of language, it is known today as style. Murry (qtd. in Kazmi 9) states:

The notion that style is applied ornament had its origin, no doubt, in the tradition of the schools of rhetoric in Europe; and in its place in their teaching the conception was monstrous as it is today. The old professors of rhetoric were exclusively engaged in instructing their pupils how to expound an argument or arrange a pleading.

Elocutio or style in rhetoric incorporated different views, the most persistent one is the choice of manner rather than matter of expression, which is based on the dualist approach of language between form and content, in other words, it ponders on the thought and expression, on the distinction between what the author intends to say and how he/she presents it to the reader. This view of style received many emblematic descriptions during the Renaissance and New Classical periods; it was referred to as the "dress of thought "by Samuel Wesley or as "the molding of the message. This idea indicates that while the content is the same, the way language is used to convey the thought could differ but it does not make any discrepancy to the final product or text, Samuel Wesley in Oxford Essential Quotations describes: "Style is the dress of thought, a modest dress, Neat, but not gaudy, will true critics please " in other words, language was believed to be the dress of meaning and style is the particular fashion of the dress.

Another description of style was being a "manner of expression", this concept according to Leech and Short can be a second view of dualism. It emphasizes that writers may hold the same thoughts or concerns yet each writer creates his/her way or manner of expression, the words, sentences, and language chosen may cause minor alterations to the general meaning (15). The dualist approach maintains the idea that there can be different ways of conveying the same content, however, the monist view with its rejection of the form-content dichotomy

managed to establish itself as a doctrine of the New Critics, this belief holds that the viewpoint of dualism is incorrect, and that style is a combination of both form and content thus any variation in the first results in changes in the second.

Given that, the rhetorical views that believe language should be used to impress and persuade the audience have led to the creation of a new discipline that studies style from a rhetorical perspective. The discipline known as **rhetorical stylistics** emphasized the need to concentrate on the practical function of language. Nevertheless, such an area spread out to explore other dimensions; that are poetics, which branched out of rhetorical stylistics, highlighted the need to concentrate more on the aesthetic function of language and less on the practical function.

Since being at the core of literary studies in the ancient classical world, rhetoric and poetics created the first groundwork for studies on style. Accordingly, modern studies established a new framework in which the earlier examinations of style are substituted and developed to create more analytical approaches of analysis; the present-day notion of style is a recycling of the perceptions of the traditional notion of style (Burke 2).

1.2.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Linguistic Style

Traced back to the earlier days of Aristotle, the investigations into literary style were still debatable and intractable in the study of language till present times. For critics and scholars, it was insufficient to provide a satisfactory account of literary texts, considering that it presents only subjective and unscientific interpretations. Contrary to rhetorical stylistics, modern stylistics calls for a detached and systematic examination of both literary and non-literary language styles. Many approaches have been developed to give the concept of style a new elucidation; linguistics was incorporated in the studies of literature thus style developed a more analytical and objective view. Within the field of stylistics, various definitions were

proposed regarding the linguistic notion of style; the substantial ones range from viewing style as a choice, as the man in addition to viewing it as a deviation.

1.2.3.1 Exploring Style through Choices

Concerning the traditional dualistic approach to style, modern linguistics and stylistics proposed a new conception in which style is viewed as a choice. This view is derived from the belief that all languages bear a set of substitute expressions, in which writers are given various choices to employ in a given situation, the linguistic and stylistic choices have different functions that differ depending on the context and the kind of text to be created. Accordingly, style can be defined as the interplay of linguistic and stylistic choices drawn from the repertoire of language. The current method relatively adopts the idea of dualism and suggests that the same content can be conveyed through different linguistic forms; style is thus determined in terms of the variant linguistic choices made in the text. Certainly, when a researcher questions on what ground certain words are selected and ordered, he/she is raising the whole question of form, thus style, in its larger sense is essentially equated with form (Enkvist, qtd. in Gull 6).

Proponents of monism never approved of the concept of style as a choice; they heavily opposed the idea of languages having different choices to express the same meaning in different structures. Monists believed that stylistically distinct articulations can never be the same. Hockett refuted the monist argument; he maintains that “two utterances in the same language which convey approximately the same information but which are different in their linguistic structures can be said to differ in style” (qtd. in Gull 7), the monist argument for opposing the idea of style as choice remained unclear, they were not able to say what style is and how it is distinguished from meaning. A compromising arrangement between dualism and monism was proposed by Verma. According to him, style is a matter of the ‘structuring of choices’ which are governed by a variety of elements like message, medium, tradition, and the

personality of the writer. On one hand, there is (literary, linguistic, and cultural) and on the other individual (invasion and creation) (qtd. in Gull 9). Verma's position indicates the inability of style to be separable from meaning.

1.2.3.2 Exploring Style Through Deviance

The concept of style as deviation was initially addressed by those who associate themselves with the Prague school; it postulates that literary language is distinguished from the standard language in being deviant. This perception is derived from the idea that deviation occurs when language conventions are not respected, rules are deliberately broken, and when ideas are presented differently from what is expected. Mukarovsky believes that deviation in poetic language is imperative, seeing that the standard ordinary language falls short of capturing the genuine feelings and the real intended sensation of an innovative writer. (qtd. in Gull 9)

In stylistics, Leech supported a stylistic framework constructed on the Mukarovskian view of foregrounding and deviation. Mukarovsky (qtd. in Traugott and Pratt 31) highlights the link between style and foregrounding and states "the violation of the norm of the standard... is what makes possible the poetic utilization of language", in addition, Leech and Short describe that deviation may occur on one or all the levels of language (phonological, grammatical, lexical, graphological and semantic) (79). A more recent connection between deviation and foregrounding is made by Jeffries and McIntyre who assert that foregrounding is a result of sudden deviant forms in language, for them deviation is "the occurrence of unexpected irregularity in language and results in foregrounding on the basis that the irregularity is surprising to the reader" (31); such notion of foregrounding has been incorporated into the modern deviation theory through the contemporary linguistic developments.

For many stylisticians, the concept of style as deviation takes two forms: internal and external. The latter is linked to the norms of the genre, literary period, or language variety that usually characterize the text. The former on the other hand is connected with the fundamental norms of the text itself, "The recognition that a text may set up its secondary norms leads to a further conclusion, that features of language within that text may depart from the norms of the text itself: that is, they may 'stand out' against the background of what the text has led us to expect. This is the phenomenon of INTERNAL DEVIATION. "(Leech and Short 55).

1.2.3.3 Exploring Style and Persona

Another common interpretation of literary style is related to the writer himself; style as the man is based on the idea that each individual operates differently; each has his/her distinctive characteristics that separate him/her from others. In this notion, style is seen as an indicator of the writer's personality; it is understood to be a set of idiosyncratic features that the author uses to provide a unique vision of his/her work and to create a personal style that differentiates him/her from other writers. Middleton Murray is one of the proponents of this view; he believes style to be the spokesman of the writer's thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. According to him "style is a quality of language which communicates precisely emotions and thoughts of emotions or thoughts peculiar to the author" (71).

Several scholars consider this notion inadequate to give a comprehensive exposition of what style is. Stanley Fish, Herrnstein Smith, and others refused the idea of connecting the writer's style with his personality; it is unreasonable to judge a writer's personality based on his stylistic use of language. In literature, a writer's style is shaped depending on their social and political background, religious and cultural attachment, education, etc. Accordingly, the writer may use different styles in different works, but it does not mean that he has multiple personalities.

1.3 Synopsis of Stylistics:

1.3.1 Linguistics and Literature

In opposition to the traditional view of literary studies, notably research on style that was essentially centered on rhetorical and poetic canons, modern times' approaches to literature studies opted for a new and different course of analysis. The integration of more scientific approaches to language was necessary; linguistics was the go-to discipline that provided the mandatory scientific and objective system for literary language studies. Thus, literary criticism became closely associated with linguistic studies at the same time when the latter witnessed significant developments regarding investigations on the nature of style. However, this relationship did not receive a warm welcome at the beginning; some literary critics believed that the two disciplines were unique in their traditional directions and conceptions and thus could not serve each other, and few others simply contested whether linguists are adequate to analyze literary texts. They presumed that linguistics could not bring any addition to the field of literary studies.

Literary specialists have been alarmed by what they believe is linguistic colonization into the literary sphere, postulating a conspiracy theory suggesting the linguist is attempting to undermine the autonomy and relevancy of literary criticism as a discipline in its own right (Hayes 199). They justified their rejection of the integration of linguistic methods and approaches into literary studies as being reductionists in the sense that they amplify the 'form' and deteriorate the 'content', hence; they break the unity of the two components by prioritizing one of them (Ihwe, 134).

A representation of contrasts between linguistics and traditional literary studies was outlined by De Beaugrande, the framework exhibits the lack of contact between the two disciplines in past decades. These contrasts are summarized as follows:

The difference in retrieving the material for the analysis; for the linguist, data is the primary source for analyzing language using fieldwork and introspection. The literary scholar, however, used to accumulate his material from the canon of literary texts. In linguistic studies, the chief goal was to describe the language system of a particular work; i.e the phonological, morphological, and grammatical regularities of a work of art, while the goal of literary studies was the interpretation of a particular work; in combination with the merit of the work itself with such interpretation. Another contrast is that linguistics studied language synchronically; literary studies however adopted the diachronic approach to language. In addition, linguistics focused more on the rules of language encoding, whereas literary studies addressed the conventions of the genre which differ according to the form or themes. (qtd. in Pascal Ally Hussein 474-475)

Style is perceived differently by the two language fields, in linguistic studies, style is analyzed as a choice; i.e. the linguist intentionally decides on options offered by the general system of language, literary studies on the other hand consider style as ornamentation, i.e. the literary scholar investigates the aesthetic effect of schemes and tropes that occur independently of the content of the literary work. Another major discrepancy between the two fields lies in the training process; on the one hand, the linguists are trained by a method including approaches for eliciting, recording, and analyzing data. On the other hand, the literary scholar's training was through imitating the interpretations of established scholars. Linguistic studies concentrated on expanding previous theories and creating new ones, literary studies focused more on the practice of reading and interpreting literary texts rather than formulating abstract notions.

The above annotations illustrate the contrariety between traditional linguistics and traditional literary studies; the emergence of modern linguistics at the beginning of the 20th

century renovated such conventional and conflicting relationships by proclaiming a firm ground for itself in the area of literary analysis. Numerous linguistic approaches became fundamental in the investigation of the different aesthetic aspects of literary language and were regularly used in the interpretation of literary works, "linguistics does have considerable contributions to make to the study of literature simply because it, like literature, is concerned with language." (Birch 2).

The numerous discussions concerning the correlation between linguistic analysis and literary studies focused their attention on the importance of the concept of style. Even though each had a different standpoint and distinct approach to analysis; linguists and literary scholars showed mutual concerns in the investigation into literary style. On the one hand, linguists analyze language scientifically thus they investigate style as well in an impersonal and objective manner, literary criticism on the other hand, focuses on artistic unsystematic interpretation of texts; the point in which style is studied subjectively and intuitively apart from the linguistic aspect of language.

The rise of the field of stylistics was able to bridge the gap between linguistics and literary criticism between language and literature. Stylistics' effectiveness in the area of language studies was due to its power to accumulate techniques and approaches from both disciplines to establish a solid background for both literary and non-literary texts analysis, to quote Widdowson's words: "...stylistics is an area of mediation between two disciplines...stylistics can provide a way of mediation between two subjects" (4).

1.3.2 Stylistics: Formative Years

The existence of modern Stylistics can be traced back approximately one hundred years to the classical fields of rhetoric and poetics; the study of style at that time was considerably important in oral expression and the art of persuasion. Aristotle's *'Art of Rhetoric'* was said to have paved the way for the very first publications that focused on style, "Without classical

rhetoric and poetics there would be no stylistics as we know it today "(Burke 11). The very first influence on the development of stylistics, according to Fowler, was Anglo-American literary criticism, in particular, new criticism. The movement emerged in the USA at the beginning of the 20th century, roughly at the same period as Practical Criticism in Britain, and it was named after John Crowe Ransom's book *The New Criticism*. The latter contributed substantially to the development of New Criticism in different ways; both movements reacted against traditional literary criticism, where the main concern of critics was evaluation and finding out whether the text was good or bad.

The way traditional literary conventions were established did not appeal to the new critics; they were dissatisfied with how literature was controlled. Some of Ransom's students, Allen Tate, William Wimsatt, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, and John Beardsley, believed that the tenets of literary texts need to be approached differently; hence, a new and positive approach to literary and critical development was necessary. They stressed the need to substitute traditional subjective criticism with new analytical and practical methods, to be able to free criticism from impressionism and emotionalism.

The New Critics coincided with the formalists in that literary language was considered deviant from standard language and that any study of literary texts needed to focus on the words and text itself without any reference to context. New Criticism advocated for a close study of literary texts, mostly poetry; it stressed the importance of detaching the author from his text and the historical and social background of its making. Thus, the only thing that critics counted on in their analysis, or readers depended on to understand the text, was its own merits; nothing else was important. They also believed in the attachment of the form to the content of the text; so it is inadequate to analyze them separately.

Stylistics emanated from previous critical approaches associated with Practical Criticism and New Criticism. Where the groundwork of New Criticism mainly focused on the

depiction of literary texts as independent artistic entities, Practical Criticism paid attention to the reader's cognitive interaction with the text. Stylisticians on the other hand support the idea that texts should be analyzed comprehensively rather than simply relying on intuition. In reality, stylistics truly thrived at the beginning of the 20th century with the development of Russian formalism and the Prague school, as Paul Simpson pointed out:

There is one particular field of academic inquiry, from the early twentieth century, that has had a more direct and lasting impact on the methods of contemporary stylistics. This field straddles two interrelated movements in linguistics, known as Russian Formalism and Prague School Structuralism. (50)

The Russian Formalist movement was significantly shaped by key figures and their theories, including Roman Jakobson's poetic function of language, Viktor Shklovsky's defamiliarisation, and Vladimir Propp's structural morphological analysis of plot components. These scholars were the most influential proponents of formalism; they worked together towards making literary inquiry more scientific in the sense that literary studies need to be united with linguistics. In *Handbook of Stylistics*, Michael Burke and Kristy Evers assumed that formalists trusted the idea of literature gaining more respect in the academic world and benefiting in diverse ways from a new, elevated systematic status if it is studied more scientifically. (32)

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas and theories were the primary inspiration for the formalist scholars; who became interested in the poetic form of literary language, they maintained that literary language should only be studied in terms of the linguistic elements of the text; the psychological, social, historical or ideological approaches should not be taken into consideration. According to Burke and Evers, "The formalists were particularly interested in formal linguistic differences between poetic and non-poetic

language. This area is often known as the ‘literariness’ debate, and includes discussions on what would come to be known in the Prague School as ‘foregrounding’”. (32)

The formalist stylistic inquiry mainly focused on the linguistic approaches to poetry, which induced certain criticisms of ignoring other important aspects such as context in the analysis of literary texts. The pioneers of the Prague school though expanded on the theories of formalism they quickly became functionalists; for them, a literary work cannot be analyzed separately from its context, “no element of a language can be duly evaluated unless its relations to the other elements of the same language are taken into account.” (Vachek, qtd. in Kazmi 7). In addition to the formalist stylistic examination of poetry, the functionalist model of Halliday was interested in longer extended texts like narratives and plays, seeing that it was more systematic for stylisticians who wanted to experience a new genre other than poetry.

Havranek, one of the influential figures of the movement, argues that the formalist stylistic notions of literary language are not adequate; he maintains that it is the context that determines the linguistic choices found in a work of literature (1964, p.3). With the development of functionalism in the Prague School, there was a gradual move from text to context, from form to function, from semantics to pragmatics, and from logic to rhetoric (Burke & Evers 41). In brief, the functionalist stylisticians thoroughly explored the relationship between the structures of language as a system and the context in which it is produced.

After Russian Formalism and Prague Functionalism, numerous structural approaches were introduced in both literary and linguistic studies, pioneered by Bloomfield between the 1920s and 1950s, was one of the main linguistic theories that influenced the rise of stylistics as we know it today. Bloomfield’s approach was known as descriptive linguistics, seeing that it replaced 19th-century prescriptive rules of language (historical linguistics) with descriptive linguistic investigation, focusing mainly on a detailed analysis of the structure of language,

yet overlooking its meaning. Bloomfield developed his ideas from the linguistic doctrine of Ferdinand de Saussure, who was known as the father of linguistics.

French Structuralism, in the eyes of Fowler, was another area that contributed to the development of stylistics (14). The movement, as its name suggests, originated in France in the 1950s and 1960s. European Structuralism was introduced to linguistic studies, and was developing roughly at the same time as that of stylistics; it was notably derived from the innovative ideas of the Swiss Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and Russian Formalism. Structuralist approaches weren't confined to only one area of inquiry; Fowler introduced French structuralism as a 'diffuse set of intellectual movements including the French linguistics, literary theory, anthropology, the semiotics of language and culture' (14).

French Scholars in different fields elaborated on the linguistic concepts of Saussure and the theoretical frameworks of structuralism and implemented them in their field of interest, from the anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss to the political philosophy of Louis Althusser, the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, the "narratology" of Roland Barthes, the structuralist paradigm also operated in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, the "history" of Michel Foucault, and the genre studies of Tzvetan Todorov.

In his *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, Saussure proposed various new concepts about the nature of language, which were essential in the later development of structuralism and were of great use in stylistic analysis. He opposed the traditional historical view of the study of language and the origin of language (diachronic) and suggested an approach that maintains that language should be examined at one particular point in time without any reference to its history (synchronic). In other words, he recommended that linguists study the structures, style, and functions of language without looking at any historical aspects that might have had a part in the development of language up to that point.

Another notion introduced by Saussure became the groundwork in the field of semiology and was influential in both structuralist and poststructuralist paradigms; according to him, language is a structured system of signs, in which a sign reflects the relationship between the sound image (signifier) and the concept (signified). This relationship is arbitrary, meaning that there is no connection between the meaning of a word and its sound or form. Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* was influential in stylistic studies as well, with *langue* being the abstract system of language common to all individuals in a given speech community, and *parole* being the concrete side of language; in other words, it is the use of the abstract system (*langue*). Accordingly, *parole* was of great importance in stylistics, considering that any stylistic analysis to be conducted required the linguist to concentrate on the writer's deliberate and highly individualized use of language. According to Leech and Short, style pertains to *parole*; it is a selection from a total linguistic repertoire that constitutes a style" (38)

The contribution of structuralism to the development of stylistics can be traced back to Charles Bally, a former student of Ferdinand de Saussure. Bally was considered the first to introduce stylistics as a separate and new discipline in language studies through his work 'Traité de Stylistique Française' (1909), which was complementary to Saussure's linguistic theories of language. He advocated the descriptive method for the study of language and literature.

1.3.3 Understanding Stylistics: A Definition

Up to now, the term stylistics does not have one agreed-upon definition. However, scholars did concur on the fact that stylistics is the study of style. The nature of stylistic investigation had different trends, which made stylisticians diverge and unable to set one single approach to the analysis of style. According to Wales, this variation in stylistics was mainly because of the effect that linguistics and literary criticism had on its development

(399). Riffaterre stressed the relationship that style has with linguistic facts; he maintained that stylistics is the study of literary discourse from a linguistic dimension; it is interdisciplinary, seeing that it adopts concepts and approaches from both linguistics and literary studies (155). Widdowson suggested that the morphological delineation of the term 'stylistics' is a result of the fusion between literary criticism and linguistics, as 'style' is mainly associated with the former and 'istics' is part of the latter. (3)

The notion of integrating linguistics in literary studies caused a serious conflict between scholars; some literary scholars did not welcome the idea of language being scientifically approached by linguists. Jakobson attempted to moderate the conflict by establishing a strong connection between the two fields; he maintained that for a literary text to be adequately interpreted, the linguist must be competent in the literary function of language, and for the literary critic to have sufficient knowledge in linguistics, this complementary relationship is the heart of stylistics (377). Even though this field encompasses both literary criticism and linguistics, it is not the literary critic who is concerned with stylistic analysis, but it is the linguist who examines, compares, and evaluates the style of the author of a literary text.

Stylisticians use a toolkit composed of linguistic models, theories, and frameworks to explain how words of a literary discourse work to construct both implicit and explicit meanings. These approaches used in stylistic analysis typically focus on the phonology, grammar, lexis, semantics, or pragmatics of the text. Most stylisticians balance their analysis on the author of the text and his style; others, however, focus on the text itself, whereas others concentrate on the reader and their role in meaning construction. In her *Dictionary of Stylistics*, Katie Wales maintained that the majority of materials used in stylistic analysis are literary and most of the attention is centered around the text itself, with no reference to the author or reader. She continues the discussion on the central aim of stylistic analysis and highlights that:

The goal of most stylistic studies is to show how a text ‘works’: not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text, or to relate literary effects or themes to linguistic ‘triggers’ where these are felt to be relevant. (400)

Whichever model or theory stylisticians apply, the core focus of their analysis is to uncover the implicit linguistic signs embedded in the text, either consciously or unconsciously by the author; the violations of language patterning or the traditional form of sentences, or the placement of parts of speech. This regulation can be the identification of particular texts from others, contexts, and authors.

The purpose of stylistics is well explained by Paul Simpson (2004) in his book *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. According to him, the reason behind stylistic analysis is to explore language and the creativity in language use (3). He recommended that any stylistic analysis should match up three basic principles:

- Stylistic analysis should be rigorous
- Stylistic analysis should be retrievable
- Stylistic analysis should be replicable. (3).

For a start, for stylistic analysis to be rigorous it ought to be built on a specific framework of analysis, in other words, it is not a random process but one with precise models that work to explain how language operates and how the various patterns are processed and understood. To explore in what way stylistic analysis is retrievable means that it should be constructed upon certain standards and criteria; to put it another way, stylisticians need to accurately follow the framework adapted and to see in what way the analysis reached its conclusion. Stylisticians must ensure the transparency of the theories and frameworks of their

stylistic analysis to guarantee that other stylisticians replicate the study by verifying, testing, and applying them in their analysis of different texts.

1.3.4 Varieties of Stylistic Inquiry

The term stylistics does not denote one single branch; it encompasses different subfields, each with its own tendency to stylistic investigation. As an interdisciplinary field, stylistics incorporates various elements from different branches, resulting in the birth of multiple disciplines that consider stylistic analysis as their main approach. This research will only shed light on two of the most prominent fields in stylistic investigation, linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics.

1.3.4.1 Linguistic Stylistics

It is widely acknowledged that stylistics derives its methods and approaches from the general field of linguistics. This approach is believed to be the pure version of the discipline of stylistics (Ghazalah 2); it is centered on the linguistic description of stylistic devices. Halliday affirms that the concern of the term ‘linguistic stylistics’ is not a mere investigation of the linguistic aspects of a literary text; it centers around the amelioration of the linguistic model, which has the prospect of stylistic analysis. For one thing, the proponents of this approach integrate the research done on the literary language and style to upgrade the models of the study of language to improve an existing linguistic theory; to put it another way, linguistic stylisticians use models derived from linguistics to upgrade linguistics.

Undertaking a linguistic stylistic investigation is a multidimensional process that requires sufficient linguistic knowledge to identify and describe a range of linguistic choices made by the author, either consciously or unconsciously, to see how these varieties construct the meaning of the text under scrutiny. Generative stylisticians advocated for the importance of description in stylistic analysis. Thomas and Kintgen suggest that the description of

language features is crucial in analyzing the style of an author through transformational grammar (814). Moreover, Thorne focused on the use of descriptive linguistics in the analysis of literary texts, giving less importance to stylistic aspects and their part in meaning-making.

Halliday focuses on descriptive linguistics and explains the term ‘application’ to refer to the study of literary discourse applying linguistic theories and methods. He goes along with McIntoch to propose two forms of description; one is textual, where the linguist merely describes a written or spoken text, the other is exemplified, which illustrates the categories of the language that are used in the construction of the text (64). In other words, descriptive linguistics is concerned more with description and less with interpretation. According to generative stylisticians, linguistic stylistic analysis is agreeably objective and unbiased in that it parts the stylisticians personal judgment from the stylistic description; all the same, if an analyst would replicate the same investigation on the same text using the same model of analysis, he/she should arrive at the same conclusion.

By way of contrast, Fowler & Bateson negate the view of generative stylisticians and point out that “A mere description is of no great use except possibly as an exercise to promote awareness of language or method” (33). They emphasized that the main aim of stylistics is the shift to critical and semantic interpretation rather than a description of style. Pearce,, however, claims that description in linguistic stylistics is interpretation; he believes description is equal to interpretation and analysis: “Description of the facts is never separable from an interpretation of the facts” (qtd. in Babiker & Saad 136)

Linguistic stylistics strongly connects to context; the latter is a center of dispute for many stylisticians. Functionalist and pragmatic stylisticians advocate for the strong relationship between language and context. Halliday’s functional model of language views language as a social semiotic that influences and is influenced by the context in which it occurs. The analyst or reader may derive various interpretations of a single expression based

on the context; hence, any linguistic or stylistic investigation into language varieties has to position that language in context (social, historical, cultural, etc.). According to Stockwell, “Since readers come with existing memories, beliefs, and both personal and social objectives, the context of the literary work is already conditioned by interpretation, even before reading begins” (747-748). Conversely, Russian formalists like Roman Jakobson and Victor Shklovsky argued that literary inquiry should be more systematic and scientific, with no reference to context. Widdowson underlined that the absence of context in literary studies assists in providing a more comprehensible account of the text in a more concentrated manner, mostly because readers are compelled to focus on the language of the text rather than its context.

Linguistic stylistics, therefore, incorporates methods and approaches from the field of linguistics in the analysis of literary language to help refine an existing linguistic theory. The model is objective and provides a systematic and scientific analysis of language; it also correlates with the context in which the conclusion is mostly related to the reader’s understanding and the author’s intention when creating the text.

1.3.4.2 Literary Stylistics

The literary approach to stylistic analysis is simply the study of literary style; Widdowson argues that literary stylistics is the marriage of linguistic studies with literary studies. Similar to linguistic stylistics in general; it is concerned with the analysis of literary and non-literary texts however its major interest is the interpretation of literary texts. Since language is the core of literature it is unavoidable to incorporate a linguistic analysis when implementing a literary investigation of the text, the stylisticians would seek out significant stylistic devices to investigate their function and perceive their contribution to the understanding of the text.

According to Leech and Short "...literary stylistics has, implicitly or explicitly, the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function. The motivating questions are not so much *what*, as *why* and *how*." (13) They emphasize that the linguist and the critic should develop a complementary relationship, the former examines the reason why the author opted for a specific utterance to express him/herself, the latter on the other hand is responsible for investigating how language constructs certain aesthetic function.

In contrast to linguistic stylistics, literary stylistics is concerned more with interpretation and less with description; for literary stylisticians, a mere linguistic description of stylistic devices is inadequate, for a literary text to be properly scrutinized it is crucial to uncover the functions of these devices and how they can affect the perception and interpretation of the text. The process of interpretation in literary stylistics is limited to the text itself without reference to context, it varies according to the experience and knowledge of the critic and thus one text is likely to exhibit multiple interpretations. Literary stylisticians must be intuitive while carrying out a literary stylistic investigation; Ghazalah asserts that literary stylisticians are not bound to analyze every single utterance but to intuitively select the important linguistic features that will be the basis for interpretation, he continuously points out that "Counting on intuition for extracting stylistic devices and functions is the cornerstone for any literary stylistic activity "(50).

Any stylistic analysis fluctuates according to the approach or the purpose of the study, Leech distinguished two categories that stylisticians may draw on during a stylistic analysis of literary texts i.e. executing a literary stylistic investigation is often explanatory concerning the analyst's objective being either intrinsic or extrinsic, Leech notes that "we may distinguish cases where the explanatory goal is *extrinsic* (e.g. to find out the author(s) or the chronology of a set of writings), or *intrinsic* (where the purpose is to explain the meaning or value of the

text itself "(54-55). In the general sense, the intrinsic goal revolves around the interpretation and literariness of literary text.

Ghazalah sums up Carter and Nash's article *Language and Literariness* which is considered one of the preeminent works that aims at communicating the concept of literariness in language; the article gives an all-encompassing notion of the tenets of literary stylistics through their appreciative view on the significance of literariness, Ghazalah points out:

1. Literary texts contain identifiable elements of literariness, but recognizing these elements is not straightforward. It depends on the stylistic patterns, effects, and their interactions within the text.
2. The language of literary texts is multi-layered, so identifying literary elements requires examining various levels, not just one or two.
3. Literariness is not an inherent feature of individual words or stylistic devices but emerges from the interaction of different levels of language and their effects.
4. Additionally, the properties of literariness are not exclusive to literary texts; they may appear in other types of texts, though less intensely. These properties distinguish literary from non-literary texts and serve as criteria for defining literary works. (12)

In summary, literary stylistics in general terms is the investigation of style in both literary and non-literary texts. The discipline encompasses approaches from both linguistics and literary criticism, primarily via linguistic approaches that pave the way for the stylistician's interpretation and appreciation of the literary work. Zhang sums up the creeds of the discipline to explore the thematic and aesthetic values created by linguistic choices—values that express the author's vision, tone, and attitude. These elements enhance the

emotional impact of the message, aid in character development, and strengthen the coherence of the fictional narrative. (155)

1.3.5 Linguistic Stylistics Versus Literary Stylistics

The two divers yet at the same time joined disciplines of linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics have been at the center of discussion by many practitioners, Carter maintained that: “there is already a considerable division in the subject between literary stylistics (which is in many respects an extension of practical criticism) and linguistic stylistics (which seeks the creation of linguistic models for the analysis of texts – including those conventionally thought ‘literary’ and ‘non-literary’)” (161).

The two approaches are concerned with exploring the language and style of literary texts each with its distinct methodology and course of action, the latter differs according to the analyst’s interpretive decisions and the result he/she desires to attain. In stylistic investigation, the ultimate aim of the literary approach is textual evaluation and interpretation, while the linguistic approach examines an instance of language use to contribute to a linguistic theory. Carter and Simpson paint linguistic stylistics as: “The purest form of stylistics, is that its practitioners attempt to derive from the study of style and language a refinement of models for the analysis of language and thus to contribute to the development of linguistic theory.” (4) In opposition, they detail literary stylistics as:

A distinguishing feature of work in literary stylistics is the provision of a basis for fuller understanding, appreciation, and interpretation of avowedly literary and author-centered texts. The general impulse will be to draw eclectically on linguistic insights and to use them in the service of what is generally claimed to be the fuller interpretation of language effects than is possible without the benefit of linguistics. (6)

Ronald Carter pointed out the variance between the two approaches by dint of an example that literary stylistics requires the critic to be analytical and rich with literary and linguistic knowledge to enable him/her to offer an effective stylistic reading of the text, linguistic stylistics as well presses the linguist to hold investigative skills with linguistic methodology and argumentation. He illustrates:

For example, literary stylistics can be more accessible to literature students because it models itself on critical assumptions and procedures already fairly well established in the literature classes of upper forms in schools, whereas the practice of linguistic stylistics tends to require a more thorough acquaintance with linguistic methodology and argumentation. (161)

The debate of the researchers on the superiority of one approach over the other cannot refute the strong connection between the two; both are complementary and meet in certain aspects. Fowler argues that "The relationship between linguistics and poetics (stylistics) should be interdisciplinary. Rather than accept one another passively, each can help to reform the other" (1981, p. 162).

1.4 Analytical Methods in Stylistic Inquiry:

The recognition of stylistics as one of the fundamental disciplines of applied linguistics and its acceptance by the literary critics as a new field with considerable contributions to the study of literary texts has led to the emergence of several approaches to stylistic analysis, each with its distinctive procedures to analyzing style. For the current thesis to exhibit a more comprehensive understanding of the analysis to be completed in the following chapters, it is important to shed light on a few of the many stylistic frameworks that enrich the field and offer a different lens through which we study language.

1.4.1 McIntyre's Pre-inquiries to Stylistic Analysis:

Stylistic analysis can be quite complicated for novice researchers who are unfamiliar with dissecting a text and objectively examining it in detail; in contrast, literary analysis is less complicated, as it covers a wide-ranging topic with a reduction of details. To complete a comprehensive stylistic analysis of a literary text, it is crucial to identify the foregrounded/deviated elements in the text and their frequency of occurrence to comprehend the style of the text. According to McIntyre (qtd. Arda Arikan 127), there are general questions that need to be asked while analyzing a text from a stylistic perspective:

1. Does the text contain some striking irregularities of form in comparison to traditional texts that are within the same genre?
2. Are there deviant grammatical or graphological elements?
3. Despite all deviant characteristics, is there order in the text?
4. How about the text's phonological qualities? Are some sounds repeated? Are there some sounds missing?
5. Are there neologisms or awkward word usage? Does the author use jargon, slang, or standard language?
6. Semantic fields are especially important while analyzing text stylistically. For example, can you categorize the words in different semantic fields? What kind of feeling do the verbs give? By looking at the verbs, do you get the feeling of the past or do they point at an ongoing activity?
7. In conclusion, are the linguistic features of the text directly related to the overall or particular meanings reached?

McIntyre's approach draws attention to the significance of the individuality of the author; if the text does not adhere to the traditional literary conventions most authors within the same genre follow, then it is a fit source for stylistic evaluation. However, the text should be well organized and ordered despite containing deviant elements such as unexpected use of grammar, graphological elements, manipulation of sounds, and the use of unconventional vocabulary. The type of language developed is also of importance to stylisticians; the use of

standard language has a different influence than the use of other types, such as jargon, slang, or vernacular language.

Another central element to take into consideration is the semantic field of words; for example, the analyst, through a rigorous stylistic analysis, will be able to identify the feelings that certain verbs within the text convey. McIntyre maintained that the purpose behind executing a stylistic investigation is to explain how words in a text can convey feelings and reactions readers attain while reading. In conclusion, the overall aim of stylistic analysis, according to McIntyre, is to reach the point at which the analyst is adequately capable of connecting the linguistic features of the text to the overall meaning communicated.

1.4.2 Leech and Short's Checklist of Stylistic Categories:

Given that linguistics and literature find themselves at intersecting points, stylistics serves as a linguistic approach to a literary text. The study of style developed to incorporate linguistic description along with literary interpretation. Geoffrey Leech asserted that "Linguistic description and critical interpretation are, to my mind, distinct and complementary ways of 'explaining' literary text." (28) In an attempt to undertake the problem of measuring style in a literary text; Leech and Short (43) maintained that style is measurable given that it is regarded as a form of frequency, Bernard Bloch regarding the idea of frequency defined style as: "The message carried by the frequency distributions and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features, especially as they differ from those of the same features in the language as a whole". (qtd. in Leech and Short 45)

Frequency in general is the rate at which something occurs in a given sample; in stylistic analysis, the stylisticians are concerned with the measurement of style with the frequency of stylistic devices in the text, whether they are more or less frequent according to the ordinary use of language. Then again, it is worth mentioning that what the language features analysts find interesting and important in one text may not be as important in another

text either written by the same author or different authors, accordingly, in stylistic analysis there is no one precise technique for selecting the important features to be analyzed; Ghazalah approved the idea by highlighting the importance of stylistic intuition (50).

Leech and Short's persistence on the importance of style in language is synthesized in their book *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, which was validated as one of the leading instructional works in the history of stylistics since its emergence in 1981. Cureton admired the book, depicting it as: "an impressively researched and beautifully written piece of scholarship and pedagogy. As an introduction to literary stylistics, it has no peer." (362). The book offers a distinctive approach to stylistic analysis that adopts a variety of procedures of linguistic description, from Chomsky's transformational grammar and Halliday's systemic grammar to Grice's conversational analysis, along with other contemporary linguistic approaches.

The book also introduces a checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories to be used to emphasize that the mechanisms of linguistic description are to be used in examining the literary style. The checklist, according to Leech and Short, is divided into four major categories: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context (75). For this thesis, it is imperative to refer to the categories in detail; the latter are in the form of questions, and the answers to these questions are used to accumulate stylistically valid data to be explored concerning the literary effect of the intended extract. As mentioned in Leech and Short's book (75-80), the linguistic and stylistic categories are:

1.4.2.1 Lexical Categories

Lexical categories relate to the linguistic forms of the vocabulary of a language mainly at the level of the word.

a. **General** – is the vocabulary simple or complex? Formal or colloquial? Descriptive or evaluative? General or specific? How far does the writer make use of the emotive and other associations of words, as opposed to their referential meaning? Does the text contain idiomatic phrases, and if so, with what kind of dialect or register are these idioms associated? Is there any use of rare or specialized vocabulary? Are any particular morphological categories noteworthy?

(e.g. compound words, words with particular suffixes)? To what semantic fields do words belong?

b. **Nouns**: Are the nouns abstract or concrete? What kinds of abstract nouns occur (e.g. nouns referring to events, perceptions, processes, moral qualities, social qualities)? What use is made of proper names? Collective nouns?

c. **Adjectives**: Are the adjectives frequent? To what kinds of attributes do adjectives refer? Psychological? Visual? Auditory? Color? Referential? Emotive? Evaluative? Etc. Are adjectives restrictive or non-restrictive? gradable or non-gradable? Attributive or predicative?

d. **Verbs**: Do the verbs carry an important part of the meaning? Are they stative (referring to states) or dynamic (referring to actions, events, etc)? Do they ‘refer’ to movements, physical acts, speech acts, psychological states or activities, perceptions, etc? Are they transitive, intransitive, linking (intensive), etc? Are they factive or non-factive?

e. **Adverbs**: Are adverbs frequent? What semantic functions do they perform (manner, place, time, degree, etc)? Is there any significant use of sentence adverbs (conjuncts such as so, therefore, however, disjuncts such as certainly, obviously, frankly)?

1.4.2.2 Grammatical Categories

Grammatical categories refer to a set of syntactic elements (words/phrases/sentences) in language that share similar characteristics of structure and distribution but not meaning. The

checklist for grammatical categories is divided into nine points: **sentence type, sentence complexity, clause types, clause structure, noun phrases, verb phrases, other phrase types, word classes, and general** (Leech and Short 76-78)

a. **Sentence type** – does the author use only statements (declarative sentence), or does he also use questions, commands, exclamations, or minor sentence types (such as sentences with no verb)? If these other types are used, what is their function?

b. **Sentence complexity** – do sentences on the whole have a simple or a complex structure? What is the average sentence length (in number of words)? What is the ratio of dependent to independent clauses? Does complexity vary strikingly from one sentence to another? Is complexity mainly due to (i) coordination, (ii) subordination, and (iii) parataxis (juxtaposition of clauses or other equivalent structures)? In what parts of a sentence does complexity tend to occur? For instance, is there any notable occurrence of anticipatory structure (e.g. of complex subjects preceding the verbs, of dependent clauses preceding the subject of a main clause)?

c. **Clause types** – what types of dependent clauses are favored: relative clause, adverbial clause, different types of nominal clauses (that- clauses, wh-clauses, etc)? Are reduced or non-finite clauses commonly used, and if so, of what type are they (infinitive clauses, -ing clauses, -ed clauses, verbless clauses)?

d. **Clause structure** – is there anything significant about clause elements (e.g. frequency of objects, complements, adverbials; of transitive or intransitive verb constructions)? Are there any unusual orderings (initial adverbials, fronting of object or complement, etc)? Do special kinds of clause construction occur (such as those with preparatory *it* or *there*)?

e. **Noun phrases** – are they relatively simple or complex? Where does the complexity lie (in premodification by adjectives, nouns, etc, or in postmodification by prepositional phrases, relative clauses, etc)? Note the occurrence of listings (e.g. sequence of adjectives), coordination, or apposition.

f. **Verb phrases** – are there any significant departures from the use of the simple past tense? For example, notice occurrences and functions of the present tense; of the progressive aspect (e.g. was lying); of the perfective aspect (e.g. has/had appeared); of modal auxiliaries (e.g. can, must, would, etc).

g. **Other phrase types** – is there anything to be said about other phrase types: prepositional phrases, adverb phrases, adjective phrases?

h. **Word classes** – having already considered major or lexical word classes, we may here consider minor word classes ('functional words'): prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, determiners, auxiliaries, and interjections. Are particular words of these types used for particular effect (e.g. the definite or indefinite article; first-person pronouns I, we, etc; demonstrative such as this and that; negative words such as not, nothing, no)?

i. **General** – note here whether any general types of grammatical construction are used to special effect; e.g. comparative or superlative constructions; coordinative or listing constructions; parenthetical constructions; appended or interpolated structures such as occur in casual speech. Do lists and coordination (e.g. lists of nouns) tend to occur with two, three, or more than three members?

1.4.2.3 Figures of Speech

a. **Grammatical and lexical schemes** – are there any cases of formal and structural repetition (anaphora, parallelism, etc) or mirror-image patterns (chiasmus)? Is the rhetorical effect of antithesis, reinforcement, climax, and anticlimax.

b. **Phonological schemes** – are there any phonological patterns of rhyme, alliteration, assonance, etc? Are there any salient rhythmical patterns? Do vowel and consonant sounds pattern or cluster in particular ways? How do these phonological features interact with meaning?

c. **Tropes** – are there any obvious violations of, or departures from the linguistic code? For example, are there any neologisms (such as *Americantly*)? Deviant lexical collocations (such as *portentous infants*)? semantic, syntactic, phonological, or graphological deviations? Such deviations will often be the clue to special interpretations associated with traditional figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, paradox, and irony. If such tropes occur, what kind of special interpretation is involved (e.g. metaphor can be classified as personifying, animizing, concretizing, synaesthetic, etc)? Because of its close connection with metaphor, simile may also be considered here. Does the text contain any similes, or similar constructions (e.g. ‘as if’ constructions)? What dissimilar semantic fields are related through similes?

1.4.2.4 Context and Cohesion

Under cohesion, we refer to ways in which one part of a text is linked to another, for example, how sentences are connected. This is the internal organization of the text. Under context, we considered the external relations of a text or a part of a text, seeing it as a discourse presupposing a social relation between its participants (author and reader; character and character, etc), and a sharing by participants of knowledge and assumptions. (Leech and Short, 1981, p.78-79)

a. **Cohesion** – does the text contain logical or other links between sentences (e.g. coordination conjunctions, or linking adverbials)? Or does it tend to rely on implicit connections of meaning? What sort of use is made of cross-reference by pronouns (she, it,

they, etc)? by substitute form (do, so, etc), or ellipsis? Alternatively, is any use made of elegant variation – the avoidance of repetition by the substitution of a descriptive phrase (as, for example, ‘the old lawyer’ or ‘her uncle’ may substitute for the repetition of an earlier ‘Mr. Jones’)? Are meaning connections reinforced by repetition of words and phrases, or by repeatedly using words from the same semantic field?

b. **Context** – does the writer address the reader directly, or through the words or thoughts of some fictional character? What linguistic clues (e.g. first-person pronouns I, me, my, mine) are there of the addresser-addressee relationship? What attitude does the author imply towards this subject? If a character’s words or thoughts are represented, is this done by direct quotation (direct speech), or by some other method (e.g. indirect speech, free indirect speech)? Are there significant changes of style occurring to who is supposedly speaking the words on the page?

The process of selecting the appropriate linguistic elements to be examined while engaging in a stylistic evaluation is highly connected to the literary concerns of the analyst; it is redundant to investigate the entirety of linguistic features of the text as it is possible to arrive at a remote interpretation from the researcher’s initial intention. In his review of the book *Style in Fiction*; Cureton praised Leech and Short’s checklist and its detailed application on 3 samples of literary texts, he maintained: “These analyses are excellent: detailed, multileveled, linguistically explicit, and aesthetically revealing” (363). Leech and Short’s checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories provides a comprehensive guideline for linguistic data collection for stylistic analysis. Paying close attention to the production of the linguistic structure of a literary text is believed to promote understanding and interpretation of the language of that text.

1.4.3 Crystal and Davy's Model:

The variety of approaches to stylistic analysis stems from the deficiencies of the traditional strategies adopted in language studies. Several researchers showed commitment to the study of literary style, yet each researcher had a different approach to how style should be investigated. Crystal and David labeled stylistics in a more general view as “the whole complex of varieties and styles that make up a language” (99); however, with literary language, stylistics is “a technique of explication which allows us to define objectively what an author has done in his use of language” (100).

In their book *Investigating English Style*, Crystal, and Davy introduced a more analytical model of stylistic analysis, which stemmed from the rate of occurrence of certain linguistic features in the text concerning external features. For them, the linguist must justify their intuitive choices of what features are stylistically important by exploring the alternative linguistic context of their occurrence (64).

In literature, the author is allowed to incorporate any use of language he desires; this is one of the main reasons literary texts are appealing to analysts. The understanding of the different varieties of language the author exploits in his/her text (the use of conversation, religious statements, and vernacular language in addition to many other varieties) is crucial in identifying the author's initial intention. To achieve this understanding of the varieties need to be explored in their original context (Crystal 100). Any use of language displays certain linguistic items that allow it to be identified with one or more extra-linguistic contexts. In other words, for stylistic analysis to be adequately carried out and for the literary style to be identified and understood, the analyst must be aware of the non-literary styles.

Crystal and Davy's approach to stylistic analysis denotes the next stage following the analyst's intuitive selection of the linguistic features that ought to be analyzed. The process is carried out within parallel frameworks, one is the linguistic framework that contains the levels

of analysis: phonological, graphitic, syntactic, lexical, and semantic and their sub-classification; the other is the stylistic framework which contains the dimensions of description: individuality, dialect, time, discourse (medium), discourse participation, province, status, modality, singularity, and their sub-classification.

The model emphasizes that, to form the overall stylistic structure of the text, the analyst needs to make two concurrent decisions: the first is assigning the feature to a particular level of analysis (linguistic framework), and the second is allocating the feature to one or more of the stylistic elements. Each feature should be labeled according to a binary description, i.e., a syntactic feature of a province, a phonological feature of a status, and so on. They regularly work with two sheets of paper in front of them, one listing the levels; and the other listing the various dimensions of description (Noman 3).

Crystal and Davy's model answers the question "what are the theoretical notions that need to be established to bridge the gap between the description of a language, on the one hand, and the description of a variety of that language, on the other?" (60). It is not concerned solely with analyzing the style of a literary language, "it treats style within the framework of general language variation" (Hendricks 990). The ultimate objective of stylistic analysis, according to Crystal and Davy, is the clarification of the full meaning and potential of language in use.

1.5. Foregrounding in stylistics

To adequately implement a stylistic analysis of a literary work, it is crucial to study the linguistic features used to display the significance of the text. This process involves two principles of relevance for the selection of stylistic elements: a literary criterion and a linguistic criterion, according to Leech and Short, these two criteria unite in the concept of foregrounding (69). The Russian formalists and Prague school of linguistics devised the term automatization, which "refers to the process of over-familiarity to which linguistic signs are

prone in everyday communication, so that users of language are no longer aware of their aesthetic possibilities.” (Wales 39). In literary language in general and poetry in particular, however, linguistic features are usually de-automatized or foregrounded. The term foregrounding is prevalent in the field of stylistics; the concept has its origin in the term *aktualisace* by the Czech theorists Jan Mukarovsky and Havránek, then was translated and introduced to stylistics by P.L. Garvin (1964).

In contrast to everyday language, where foregrounding is random and unconscious, in literary language, it is a systematic and structured process; the foregrounded elements are used to display the aesthetic function of language and to surprise the reader with linguistic structures that are usually taken for granted. Burke and Evers give a simple definition of the notion: “foregrounding highlights the poetic function of language, in particular its ability to deviate from the linguistic norm and to create textual patterns based on parallelism, repetition, or deviation from a norm (41). Their delineation was based on Leech’s understanding of the different forms of foregrounding; which he achieved via deviation (abnormal irregularity) and parallelism (abnormal regularity). (60)

The complementary relationship of the foregrounded devices (deviation and parallelism) acts to de-familiarize and stimulate the reader’s emotions towards the texts; moreover, it restrains the sum of interpretations the analyst may devise from a literary work. Van Peer distinguished the two; deviation is the linguistic item chosen outside the standard allowed choices; he distinguished three forms of deviation, internal deviation (from the text itself), external/ determinate deviation (occurs outside the text, departure from linguistic, literary, social and cultural conventions) and statistical deviation (departure from relative norms) (22). Parallelism on the other hand denotes a model of equivalences and/or contrasts that are coated in the standard patterns of language.

Mukarovský, Havránek, and Van Peer agree that foregrounding occurs on three levels of linguistic and stylistic structures, the phonetic level (e.g., alliteration, rhyme), the grammatical level (e.g., inversion, ellipsis), or the semantic level (e.g., metaphor, irony). Shklovsky emphasized the strong connection between deviation and emotions; he noted that stylistic devices in literary texts "emphasize the emotional effect of an expression" (9). In line with this convention; Short concurs with Shklovsky and believes all sorts of deviation have a psychological effect on the reader, if a text is deviated it is more noticeable, interesting, and exquisite thus the psychological effect it creates is known as foregrounding (11).

The stylistic theory of foregrounding is of high importance in the analysis of literary texts; it is then recognized as a practical concept that refers to the dynamic interaction between the author, literary text, and reader. One of the ultimate aims of constructing a literary work is influencing the reader; accordingly, the text is the only available material the author controls and uses to regulate the direction of the interpretation, the consciously motivated patterns (foregrounded structures) work to gratify the reader's aesthetic desires towards a literary text, as well as to guide the analyst's evaluation and interpretation of the text.

1.6 Major Stylistic Devices/Expressive Means

Creating a unique piece of literary work depends greatly on the writer's aesthetic proficiency in manipulating the language so it is attractive and fascinating for the reader; stylistic devices shape the style of the author and differentiate him/her from others. The analyst is expected to search not only for the use of such devices but for their absence as well. Accordingly, constructing a distinct style is not only about employing certain kinds of stylistic devices rather it is a matter of avoiding some kinds as well. As mentioned earlier, identifying stylistic devices to be analyzed is an intuitive process, therefore it is important not only to rely on a checklist to recognize these devices but also to depend on comparison to minimize

subjectivity. “The possibly relevant presence or absence of stylistic devices in a certain piece of discourse is more easily brought to light if the analyst compares it to another relevant piece of discourse that is expressed in the same (discussion) context” (Haaften 311).

Scrutinizing a literary work using stylistic analysis requires a detailed comprehensive account of the stylistic scheme used by the author; the process is carried out on multiple levels that hold implications to assist the analyst in his/her evaluation of the style of the author or text. Stylistic instruments are studied on phonological, syntactic, and lexical levels.

1.6.1 Phonological Stylistic Devices

Alliteration

Alliteration or initial rhyme is a phonological stylistic device that works deliberately to create an aesthetic effect in the literary text; it is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of neighboring words.

Example: Her **b**rown **b**raid **b**rushed the **b**ridge of her **b**row.

Assonance

Assonance also called head rhyme is the repetition of the same vowel at the beginning, middle, or end of two or more successive words in a sentence;

Example: **W**ater**f**alls ac**a**ross the **a**utumn **r**ocks.

Consonance

Consonance also referred to as end alliteration or consonantal assonance is a literary device that refers to the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning, middle, or end of words.

Example: **F**red **w**ondered **why** the **r**oad **w**ound to a jagged **e**nd.

The typical occurrence of these literary instruments is often found in poetic language; they produce either the effect of euphony (a sense of ease and comfort in pronouncing or hearing) or cacophony (a sense of strain and discomfort in pronouncing or hearing). However the use of sound devices to create an artistic effect in prose is infrequent, they are foregrounded mainly through the change of its common graphical representation, Katie Wales maintains the foregrounded sounds can be used for emphasis, and to aid memorability (15). Graphon is the deliberate deviation from the graphical structure of the word that is generally found in vernacular language, graphon holds several forms, one is mispronunciations in the speech of uneducated people (“peepul”, “jewinile”), another is the amalgamated forms (“gimme” (give me), “gonna” (going to), and also mispronunciations which show the physical defects of the speakers: stumbling, lisping.

Onomatopoeia

The use of words that imitate the object or action it signifies; makes the description more expressive and interesting. These words despite the rejection of linguists as being real words since they only comprise a small portion of the lexicon are to a degree considered as conventional as any other words (Wales 296). In literary language; onomatopoeia developed as an expressive iconic device the author uses to create vivid impressions.

A partial list of onomatopoeic words: atishoo, bang, biff, blare, boom, brr, buzz, caw, cheep, chirmp, dick, click-clack, clickety-click, cock-a-doodle-do, coo, crack, crash, ding-dong, flop, froufrou, glug-glug, gobble-gobble (of a turkey), grr, growl, gurgle, hee-haw, hum, knock knock, meow, moo, pit-a-pat, plop, pom pom pom, puff-puff, purr, quack, rataplan, rat-tat, rustle, sizzle, slap, smack, snap, sniff, snore, splash, squeak, swish, thud, tick-tock, ting-a-ling, tinkle, vroom vroom, wallop, whack, yum-yum. (Dupriez 310-311)

Example: The **buzzing** bee flew away.

The **rustling** leaves kept me awake.

1.6.2 Lexical Stylistic Devices

Metaphor

A metaphor is the comparison between two unlike things. It is a stylistic device used to implicitly transfer the similarity of features or characteristics of two different entities (Without “as” or “like”), in other words, a metaphor does not only compare two things but asserts that one thing is another thing. For the metaphor to be more expressive the two compared objects need to be as different and unexpected as possible, according to Galperin a metaphor is “the power of realizing two lexical meanings simultaneously.” (140); due to this power; this stylistic device when used in literary texts is responsible for creating the intended image in the reader’s mind by making the abstract or unknown concrete and familiar.

Example: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” William Shakespeare

Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an object or concept is given a different designation mainly one that is directly and logically associated with, like *the press* (‘newspapers’), *the stage* (‘theatre’), *the Crown* (‘monarchy’) and *The White House* (‘US Presidency’). Metonymy is often confused with synecdoche, the latter is understood to be a special variety of metonymy. Synecdoche is also a stylistic device used to refer to a concept by replacing it with an element that is an actual part of it, such as a *set of wheels* (‘car’). Metonymy has also been discussed in relation to metaphor, mainly since the two stylistic devices work on the level of replacement of an expected word by the unexpected (Wales 268); however, the two concepts are different in which metaphor shows similarity of two completely different objects or concepts unlike metonymy which replaces the object it is mostly connected to.

Example: This land belongs to **the crown**.

Irony

Irony is a stylistic device in which the contextual evaluative meaning of a word is directly opposite to its dictionary meaning; in other words, it is an intentionally used expression to indicate the opposite of what is required in the context or intended by the writer or speaker; it is often sarcastic and negative. As a literary/stylistic device, irony holds three main forms: verbal, dramatic, and situational. In verbal irony what is said contradicts what is implied, in dramatic irony, readers hold more information than the characters of the literary work, in situational irony, the characters oppose the actions that the reader expected throughout the story.

Example: "I have great faith in fools - self-confidence my friends will call it." *Edgar Allan Poe* Marginalia

Oxymoron

Oxymoron is a type of paradox that combines two contradictory meanings usually an adjective-noun ("Friendly fire") or adverb-adjective ("inertly strong") relationship. As a literary device, an oxymoron has the effect of creating an impression, enhancing a concept, and even entertaining the reader.

Example: Low skyscraper, sweet sorrow, silent scream, cheerful pessimist, sad joy, wise fool, tender cruelty, despairing hope.

Simile

A simile is a literary device used to assert the similarity of two essentially different objects; it is employed in literary texts to compare unfamiliar things to something known to the reader, it uses connective words such as *like*, *as*, *such as*, *as if*, *seem*. Galperin maintains "To use a simile is to characterize one object by bringing it into contact with another object

belonging to an entirely different class of things” (167). Though simile and metaphor are both literary devices of comparison, the former allows the two compared ideas to remain distinct despite their similarities, whereas the latter seeks to equate two ideas despite their differences.

Example: I wandered lonely as a cloud

In the eastern sky there was a yellow patch like a rug laid for the feet of the coming sun.
Stephen Crane (The Red Badge of Courage 8)

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a stylistic device used to emphasize something through deliberate exaggeration or overstatement, Dupriez defined it as “An exaggerated or extravagant statement, used to express strong feeling or produce a strong impression, and not intended to be understood literally” (215).

Example: Her voice is full of money. *The Great Gatsby* (F. Scott Fitzgerald 128)

Euphemism

Euphemism is a word or phrase used to replace an unpleasant word or expression with a conventionally more acceptable one; it is generally used as a manner of politeness to spare an individual’s feelings.

Example: Enhanced interrogation (torture)

Correctional facility (prison)

1.6.3 Syntactic Stylistic Devices

Stylistic Inversion

Inversion also known in Rhetoric as Hyperbaton is a stylistic technique in which the standard word order (S—P—O) in the sentence is reversed to achieve a particular effect of emphasis. This device according to Galperin is a form of emphatic constructions that are

regarded as disruptions of the normal word order in the sentence, however, in reality, these constructions are as common as the traditional word order structure, he continues to point out that “inversion must be regarded as an expressive means of the language having typical structural models.” (205)

The most frequently used patterns of stylistic inversion in both English prose and English poetry are as follows (Galperin 204):

1. The object is placed at the beginning of the sentence.
2. The verb is placed after the word it modifies. This model is often used when there is more than one attribute, for example: "With fingers *weary and worn...*" (Thomas Hood). "Once upon a midnight *dreary...*" (E. A. Poe)
3. a) The predicative is placed before the subject, as in "A good generous prayer it was." (Mark Twain), or b) the predicative stands before the link-verb, and both are placed before the subject, as in "Rude am I in my speech..." (Shakespeare)
4. The adverbial modifier is placed at the beginning of the sentence, as in: "Eagerly I wished the morrow." (Poe). "My dearest daughter, at your feet I fall." (Dryden). "A tone of most extraordinary comparison Miss Tox said it in." (Dickens)
5. Both modifier and predicate stand before the subject, as in: "In went Mr. Pickwick." (Dickens). "Down dropped the breeze..." (Coleridge)

Repetition

Repetition involves the intentional use of recurrent words or phrases more than once in speech or a written work to either draw the attention of the hearer or reader or to emphasize the idea and make it memorable. Repetition is considered both an expressive means of language and a stylistic device; the former is used to communicate strong feelings to the

reader in which the speaker or writer manifests through intonation, the latter however is used to fix the attention of the reader on the keyword in the sentence. Galperin (211)

Example: “Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath: “‘The horror! The horror!’” (Heart of Darkness 12)

Anaphora

Anaphora is a literary device that is considered a form of repetition; it involves the repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences. It can be effectively used to emphasize descriptive and emotional impacts. Wales (20)

Example: You are kind. You are smart. You are important. *The Help* (Kathryn Stockett 443)

Enumeration

Enumeration according to Galperin is a stylistic device that lists separate things, objects, phenomena, properties, and actions one by one (216). It is a type of amplification (rhetorical device writers use to elaborate a sentence or statement by adding further information) used by writers to avoid ambiguity and illuminate an idea for the readers, effective in translating the abstract into concrete terms and the general into the particular (Dupriez 158)

Example: “When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews, and Gentiles, Protestants, and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, ‘Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!’” “*I Have a Dream* (Martin Luther King 6)

Ellipsis

Elliptical sentences typically found in spoken language converted to written language and became stylistic devices in which a part of a sentence or event is deliberately omitted; the reader is expected to understand the missing part from the context. Wales (268) defines it as: “omission of part of an utterance or grammatical structure, which can be readily understood by the hearer or reader in the co-text or the context, and which can be ‘recovered’ explicitly.”

Example: “Did he ... peacefully?” she asked.

“Oh, quite peacefully, ma’am,” said Eliza. “You couldn’t tell when the breath went out of him. He had a beautiful death, God be praised.”

“And everything ...?” *Dubliners* (James Joyce 15)

The aforementioned stylistic means are a minor sample from a large list of devices employed in literary texts. In Stylistic analysis; the analyst attempts to identify the reason behind the choice of these expressive means. To see if the author employed these devices consciously or unconsciously? And what is their significance in meaning construction? The answers to these questions will help the researcher identify the style of the author or the text.

1.7 Conclusion

Chapter one gave a rundown of stylistics in general and literary style in particular; as an attempt to map and guide this research on firm grounds. A breakdown of the concept of style and, a synopsis of linguistic and literary stylistics in addition to the central methodological frameworks that contribute to and facilitate the stylistic analysis are also highlighted in the current chapter. Considering that stylistics is the study of language via an inclusive analysis of the grammatical, phonological, and lexical features that differ according to the researcher’s purpose of investigation, style, or, his/her language preferences, this chapter will lay the theoretical foundation for the current research. With a clear understanding

of the key theories outlined in this chapter, the next chapter will shift focus to scrutinizing two of the most celebrated works in African American Literature *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *Push* by Sapphire, which are the cornerstones of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Alice Walker and Sapphire: A Legacy of Strength in African American Women's Literature

2.1 Introduction

On the grounds that the present thesis is a stylistic analysis, it is crucial to illuminate the literary works pertinent to the objectives of the research. The current chapter is devoted to reviewing two of the most celebrated novels in the spectrum of African American literature, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *Push* by Sapphire. The story, characterization, and language of the two novels are intensively constructed to mold beautiful works of fiction. The appeal of crafting a piece of art that channels the inner and outer torments of colored women was at the heart of African American women's literature. Written and oral productions touching on Black women's lives remain unwavering through centuries, Black female authors, poets, and storytellers fully participated in the creation of both the oral vernacular and the literate traditions.

Considering this research work is essentially about Black women writers in the US, the researcher estimated the importance of providing an insight into Female writings and the way they evolved in form and concerns; in addition to highlighting common themes and the image of women in African American literature. The life and work of both authors along with the summary of the two novels are also featured, additionally; a discussion of feminism and womanism is underlined for being one of the pillars in the works of Black women authors. It is also imperative to pinpoint the Epistolary novel, Bildungsroman, stream of consciousness, and African American Vernacular English that characterized both novels.

2.2 African American Literature

2.2.1 Literary Voices: African American Women's Writings

Throughout the history of African American literature, the writings of black women embraced a wide diverse literary convention; in the course of the slavery era, African American women managed to preserve the tradition and culture of their ancestors by devoting their works to shed light on the common oppression black people in general and women in particular suffered from. Female writers communicated stories that were at the heart of the black society particularly female predicaments, their diverse literary works throughout history mirror narratives of personal development directed towards creating a whole self, narratives that portray the journey of black women's characters from subordination towards independence at a time when freedom and equality were extreme notions far from the reach of these women.

Black women have been producing works in America since the early 18th century; a time of slavery and oppression. The only hunt for freedom for such women was through their art; quilting was one of the central folk arts at the time, depicting scenes from the Bible and historical events made by Harriet Powers, a woman born into slavery in Georgia in 1837 and freed after the Civil War; her works have been preserved in the Smithsonian and Boston's Museum of Fine Art. Literature by blacks at the time of slavery was an endeavor to establish a place for themselves in the white community, a strong sign of their humanity, and an intellectual and artistic foundation. It proved that females played a major part in re-erecting the nation after the devastating time of slavery.

After the Civil War and during the Reconstruction period (1863-1877), African Americans obtained citizenship rights, and black women organized associations and literary societies to act for the entire African American community; "They identified education and literacy as the keys to success and for maintaining their freedom" (Beaulieu 554). Sadly, this

newfound freedom didn't last long as W.E.B. Du Bois maintained, "The slaves went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery" (26) Slave narratives before the Civil War had a titanic interest by the whites; the violence, racism, and all the discriminatory practices black people and especially black women suffered from at that time were appealing.

The Reconstruction era, on the other hand, witnessed a decline of interest in slave narratives, essentially since the audience was no longer attracted to stories told by ex-slaves. African American women reshaped slave narratives to catch the fancy of readers; they authored narratives with biblical conventions along with political and secular notions. The first slave narrative by a woman was written in 1861 by Harriet Jacobs, who authored *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*; Harriet published under a pseudonym, for it was not allowed for colored women to publish at that time. The text was published in the New York newspaper discussing her childhood years of slavery and oppression.

Despite being segregated and treated as less of a human by their race (black men), black women writers ascertained themselves as representatives for both their race and gender. In the twentieth-century, black women's literature flourished essentially owing to the Civil Rights Movement; Gertrude Mossell (qtd. in Beaulieu 556) called it the "Woman's Century", Black females gained voting rights, more access to education, equal protection, and equal wages between men and women. Between the 1910s and 1920s, the history of black literature witnessed the beginning of a new era known as the Harlem Renaissance, the movement gave birth to some of the most prominent women writers at the time who adopted new literary genres including drama, the short story, and biographies, such as Maggie Pogue Johnson's *Virginia Dreams* (1910), Katherine Davis Chapman Tillman's *Fifty Years of Freedom* (1910). Georgia Douglas Johnson's *The Heart of a Woman* (1918) and Mamie Mary Burrill, an

educator, actor, and playwright, published her one-act feminist play in (1919) *They That Sit in Darkness*. Jessie Fauset published *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931).

Unfortunately, at the beginning of World War II blacks lost their minimum privileges earned several years ago, African American males and females joined forces and began political demonstrations to demand back their rights. Black women during this period contributed enormously to the protests, Mary McLeod Bethune organized the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in (1935) to communicate black women's concerns. In (1942), the organization published the *African American Women's Journal* which protested everything from the lack of human and civil rights, unequal pay, fair housing, and equal educational opportunities as well as the right to fight in the U.S. armed forces during World War II (Beaulieu 562). Gwendolyn Brooks answered Margaret Walker's charge in *For My People* with her *A Street in Bronzeville*, the two authors exchanged literary debates through their texts, Evans maintained that "Afro-American woman remained an all-pervading absence until she was rescued by the literary activity of her black sisters in the latter part of the twentieth century".(4)

Black Arts Movement (1960–1969) is the literary correspondent to the non-violent Civil Rights Movement, Aretha Franklin's song "Respect" voiced what black women were demanding. What distinguished this movement from other literary periods is the language; "Alternate spelling of words to reflect urban black speech and the lack of capitalization and/or punctuation characterizes the movement's poetics." (Beaulieu 564) in addition to taking another approach to feminism different in terms of degree and technique from their previous peers. women Poets and writers of this era criticized everything that oppressed women including black men and women as well; they were the first to have the courage to reject their mothers, in Carolyn Rodgers's "Jesus Was Crucified" she disapproved of her

mother's acceptance of white America's conventions, Nikki Giovanni's "Woman Poem" is a feminist statement on gender roles as well as a critique of how black women treat each other.

Even though feminist works dominated the 1960s, black women were racially dismissed from every white feminist association. Most of the time, the experiences of white/middle-class women were described as universal *women's experiences* thus racially ignoring the experiences of black women. Being sexually oppressed by Black men and racially discriminated by White women, Black women were faced with the inevitability of constructing a Black Feminist Movement that empowers them; Toni Cade Barbara, Ntozake Shange, Angela Davis, Toni Morrison, Jane Jordan, and other Black women broke the silence in the 1970s. These African American women notably Alice Walker in the 1980s and 1990s developed a *voice*, a self-defined Black women's standpoint about Black Womanhood. Black women appear to have a voice, and with this voice comes a new series of concerns.

Alice Walker coined the term Womanism as the official label of the movement in her *Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* collection of essays; she also made history as the first African American writer to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1982. Other writers who continued the tradition of womanist literary writings include Marita Golden, Tina McElroy Ansa, Gloria Naylor, Bebe Moore Campbell, Lorene Cary, Shay Youngblood, and poets Natasha Trethewey and Sapphire. Patricia Hill Collins's publication *Black Feminist Thought* and her book *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* are extensions of the modern Black Feminist intellectual convention.

All African American women writers throughout the centuries were able to achieve a prevalent academic recognition. Through the variety of subjects, artistic styles, and distinctive qualities, these women managed to create a voice and retaliate against racism, sexism, oppression, and injustice acts put upon them not only by the Whites, Black Men but by Black

Women as well, according to Wisker “Literary activity has rescued silenced, disenfranchised and invisible Black women from the margins, enabling them to speak and to be seen and heard.” (37). In the twenty-first century, Black women writers are granted bigger freedom, and bigger writing and publication opportunities mostly due to the internet, social media, and film media. Despite having the privilege of freedom and autonomy unlike their ancestors; these female writers still communicate issues of equity, racial and gender discrimination, and fighting for Black liberties.

2.2.2 Exploring Common Themes in African American Women Authors' Works

Literature written by colored men and women was and still is remarkable and brilliant only for accurately depicting the genuine sufferings of the black community to the world; and holding on to their values, traditions, and philosophies in their works. Though several white American authors such as Harper Lee and Alan Paton attempted to give a picture of the life of the blacks, it was never as adequate as the writings of the black authors themselves; who gave the readers vivid representations of the unjustified miseries of African American individuals experienced by the whites. Throughout the history of black literature; both men and women addressed numerous themes in their writings; however, it is fair to say those female writers were more dedicated to the cause than men primarily for having to bear double suffering and savagery not only from the whites but the colored men as well. Women forwarded themes ranging from slavery, violence, race, and literacy to family, identity, womanism, and freedom.

Education was one of the biggest challenges African Americans faced from the slavery era to the Civil War and Reconstruction period, literacy was a privilege for the Whites and a prohibition for the blacks. Slave owners disallowed slaves to read and write, suppressed their communication, and prohibited the use of African languages to ensure their submission and absolute compliance. Ironically, white Europeans used illiteracy as an excuse to enslave Africans for not qualifying as humans according to their standards. During the era of slavery,

both black men and women were unschooled; however, men gained minimum rights to education, unlike women.

With these rights male authors were able to convey their experiences as slaves, Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* made most famous, Beaulieu (550) sees Douglass's work as a foundation of literacy to be the groundwork for black men's identity and freedom in the White society disregarding women's rights of education and liberty. Harriet Jacobs's slave narrative offers a woman's view of slavery. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), she was able to depict the vivid image of the physical and emotional injuries black women suffered from.

Literary writings debating slave experience with all its facets of violence and inhuman white torment for the blacks dominated the early 18th century until 1865 the official abolishing of slavery. Slave narratives written by oppressed people who were treated as anything but human beings acted as a plan to rouse anti-slavery emotions and to give a voice to the voiceless American blacks, Olson maintained that: "The slave narrative became the sword African Americans thrust into the heart of the inhumanity of slavery and white atrocities" (794), this genre was considered by many scholars as the launch of African American literary tradition. Themes such as slavery, violence, and racism were at the heart of several literary works; writers like Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), Richard Wright (1908-1960), James Baldwin (1924-1987), Toni Morrison (1931-Date) and numerous other black writers who helped shape the African American literature the world is familiar with today.

In the light of conditions that seemed unpropitious for extensive engagement of black Women in literary vocations, these brave women took center stage as advocates for freedom and equality. Despite their works being mostly tools to highlight the dreadful concerns of the black community; they also illuminated themes like love, religion, family, and black

Feminism, proudly called Womanism secured a place in their literary works. Themes of family and love were very prevalent in African American literature, authors either displayed the importance of family and its role in overcoming the hardships African Americans faced; such as *12 Years a Slave* and *The Song of Solomon*. The authors also exposed the fallouts of not having a family nor experiencing the strength of love in healing and empowering the soul; several works mirrored these issues such as *The Color Purple* and *Push*.

2.2.3 Images of Women in African American Literature

The images of black women in literary tradition have been negatively stereotyped from the early writings of white male and female authors, depicting them as classless, illiterate, problematic, and inferior. This conception dates back to the era of slavery and reconstruction, although it is misleading and inaccurate it was widely accepted as a fact for an extended period. Painting images of colored women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas supports the rationale behind American black women's oppression. Challenging these controlling images has long been a core theme in black feminist thought. (Collins 69) the mammy figure is the most prominent black female figure in southern white literature, the black woman was portrayed as the counterpart to the white woman.

Black women's images in literature are numerous; each is conceived differently by different literary critics. Christian pinpointed the differences in the characterization of black and white women in literature. According to her, the mammy figure was portrayed as black, fat, nurturing, religious, kind, and above all strong. A woman who was desired and needed to fulfill the responsibilities of white women, a woman who demands so little but offers considerably. Notwithstanding, the white woman was depicted as pretty, slim, frail, and unable to do hard work. Christian continues to relate the two figures as dependent on one another, the white woman's image would be degraded if she nursed and took care of children.

The mammy character's role was mainly physical; she was a harmless slave and a surrogate to bear all the physical fears of her white counterpart. (2)

Another characterization of black women by the white western society according to Patricia Hill Collins is the matriarch; this figure presents a negative image of black women. Sociologists E. Franklin Frazier and Daniel P. Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* defined the matriarch woman as the decision-maker in the family, as mentioned in the report; black women's mastership at home is the focal point behind black poverty and illiteracy of their children. These women were fierce, unfeminine, and aggressive which according to Collins "the matriarch represented a failed mammy, a negative stigma to be applied to African-American women who dared reject the image of the submissive, hardworking servant." (75)

An additional account of black women's figure is the jezebel or prostitute, this image was predominant not only in literature but mostly in society. This "Black Slut" was depicted as temptress and seductress to the white master, Bell hooks maintained in her book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Woman and Feminism* that this portrayal of women is the white men's strategy to escape their cruel sexual acts by diverting the public attention towards a misleading idea of black women "Black women were naturally seen as the embodiment of female evil and sexual lust. They were labeled jezebels and sexual temptresses and accused of leading white men away from spiritual purity into sin." (4) The black woman "became the symbol of the unconscious, sinful lust that haunted the psyche of Puritan white America" (Purkayastha 27)

At the same time as white southern American literature focused on the mammy figure as the dominant black female image, African American literature opted for another approach concentrating on the tragic image of the mulatta. This title represents the clash between two contradictory cultures; the birth of African American women from a sexual relationship

between the white master and the black female slave. Christian condemns this relationship for breaking the philosophical concept of slavery, she questions, since blacks are not humans how is it possible for humans (white masters) to mate with nonhumans (black slaves), and if they did; what would the product be, human or nonhuman? (3) the tragedy of the mulatta put her at the center of several African American literary works; *Clotel* (1850) by William Wells Brown paved the way for this heroin to be a lasting image in black literature for decades to come, she was portrayed as beautiful, courageous, refined and worthy of freedom.

The welfare mother is among the many representations of black women in literature. For a long time, black women were denied social welfare benefits in America; thus there was no need for this depiction. However, when black women earned more political rights in the U.S. consequently gaining equality of access to social state services, the need arose for this controlling image. An image of a lazy, irresponsible woman who depends entirely on welfare money for financial support.

For the white American society, the welfare mother was held accountable for the entirety of economic and moral problems spread in the society; this cruel accusation is another form of oppression performed on African American women. As reported by Collins the welfare mother like the matriarch was pictured as a “bad mother”, yet unlike the matriarch, the welfare mother was not aggressive, she was also compared to the matriarch about tending to their children, “while the matriarch’s unavailability contributed to her children’s poor socialization, the welfare mother’s accessibility is deemed the problem. She is portrayed as being content to sit around and collect welfare, shunning work, and passing on her bad values to her offspring. (79)

The aforementioned rendition of African American women was mainly in white authors’ works. Black writers especially females were attentive to breaking the inherent

stereotype of black women in the American white society, they overburdened themselves with the quest of rectifying the misleading images attributed to black women and creating a new one on the premise of establishing the subjectivity of colored women. In their writings, the black female has a completely different self-consciousness; she was given new physical and psychological images that contradict what is depicted by white female authors. The black woman was finally seen as a three-dimensional person not just a picture on the wall. She had a culture, a gender, a race, and visions to share with the world. (Amri 33)

2.3 Biography to the Authors

2.3.1 Alice Walker: Life and literary legacy

One of the prominent African American female figures in history is Alice Malsenior Walker; born on February 9, 1944, in the small and poor town of Eatonton, Georgia. One of the early accidents in her life is credited for her beginnings in writing stories and poems; young Alice was shot in her eye by her brother which left her blind and thus resulted in creating a timid and isolated child who fantasized about suicide mainly for seeing herself ugly. She found in writing the only escape from her sufferings, Walker maintained that the unexpected hazard enabled her to truly see and appreciate people and things, to perceive different relationships, to cope, and learn how to be persistent enough to care about how would these relationships turned out (qtd. in Beck 203) Walker's early teen years witnessed a good turn of events; her unhappy childhood injury was the reason for securing a scholarship to Spelman College, a black women's school in Atlanta. Walker was gripped by the Civil Rights Movement during the two years (1961-1963) she spent in college; this time was marked by a newfound intellectual and social awakening.

Alice Walker's writing career began in 1964 when she accepted a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College; a predominantly white women's school in Bronxville, New York. She traveled to Africa and returned a pregnant teen with suicidal thoughts; for her, the only

options she had were either to kill herself or get an abortion (which was illegal and inaccessible to people of color) fortunately her friend helped her to get an abortion and thus her life back. During this period, she wrote several poems that focused mainly on Africa, love, and suicide. The collection *Once* was later published in 1968.

After graduation Walker showed increased interest in the Civil Rights Movement, she worked as a writer concerned with biographies and autobiographies of black women. She married Melvyn Rosenman Leventhal in 1969, a white civil rights lawyer, and moves to Jackson, Mississippi with him. Alice Walker's profession took off in the seventies as she was awarded the Radcliffe Institute Fellowship and published her first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. She worked as a teacher at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Wellesley College, where she lectured one of the first classes in the nation on gender focusing on African American women's literature. Not long after that, she published several other works characterized by similar themes from racism and sexism to economic and social oppression. On the whole, her writings reflect the social issues that black people (especially women) experienced within Southern American society.

In the same year of her divorce in 1976, Walker published her second novel *Meridian* which is considered to be one of her best works. The novel has been described as an account of black women and the inner dynamics of the Civil Rights Movement. From 1977 to 1981 Walker published numerous works from poetry and short stories to novels, yet her most appreciated work was *The Color Purple* in 1982; the book remained on the New York Times bestseller list for more than a year. In 1983 the novel won the American Book Award along with the Pulitzer Prize making Walker the first African American woman ever to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, it was later adopted as a movie nominated for several Academy Awards directed by Steven Spielberg in 1985 and a Broadway musical in 2004. In 1983 she published her first nonfiction collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*

discussing herself, the civil rights movement, literature, and black women. The collection also introduces her later celebrated and prominent womanist ideology; Walker advocated for the freedom of black Women from the oppression of both black and white communities.

During the nineties and the first decade of the twenty-first century, Walker continues along the same path, publishing many different works. Her fifth novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* presents several minor characters from *The Color Purple* to tell their story. Alice Walker was and still is one of the outstanding black female authors in history; all her works contribute somehow to the black feminist movement where the rights of black women should be preserved, their freedom from male oppression, sexism, and racism should be secured and their breakoff from cultural and social conventions is to be attained.

2.3.2 Sapphire: Her Life in Literature

Ramona Lofton better known as Sapphire was born on August 4, 1950, into a military family; she spent her early years moving from one city to another until finally settling down in New York in 1977 where she graduated and began teaching in numerous literacy programs for children and adults. Ramona changed her name and began writing (poetry) and dancing in her twenties. The African American author was not privileged with a good or at least a normal childhood, she was sexually abused by her father along with her other siblings which the author never identified as a sinful act or a crime as a child.

In 1988 after the death of several important individuals in her life (her mother, brother, and friends in 1986), Sapphire intensely scrutinized her life coming to the dreadful conclusion of the sexual molesting she experienced as a child; she credited the overcoming the hardships and sufferings to her writings "Had I not been able to write, I think I would have lost my mind," she told a Harper's Bazaar interviewer. The newfound freedom and power she obtained were transmitted to her young students whom she educated and enrolled herself as an

advocate for ending rape, denouncing incest, and exposing the sexual exploitation and victimization of women.

Her first published work was a self-published volume *Meditations on the Rainbow* (1987). She became an active writer by her forties with her publication of *American Dreams* (1994) and *Black Wings & Blind Angels* (1999), *Publisher's Weekly* deemed *American Dreams* to be “one of the strongest debut collections of the '90s,” while *The Advocate* found *Black Wings & Blind Angels* “a must for poetry fans.” Sapphire received the MacArthur Foundation Scholarship in poetry and won first place in Downtown Magazine's Year of the Poet III Award, in addition to receiving the M.F.A. from the writing program at Brooklyn College in 1995.

1996 marked the birth of Sapphire's legacy; she published her first novel *Push*. The novel was and remains her best literary work; it exhibited her growth as a writer and a woman. *Push* (1996) received several awards, has been translated into numerous languages, and was adapted as the Academy Award-winning film *Precious* (2009). The same as any work of art, the novel was both admired and criticized, however, it enlisted her among the greatest African American female writers; most critics were fascinated by “the voice—ignorant, terrified, rebellious, dissociated, witty, evolving—of Precious Jones” the protagonist of the novel (Beaulieu 770). *Sapphire's Literary Breakthrough* offers conventional and new scholarly voices to interpret Sapphire's social justice concerns and to locate her contributions within larger African American literary traditions and cultural landscapes. (McNeil et al 1).

Sapphires' works touch on the concerns of black feminism, social injustice, racism, literacy, and incest among several other issues. The analysis of her works was mostly done on two major trends, one is placing Sapphire in a greater position in literary studies and the other

is exploiting her works to demonstrate particular critical theories (Parks 228). Sapphire for the most part was compared to other African American female writers such as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison; in the article *Beyond Morrison and Walker: Looking Good and Looking Forward in Contemporary Black Women's Stories*, Shelley Reid positions Sapphire's writing in the tradition started by Alice Walker and Toni Morrison. Reid argues that Sapphire's work is "already a part of the tradition [of African American female writers], and thus demands—and often deserves—our attention and careful consideration"

Fourteen years after the publication of her first novel, Sapphire's long-awaited second novel *The Kid* (2011) is a sequel to her novel *Push* which tells the story of Precious Jones' son Abdul Jones by narrating the struggles and hardships he faced as a child after the death of his mother. His journey of survival and awakening is voiced in a different way from what readers expected. Sapphire portrays Abdul as a victim in the opening pages of the novel, as the novel progresses, the traumas, and sexual and physical abuse he had to endure as an orphan child rolled him into the role of the victimizer rather than remaining a victim himself. "There is a cycle of abuse that is very much above water, and then there's another area of the cycle that is very much hidden. That's part of what I wanted to bring out in the text." (Sapphire 1). Sapphire maintained that Abdul's story is the cycle every victim of sexual abuse and incest is bound to go through if not properly embraced and integrated by members of society.

2.4 Understanding *The Color Purple*: A Summary

The Color Purple by Alice Walker first published in 1982 is considered one of the best feminist or womanist works in modern African American literature. The novel debates all kinds of forms of oppression that African American females faced during the first half of the twentieth century, from gender and racial discrimination to racism, sexism, and patriarchy. Due to its remarkable story, striking language, and notable characters, the novel won both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, making Walker the first African

American female to hold such honor. The uniqueness of the novel and the admiration of the readers contributed to its adaptation into a film in 1985 by Steven Spielberg starring some of the best African American Hollywood actresses, including Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey, and Margaret Avery among others.

The Color Purple is characterized as a bildungsroman novel written in the epistolary form; Nelson in his book *Ethnic American Literature, An Encyclopedia for Students* says: “The Color Purple is ostensibly an epistolary novel; it also contains elements of the epic, romance, realist, and bildungsroman tradition.” (506). After winning the National Book Award for fiction, the novel was praised by numerous critics; Anna Clark celebrated Alice Walker for devising an epistolary novel in a unique way that did not deviate from the norms and values of the traditional African American literature (1), she maintained “Reading the novel, you don’t merely watch Celie change; you feel it in the beat and rhythm of her words,”. Harris honored the novel stating that: “To complain about the novel is to commit treason against black women writers” (155)

By way of contrast, the novel received a fair share of attacks for its harsh representation of African American males, Philip Royster blames Walker for —the depiction of violent black men who physically and psychologically abuse their wives and children... [and for the] depiction of lesbianism. (347) For her defense, Alice Walker published a collection of essays *In Search Of Our Mothers’ Gardens* to illuminate everyone who censured her:

The white male writers may be more conscious of their evil (which, after all, has been documented for several centuries – in words and the ruin of the land, the earth) than black male writers, who, along with black and white women, have seen themselves as the recipients of that evil and therefore on the side of Christ, of the oppressed, of the innocent. (251)

The novel is a slave narrative scripted using a collection of letters that begins with Celie (the protagonist) writing letters to God and ends with letters from and to her sister Nettie. In the early pages of the novel, the letters offer a vivid depiction of the oppression, sexual abuse, alienation, and victimization that African American women suffer from. In the end, the letters explore the loyalties, independence, and triumphs of black women. Celie is a fourteen years old black girl who lives in rural Georgia (a male-dominated world); she is repeatedly raped by her stepfather (Pa) after her mother falls ill and isn't able to meet his needs, he says "You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't" (Walker 8). After the death of her mother, young Celie is impregnated twice by her stepfather and has two babies whom Pa had sold to another family and made her believe they died. Because her stepfather frequently threatens her not to tell anybody about his sexual exploitation he orders: "You better shut up and get used to it" (Walker 8), helpless Celie only finds comfort in writing letters to God addressing her bewildering life and fate.

Pa compels Celie to marry Albert a widowed man with four children, Albert's first intention is to marry beautiful young Nettie not ugly Celie but Pa convinces him to take Celie instead. Her new married life is crueler; she is treated as a slave rather than a wife and a mother. The idea of rebelling against her husband or anyone who does her harm never crossed her mind. Celie is stubborn but at the same time tolerates the oppression she goes through and gets used to it, the same as many African American females at that time. She loses the only family bond she has when her sister Nettie travels to Africa and Celie believes she died; Nettie always encouraged her sister to study and not be ignorant to have a weapon that one day will help her fight back.

The novel also revolves around the journey of Celie from subordination to independence; at the core of this venture are the female relationships that influenced Celie to be independent. She befriends Sophia Butler her stepson's wife; a strong, fearless, and

rebellious woman both physically and psychologically. During the initial encounter with Sophia; Celie felt jealous of her strength to fight back against any violence acted on her by any man so she encouraged Harpo to beat her for her rebellious acts. Celie's actions are not deliberate; they somehow represent the status of abused African American women and the fact that the violence and oppression they experience by the men in their lives are firmly established as conventional and necessary.

Fortunately, Sophia was able to break the stereotyped image in Celie's mind denoting the earliest support and encouragement for Celie to rebel and push back against the malicious men in her life, when Sofia realizes the obedient state of Celie in being silent and only communicating with God through writing she encourages her to bash Albert's head and think about heaven later (Walker 32). As the novel is feminist or womanist in nature, every critical life-changing relationship in Celie's life has been with women, her sister Nettie was her source of hope and desire to be alive; her friend Sophia changed her perspective on submissiveness to men, however, the most powerful and influential relationship was with Shug Avery, a Blues singer and ironically her husband's mistress.

Walker depicted Shug as a dynamic character with multiple roles most of them related to Celie; she was portrayed as her mother, friend, lover, and sexual mentor. Celie's admiration and love for Shug lasted for years seeing that Walker represented Shug as a model for the ideal African American woman that Celie and any other oppressed female aspires to become; she is beautiful, talented, strong, and independent. Their relationship creates a radical change in Celie's life because Celie feels safer with women she finds solace and care with Shug Avery that she should have found in her family and with her husband.

Following an eventful narrative, the novel ends with Walker depicting a completely different character from the one in the opening pages, Celie's journey to self-healing went

through various stages and ended with her being the confident independent woman she always aspired to be but never believed she could. She divorced Albert and moved to Memphis with Shug Avery, her writing and speaking skills developed enormously at the end of the novel making her an intellectually competent female.

Celie started her own clothing company 'Folkspants Unlimited Company' which gave her economic independence and thus liberated her autonomous thinking from the traditional beliefs of 19th-century society. Making pants for both men and women was unconventional at the time; however, Celie was able to break the stereotyped image of the superiority of men over women by making pants for women and wearing them herself. This was Walker's way to promote equality between the two genders, Neil McEwan (qtd. in Sundqvist 4) concludes Celie's evolution by saying: "She grows in the course of the story from the pitiful child of the opening pages to the sensible, happy woman of the last. Although always vulnerable, she is steadfast; although often abused, she is loving; when loved she can respond and grow"

2.5 Understanding *Push*: A Summary

Sapphire's collection *American Dreams* won her several awards firmly laid the ground for her career and established her as one of the highly appreciated African American female artists. The horrors narrated in the collection were later fiercely mirrored in her first novel *Push*. News of a novel by a debated African American female author with an extreme sense of denoting fictional and non-fictional characterization of events sparked interest among publishers and literary critics; in 1995, an agent found the first 100 pages of the novel appealing thus it was auctioned for \$100,000. The result was that Alfred K. Knopf paid \$500,000 for the rights to publish the book; a number Sapphire never imagined acquiring. *Push* was issued in 1996, in the first printing of 150,000 copies. (Brennan 04)

Written in Vernacular English and narrated through the voice of its sixteen-year-old obese black girl, uneducated and a mother of two children from incest; the novel was not immediately accepted by critics, for most of them Sapphire depicted a dishonest image of black men being violent, sexual and physical abusers. Sapphire supported her work by maintaining that some of the events in the novel were based on the real-life incidents she struggled with as a child, in addition to her experience of living in Harlem and witnessing children growing up in an environment more horrifying than what was depicted in her writings, “I lived in one building in Harlem for over ten years, so I saw a generation of children grow up,” she told *Newsweek*’s Giles. “This novel isn’t conjectured, or some studies I read. This is life as I observed it.” (*Newsweek* 72)

The storyline of *Push* is studied and analyzed in several critical pieces with comparison to Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*; for it celebrates and expands the notions *The Color Purple* propounds through its characters, themes, and the distinctive use of African American Vernacular English that branded both novels, in addition to honoring the conventions of African American community. The story received more criticism than praise, while the voice of an illiterate, abused, and HIV-positive sixteen-year-old black girl captivated the attention of numerous critics who admired the courage of Sapphire to tell such a shocking and sickening story with vivid details which for some critics seemed unnecessary. With the release of the film adaptation of *Precious* (2009), the analysis of Sapphire’s work was the center of interest for film critics. Though the film was praised and earned major awards; critics censured parts of the film for inadequately representing African American society.

Ishmael Reed’s film review “Fade to White,” expressed the view of the misrepresentation of the black community, he argues that *Precious* presents black degradation for white audiences to show that “problems that members of the black underclass encounter are a result of their culture, their lack of personal responsibility” (2). The film adaptation was

more endured within the white community than the black one, Reed continues to point out that film reviews by both white and black critics suggest that incest is prevalent in the black community which is a false conception. Incest according to The National Center for Victims of Crime: “does not discriminate. It happens in financially privileged families, as well as those of low socioeconomic status. It happens to those of all racial and ethnic descent and those of all religious traditions.” (Reed 2)

Push is a harrowing tale of *Claireece Precious Jones*; sixteen years old overweight black girl living in Harlem. The novel is divided into four long chapters which are focused on telling the story of Precious’ growth and development. It also contains an appendix with the LIFE STORIES of the girls in Precious’ reading class. The novel is narrated by Precious telling her life story to an audience in the form of a diary or a journal, her recitation is chaotic with no chronological order of events. “My name is Claireece Precious Jones. I don't know why I'm telling you that. Guess 'cause I don't know how far I'm gonna go with this story, or whether it's even a story or why I'm talkin'; whether I'm gonna start from the beginning or right from here or two weeks from now.” (Sapphire 3) Sapphire opens the novel with dreadful information about Precious’ pregnancy with her second baby, that her firstborn had Down’s syndrome, and that her father is the father of both children.

The opening pages of the novel uncover the miseries Precious endured as a child and the reasons why she has been held back in school. She starts off her story by pointing out that she was left behind in the second grade for not being able to read and peed herself in class; also when she was twelve for having her first child from her father, she continues to state that her baby girl has Down syndrome and that she is pregnant for the second time at sixteen years old. Due to her second pregnancy and being left behind in school, Precious is suspended by Mrs. Lichenstein the principal of her school. Despite her hardships, Precious always loved to learn and believed in the power of education to help her overcome the difficulties in her life.

Mrs Lichenstein felt guilty for Precious's suspension; she suggested an alternative school for girls with the same conditions as her. The thought didn't appeal to her mother but Precious loved the idea of a new all-girls school to be a fresh start for her newfound life.

Since the story is told in fragments with no chronological order, Precious takes the readers back to the time when she had her first child at twelve years old, her mother physically assaulted her while she was in labor, she recalls "Pain hit me again, then she hit me. I'm on the floor groaning, 'Mommy please, Mommy please, please Mommy! Mommy! Mommy! MOMMY!' " Then she KICK me side of my face!" (Sapphire 9) Precious goes on to remember the Latina paramedic who told her to relax, Push, and take good care of her. For no man has ever been nice to her, Precious believed him to be a God. Her mother sees her daughter as competition; she verbally, physically, and sexually abuses her and steals the welfare checks that come in the mail for Precious and Mongo, her daughter.

The actual plot of the novel begins when Precious attends the alternative school called *Each One Teach One*. The name of the school denotes its different approach to teaching; the girls are expected to support and assist each other to learn, develop, and achieve their educational as well as individual goals. Precious meets her teacher, Ms. Rain who teaches the pre-G.E.D class for students like Precious who lack the basic knowledge of reading and writing. The teacher asks her students to keep a journal, in which they are asked to write each day. Despite being illiterate; Precious makes an effort to write down her thoughts in her journal, with Ms. Rain correcting her grammar and spelling, she gradually learns how to read and write. For the first time in her life, Precious built friendships with the girls in her class; she felt a sense of belonging mostly since all of them share the same miseries and terrible home lives so it is normal to relate to each other's misfortunes.

Precious always blamed her mother for her life, mainly for not protecting her from her abusive father and allowing him to rape her repeatedly over the years. She kept wondering why her mother abused her physically and emotionally, why she never sheltered her from her father, and why she stole her welfare checks, she questioned why her mother never asked her husband to stop molesting her, why she never said get off my baby Precious is a beautiful child-like white children in magazines (Sapphire 64). Precious believed that there would never be logical answers to her questions for no normal mother would behave the way her mother does.

Precious' sense of responsibility and her newfound confidence in having a normal life influenced her sense of motherhood thus she was determined not to give her new baby to her mother the same as she did with her daughter who lives with her grandmother. Despite numerous attempts from her mother to leave school, Precious did not submit and she was committed to learning how to read and write to teach her new baby "Mama wrong. I am learning. I'm gonna start going to Family Literacy class on Tuesdays. Important to read to baby after it's born." (Sapphire 65)

Precious had a brief time of recreation after her son Abdul was born, she left her mother's house to live in a halfway house (living between the life you had and the life you want to have.) (Sapphire 84) in Harlem near her school. Her education improved significantly due to Ms. Rain's encouragement and assistance, in 1988 Precious won The Literacy Award given by the mayor's office each year to outstanding students in literacy programs (Sapphire 81). The young single mother finally considered life was giving her another chance, she felt empowered by the story of Celie in *The Color Purple* and its fairy tale ending wishing for the possibility of living happily ever after with her two children same as Celie.

Unfortunately, Precious's dreams of happiness and independence did not last long, she found out her father died from HIV which was the turning point in her life. Her son Abdul luckily escaped the disease but Precious was not so fortunate, she described:

I look my friends in the circle and I tell them, test say I'm HIV positive. And all the tongues dead, can't talk no more. Rita Romero hug me like I'm her chile and I cry and Ms Rain rub my back and say let it out, Precious, let it out. I cry for every day of my life. I cry for Mama what kinda story Mama got to do me like she do? And I cry for my son, the song in my life. (Sapphire 81)

All that Precious wanted was to give up, she kept questioning why her? Where is her *Color Purple*? Where is God/Allah? Where is love? And she is a good person who does not deserve to die this way. The only good thing in her life was her son Abdul, her teacher, and friends at *Each One Teach One* helped her navigate her way through pain and loss.

Unlike the fairy tale ending of *The Color Purple*, Sapphire reserved a classical realistic ending for *Push*. The closing pages of the novel reveal an HIV-positive black girl living with her child and attending support groups to help in her quest for happiness and self-empowerment. The support groups provide Precious with a new revelation that her color and socioeconomic background were not necessarily the cause of her abuse. Women of all ages and backgrounds attend the meetings. Sapphire concludes Precious's story with undermined fate for her and her two children, a realistic ending for a narrative that represents the real sufferings of numerous African American girls who are not fortunate enough to enjoy a happy ending to their miseries.

2.6 Intersectionality: Feminism Versuss Black Feminism

Feminism is a complex concept to be positioned under one label; Feminist theories are defined and shaped differently according to people's perceptions, diversity of thoughts, and

beliefs. This movement branched out of multiple disciplines including anthropology, history, theology, psychology, political science, physiology, and sociology which helped mold the common beliefs feminists developed about the role of women in society; they considered women as inferior, oppressed, and marginalized in a society ruled by men, thus their sole concern was obtaining social equality and putting an end to patriarchy and male domination.

The sole conviction the white feminists hold according to Olson is that the oppression of white males and the social patriarchal structure represents the biggest threat to women's lives, this idea was deeply rooted in their past subjugation as property owned by white males (922). Unfortunately, this social theory was not adequate to represent the sufferings of women of color, mostly because it cared only for white females' middle-class issues disregarding black women's concerns of race, gender, and class discrimination. Along these lines, Feminism undermined the fight for black women to be represented in the women's suffrage movement.

Introducing the adjective black to a movement constantly regarded as nondiscriminatory challenged Feminist's false universal belief of equal representation for the rights of both white and black females, Professor Bedjaoui holds that the term black feminist serves two strategic intentions; on the one hand, it highlights the contradictions underlying the assumed whiteness of feminism and on the other hand, it serves to remind white women that they comprise neither the only nor the normative feminists. (16). She also listed the main challenges facing the black Feminist movement; one is the necessity to expand the movement's ideology among black and Third World Women to gain their support, and another is to work on developing black female subjectivity to address black women as the primary audience of theoretical and critical Black feminism. The most important challenge is to a working dialogue between the white-dominated Feminist movement and the black feminist movement to continue to develop theories and actions that strive toward the end of sexism. (15)

2.7 The Need for Womanism

The need for independence from both the Women's Movement and the Black Liberation Movement led colored women in the US to work on a different social theory that echoes the struggles of racial and sexual oppression executed by both white women and black men. The Black Feminist Movement was founded to aid African American women to adequately voice issues of race, gender, and class, in addition, to abet all racist, sexist, and class discriminations that colored women have been subjected to. Alice Walker along with many other black American writers enriched Afro-American literature with their riveting and practical approaches. The Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist's most cherished work was introducing Womanism as a movement that addresses black women's issues that were not adequately spoken of by the white feminist movement.

Alice Walker coined the term Womanism in her collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. She did not limit Womanism to denote one connotation; rather, she labeled the term to have multiple outlooks to offer every black woman an opportunity to identify and connect with the term. She examines the unique identity of a Black woman and how her connections with other women impact the overall health of her community. Alice Walker defines this connection among women as womanism, viewing a womanist as someone dedicated to the survival and well-being of the entire Black race (Sree 16)

Unlike many other African American women, Walker did not distinguish between a womanist, Black feminist, or feminist of color for according to her; all expressions identify the same struggles of sexism, racism, and the quest for freedom and identity in both Black and White communities. She introduced four definitions of what a womanist is:

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, 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, xi-xii)

Walker’s definitions offer different layers of perceiving womanism; she acknowledges the existence of womanism in the African American culture, considering that young girls within the black community acted womanish, in other words, they wanted to know more than their age allowed. Due to the history of racial and gender discrimination; womanish girls acted courageous, responsible, and serious which somehow made them superior to white women. Walker’s belief in the superiority of womanism over white feminism comes from the intensity of black women’s issues that differ completely from white feminists. Subsequently, she associated womanism being to feminism as purple is to lavender; diminishing the value of

Feminism in the presence of Womanism same as lavender is in the presence of purple (Warren 568). In addition, Walker also embraced men and accepted their position and importance in the lives of colored women; something that white Feminists rejected and always considered men to be the enemy.

Black feminism is built on the groundwork of black women being full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities: intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual, and economic i.e. it constitutes both an ideology and a global political movement that faces sexism, a social relationship, Collins described black feminism as a type of Feminism which can be defined as a school of thought that states sexism, class oppression, gender identity, and racism are inextricably bound together. (165). Olson also highlighted Womanism to be “a concept that defines the desire for wholeness of self, a celebration of black women’s identity, and an appreciation and love for all things woman, including the roles of mother and wife” (921). Several other Female artists and activists joined Alice Walker in her fight for liberty and emancipation from all forms of oppression carried out on Black women, Patricia Hill Collins, Zora Neale Hurston, Bell Hooks, and Angela Davis among several others.

2.8 Literary Run-Down of *The Color Purple* and *Push*

An author’s writing style is not incidental, superficial, or supplementary; it is closely linked to the intellect and frame of mind of the author and reader. Style in a given piece of literary work can be said to encompass all the elements that contribute to the beauty, effectiveness, and hence the success of a piece of art. When analyzing writing style, it is crucial to analyze the How and not the What, in other words, study the manner used in the construction and publication of the work and not what is projected.

2.8.1 Structure: Epistolary Novel

Letters, diaries, and notes were the primary written means of communication in which people used to be in contact with one another in both daily life and literature during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Epistolary Narrative is derived from the Greek word *Epistle*, meaning *letter*, the structure of such narrative relies on epistles or letters which the characters use to reveal the story's fundamental elements. Abrams defines the epistolary novel as a narrative completely woven in letters or “conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters” (256). As a means of communication, letters work as a bridge that connects two individuals yet somehow they are not together nor apart, Altman maintains that “the letter lies halfway between the possibility of total communication and the risk of no communication at all” (43). The author’s aim of using this form of writing is to convey the entire events of his/her novel immediately, without his/her interference.

This form of narrative was considered an act of revolt and liberation by several literary critics, according to Frazier the Epistolary narrative developed into a powerful tool for establishing female identity and self-empowerment in African American feminist literature (305). Given that Walker was rebellious in her choice of literary works and advocated for Black women’s liberties; her novel *The Color Purple* was the first novel written by an African American woman to fit within the traditional definition of the epistolary novel. She manipulated the expectations that were associated with the historical novel as a concept by using the epistolary form. In *The Color Purple*, Walker created an intimate setting and used private events as a critique of American political issues such as black female oppression in a broader perspective (Isik 32).

Walker used letters as a literary vehicle to voice the intimate thoughts and feelings of her protagonist. Celie was a tormented and frightened little girl who needed her emotions spilled out in hopes of making her life easier; she chose writing as her way of sharing these

emotions for two reasons. One, Celie addresses letters to God instead of speaking to him because of the shame and guilt she feels from committing incest, this was mentioned in one of her sister's letters "I remember one time you said your life made feel so ashamed you couldn't even talk about it to God, you had to write it, bad as you thought your writing was. Well, now I know what you meant. And whether God will read your letters or no, I know you will go on writing them" (Walker 74) Second reason was fear of losing her mother after her stepfather threatened to kill her, "you better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mommy" (Walker 8)

Despite being inspired by *The Color Purple*, Sapphire took another approach to her narrative delivery in *Push*. Precious suffered nearly the same miseries as Celie; writing was their only way to share the sorrows in their lives. Precious was an illiterate young girl after losing a few years of school to her pregnancy and giving birth, her first contact with writing was through her teacher Miss Rain who asked her students to keep a journal in which they were asked to express their thoughts every day, "Write what's on your mind, push yourself to see the letters that represent the words you're thinking." (Sapphire 61) Though Precious had little knowledge of the ABCs and could not spell, she was thrilled to write "I am happy to be writing. I am happy to be in school". (Sapphire 62) The act of writing either writing letters or God or keeping a journal was a powerful step in the process of development and evolution of both protagonists.

2.8.2 Bildungsroman: Exploring Celie and Precious' Evolution

The Bildungsroman originated in Germany in the latter half of the 18th century, 'bildungs' means formation whereas 'roman' refers to the novel. Broadly known as a novelistic genre that is concerned with the moral, psychological, and economic evolution of its main character in relation to society, bildungsroman or coming-of-age novel can be seen as

a self-actualization narrative where the protagonist develops to be a mature person, one who rediscovers his/her identity and creates an image of a successful independent individual.

Gohlman asserts that Bildungsroman labels any work of fiction that served as a useful handbook to correct moral behavior but points out the importance of the Bildungsroman not just as a novel of growth, but as a novel in which the hero actively shapes him/herself both from within and without. This creates personal harmony and balance between the hero and the world (12.13). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and James Joyce are a few of the many representatives of this genre.

The traditional Bildungsroman narrative is usually depicted across three stages. The protagonist must suffer loss and/or discontent early on in the novel, followed by constant conflicts between what the protagonist needs and wants and the norms of his/her society. Finally, the Bildungsroman ends with the protagonist having embraced society's norms (Hader 168). Both novels *The Color Purple* and *Push* are considered to be coming-of-age narratives, Alice Walker and Sapphire trace Celie and Precious's growth and development from silent, sexually and physically oppressed little girls to articulate, self-governing women.

Despite having different journeys, living in cruel households filled with violence and rape, becoming young mothers, having similar broken families, suffering from incest, and lacking any love or support from their mothers, Celie and Precious had the same drive and ambition to turn their life around and were able to realize autonomy, maturation, and inner peace. Neil McEwan sums up Celie's growth in the following way: "She grows in the course of the story from the pitiful child of the opening pages to the sensible, happy woman of the last. Although always vulnerable, she is steadfast; although often abused, she is loving; when loved she can respond and grow" (56). The evolution of Precious parallels that of Celie,

however unlike Celie Precious was not fortunate enough to have the fairytale ending she dreamed of or as she called it “‘Color Purple ending’”.

2.8.3 Language: African American Vernacular English

African American Vernacular English historically known as Ebonics; also labeled as Black English is a language variety utilized by African Americans as a distinct dialect demonstrating their African heritage. This dialect sprung during the 17th and 18th centuries as a result of the shift from white English in the colonial south. Linguists, however, debated its history and origins spawning different theories; some highlight its English origins by pointing out that much of its pronunciation and vocabulary is derived from the interaction of the indentured slaves with other workers communicating with nonstandard varieties of English. Other linguists accentuate its African origins, denoting that most West African languages share considerable similarities with Ebonics regarding sound, pronunciation, and grammar. (Rickford 2). Smith argues that Ebonics, as “the language of slave descendants of African origin,” is “the linguistic continuity of Africa in Black America”, he also asks what criteria are used for classifying AAVE as a dialect of English? If there is no empirical evidence that English is the ‘base’ from which Black English derives (qtd. in Mufwene 30).

Works of literature written in Black English proceeded as an act of rebellion against racism and the unequal treatment of Blacks during the 16th and 17th centuries, through its unique phonology, grammar, and vocabulary Black poets and novelists managed to place it within the larger spectrum of national American literature. Male and female African American authors reacted against traditional American approaches to literature especially poetry (Weagel 7) to set the tone for a new variety of language capable of representing their culture and heritage. Moreover, they thrived to inspire the upcoming generation of authors to proudly use their ancestors’ dialect within their characters’ speech to offer insights into the physical,

emotional, and social distress Blacks went through which was misrepresented and overlooked in most literary works.

Considering that one of the key characteristics of Womanism is the use of African American Vernacular English; female authors expanded on the dialect as a vehicle to shed light on the realities of oppressed Black women, plus offering a chance to others who share similar skylines to relate to one another. Alice Walker and Sapphire's use of Vernacular English is an establishment of Black identity, the concerns and sufferings of Black women could not be accurately depicted with standard American English.

Walker and Sapphire received fierce backlash for using Ebonics in their works, for critics, the Black English was "degrading to black people" and painted blacks in a negative light (qtd. in Wilson 53). Walker defended her choices as necessary to genuinely represent the voices of her characters, and convey their cultural and personal experiences. Both authors recognized the importance of portraying original characters that upheld the language of African American ancestors, in an interview, Walker spoke about the use of the Vernacular as a means of recovering the Southern cultural traditions. She said: "This was the way my grandparents spoke, this is the way my mother speaks today and I wanted to capture that." (18)

Vernacularism in *The Color Purple* and *Push* is evident through the characters' writing, dialogue, and interior monologue. Celie's letters to God demonstrate her limited educational background, she writes to God: "I ast him to take me instead of Nettie while our new mammy sick" (Walker 14). Yet, she can comprehend several varieties of Southern American English and understands Nettie's coherent academic English as well as the dialect used by the members of the white community. Precious illiteracy ratio is higher than Celie's, before attending the alternative school she could neither read nor write, however, she comprehended

oral speech; her first-ever written words were “li Mg o mi m” meaning "Little Mongo on my mind." referring to her daughter (Sapphire 61-62). As both novels progress, the oral and written language of the protagonists noticeably evolves, thus their cognitive, social, and communicative faculties equally develop to create autonomous and powerful women.

Alice Walker and Sapphire expanded on the tradition of black feminist orality; a cultural tradition established in African American women’s writings. Telling stories in Vernacular form demonstrates “Black feminist orality that shows oral histories are not merely ‘anecdotal’ tales, but are frames through which Black women develop identities and critically understand the world” (Fulton 16). In their novels, both protagonists are depicted as illiterate, non-productive characters who are physically and emotionally enslaved by their families. Celie and Precious’s struggle to gain literacy represents an act against theoretical slavery, Fulton maintained that “the import of reading and writing is realized through orality“. (166) The quest for literacy was realized throughout the novels, Celie and Precious fulfilled their dreams of freedom and self-empowerment through education while maintaining their roots in Vernacular English.

2.8.4 Mode of Writing: Stream of Consciousness

In an attempt to enrich modern literature with fresh approaches that set the field on a whole new scale; and disrupt the bases of narrative realism, modernist authors opted for the stream of consciousness as a literary leap out of traditional narrative techniques. Stream of consciousness also referred to as interior monologue is a narrative method that represents the exact flow of a character’s thoughts, perceptions, and feelings, the term was initially coined by psychologist William James in his research, *The Principles of Psychology* “Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as they present themselves in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it

hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.” (148)

This narrative mode was devised to seek a new level of psychological truth; it molds the flow of thoughts and feelings of the characters into words and gives the reader an impression of being inside the mind of the character.

In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker’s use of the stream-of-consciousness technique is evident through her use of the epistolary form; the interior thoughts of Celie are presented in numerous letters. At the beginning of the novel and due to the sexual, physical, and emotional oppression she endures; Celie communicates her thoughts and feelings to God because she was threatened not to tell a living soul about her miseries. One of the fragments of her interior monologue was presented when she witnessed a fight between Sofia and Harpo, her private thoughts “Every plate look like it broke. The looking glass hangs crooked, the curtains torn.” (30) gave the reader a front-row seat to the fight. Celie’s stream of consciousness continues as she quickly processes the tiny details around the room, her thoughts are muddled but detailed and understood.

Concerning *Push*, the stream-of-consciousness method is generously adopted by Sapphire. Similar to Celie; Precious lacks the freedom and courage to share her thoughts with others about the same constraints of sexual and physical abuse. Several memorable portions of Precious’ interior monologue include:

I . . . , in my inside world, I am so pretty, like a advertisement girl on commercial, 'n someone ride up here in car, someone look like the son of that guy that got kilt when he was president a long time ago or Tom Cruise-or anybody like that pull up here in a car and I be riding like on TV chile- (35)

I sit on my bed. New picture on wall now. I got Alice Walker up there with Harriet Tubman 'n Farrakhan. But she can't help me now. Where my Color Purple? Where my

god most high? Where my king? Where my black love? Where my man love? Woman love? Any kinda love? Why me? I don't deserve this. I not crack addict. Why I get Mama for a mama? Why I not born a light-skin dream? Why? Why? (87)

Ms Rain say write our fantasy of ourselves. How we would be if life was perfect. I tell you one thing right now, I would be light skinned, thereby treated right and loved by boyz. Light even more important than being skinny; you see them light-skinned girls that's big an' fat, they got boyfriends. (113)

Sapphire wanders around in Precious' mind exhibiting her private thoughts to provide the reader with insights into her sufferings as well as her perspective on people, events, education, and fantasies of her life.

2.8.5 Flashback: Celie and Precious' Past Revisited

Modern literature considers time as a crucial element in narrative recitation; authors are attentive to the careful utilization of this facet which takes different levels, the flashback technique is one of the prominent elements portraying time in a literary work. The technique is simply defined by Dupriez as "A narrative reversion to previous events." (189). In other words, it is an interruption in the chronological narrative of a literary work to relate events from an earlier time, either to convey to the reader information regarding the character's background or serve as a means of explaining the character's subsequent actions. Cuddon adds that flashback reminds the reader of past events; reveals and develops themes of a text; and supplies background information about characters and events. (qtd. in Abie 1)

Relevant to the success of the story; Alice Walker put the flashback mode in use as Celie goes back in time when she was fourteen years old and pregnant with her first child. Poor Celie didn't understand why her stomach was getting bigger and why she was sick a lot; after all, she was only a child who had never been pregnant before. Alfonso took Celie out of

school in fear of his incest being discovered and justified his action with Celie being stupid and not fit for the school.

The first time I got big Pa took me out of school. He never care that I love it. Nettie stood there at the gate holding tight to my hand. I was all dress for first day. You too dumb to keep going to school, Pa say. Nettie the clever one in this bunch. But Pa, Nettie say, crying, Celie smart too. Even Miss Beasley say so. Nettie dote on Miss Beasley. Think nobody like her in the world. (Walker 15)

After the flashback about school and her first pregnancy, Celie takes the reader back to recent events of when she was offered to Albert as a commodity and recounts her miserable first day as a married woman. The use of flashbacks in several other events throughout the story is Alice Walker's way of providing insights into the dark background and memories of Celie; incidents that could not break her, in contrast, inspired and pressured her to accomplish freedom and autonomy at the end.

One of the early flashbacks in *Push* is quite similar to Celie's narration of her first pregnancy, yet, Precious recounts the circumstances around her pregnancy and delivery and the hard time her mother was giving her.

I was standing a t this sink the last time I was pregnant when them pains hit, wump! Ahh wump ! I never felt no shit like that before. Sweat was breaking out on my forehead, pain like fire was eating me up. I jus' standing there 'n pain hit me, then pain go sit down, then pain git up 'n hit me harder! 'N she standing there screaming at me, "Slut! Goddam slut! You fuckin' cow! (Sapphire 9)

Precious continues to narrate the Physical pounding she received from her mother while in labor, "Pain hit me again, then she hit me. I'm on the floor groaning, "Mommy please,

Mommy please, please Mommy! Mommy! Mommy! MOMMY! " Then she KICK me side of my face! " (9). Finally, the paramedics arrive and Precious gives birth on the kitchen floor:

Some mens, these ambulance mens, I don't see 'em or hear 'em come in. But I look up from the pain and he dere. This Spanish guy in EMS uniform.... He touch my forehead put his other hand on the side of my belly. "What's your name?" he say. "Huh ? " I say. "Your name?" "Precious," I say. He say, "Precious, it's almost here. I want you to push, you hear me momi, when that shit hit you again, go with it and push, Preshecita. Push." And I did. (10)

Sapphire directed her novel around snippets from Precious past; going back and forth between her childhood and her current life. She uses detailed descriptions of the traumatic past events in Precious' life to offer the reader sufficient facts on the reasons for her miseries. Same as Alice Walker, Sapphire depicted dark memories from the past to disclose the route Precious took to build her tower of strength.

2.9 Conclusion

Building a cohesive theoretical framework is crucial to the success of any research, for it encompasses the key elements relevant to the study, in addition to, providing a well-defined basis of the argument for the researcher. The second theoretical chapter was devoted to the examination of the two literary works by Alice Walker and Sapphire respectively that are to be analyzed in the following chapters with literary stylistic approaches to meet the objectives of the thesis. Synopses of female African American literature, *The Color Purple* and *Push*, and the literary movements of Feminism and Womanism have been displayed throughout the chapter. Several mechanisms used by Alice Walker and Sapphire in constructing the outlined works are underlined as well, from the Epistolary novel, Bildungsroman novel, stream of consciousness, and flashbacks to Vernacular African American English.

Chapter Three: Stylistic Rundown of *The Color Purple* and *Push*:

On Par or Not So?

3.1 Introduction

Embarking on a stylistic analysis of two literary works requires a systematic approach to mold the investigation into the researcher's objectives. The current chapter strives to answer the first research question raised; giving prominence to the major stylistic devices used by Walker and Sapphire in their novels. The chapter also explains the rationale behind the selection of *The Color Purple* and *Push*; by positioning myself as a critical researcher, I gave an insight into my stylistic intuition of the two literary works in parallel with their dividing scenario. The stylistic scheme of both novels follows Leech and Short's checklist of stylistic categories; highlighting the major stylistic devices employed by Walker and Sapphire, this step is crucial in achieving the aim of the thesis.

3.2 Methodological Platform for Analysis

This study is framed within a critical/transformational research paradigm, as it examines how language is employed to represent and challenge systems of oppression affecting African American women in *The Color Purple* and *Push*. Within this paradigm, the research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, which is appropriate for stylistic analysis grounded in close textual reading and interpretive linguistic analysis.

The data for the study consist of selected textual excerpts drawn from the two novels. Excerpts were chosen through purposeful analytical reading, focusing on passages that are stylistically salient and thematically central to the representation of marginalization, resistance, and identity. Rather than relying on statistical sampling, this study follows a qualitative interpretive tradition in stylistics, where representativeness is achieved through analytical relevance and textual richness.

Leech and Short's checklist of stylistic categories serves as a theoretical and analytical guide rather than a rigid coding instrument. Given the scope of the novels and the qualitative nature of the study, the checklist is used selectively, with particular emphasis on figures of speech, which are examined for their functional and interpretive value within the narrative context. This selective application allows for depth of analysis while maintaining coherence across the examined excerpts.

The stylistic analysis proceeds through systematic close reading, whereby recurring stylistic patterns are identified and interpreted across the selected passages. Consistency in analysis is ensured by applying the same analytical criteria to both novels, enabling a structured comparative discussion of stylistic convergence and divergence. The findings are presented in analytical prose, integrating linguistic description with literary interpretation.

3.3 The Scheme of Stylistic Analysis

The stylistic analysis in this study prioritizes interpretive coherence and analytical consistency over exhaustive categorization. While Leech and Short's framework encompasses multiple stylistic levels, this research deliberately concentrates on figures of speech as a manageable and theoretically relevant category for comparing two full-length novels.

Figures of speech including metaphors, similes, repetition, alliteration, and assonance are examined in relation to their contextual function, narrative positioning, and contribution to meaning-making. Each excerpt is analyzed individually, then discussed comparatively to highlight stylistic tendencies rather than numerical frequency. This approach aligns with qualitative stylistic traditions that emphasize functional interpretation over quantification.

By applying the same interpretive lens to both texts, the study maintains methodological consistency and allows for a comparative evaluation of how stylistic choices contribute to thematic development, narrative voice, and ideological expression. This method

ensures analytical rigor while remaining faithful to the qualitative and literary nature of the research.

3.3.1 The Selection of *The Color Purple* and *Push*: Rationale and Objectives.

The popularity of *The Color Purple* in literary studies is undeniable; the novel was subject to analysis by hundreds of scholars scrutinizing every aspect from thematic analysis, and character development, to structure and language use utilizing distinct literary approaches. The recognition of *Push* by Sapphire on the other hand; is not as massive as *The Color Purple*, yet, the novel witnessed numerous literary investigations. Most notably; the similarities between *Push* and *The Color Purple* were scrutinized in different spheres of literary studies. As mentioned in Chapter 1 concerning McIntyre's approach; if the text does not adhere to the traditional literary conventions most authors within the same genre follow then it is a fit source for stylistic evaluation, which is the case of *The Color Purple* and *Push*. The motives behind selecting Alice Walker and Sapphire's groundbreaking works for the current study are numerous:

First, my long-lasting interest and admiration of Female African-American authors and their continuous quest to display the sufferings of their race, particularly the torments of women is the most important reason behind taking Alice Walker and Sapphire's literary pieces as the heart of this research.

Second; I felt the need for *The Color Purple* to be stylistically evaluated; for the novel was not subject to extensive literary stylistic analysis and most importantly; was never stylistically compared to Sapphire's *Push*.

Third, the parallel of the plotline and characters in *The Color Purple* and *Push* was one of the main reasons for attracting millions of readers; particularly instigating the success of Sapphire's work for its resemblance to that of Alice Walker. This parallel is another

motive behind this study. The researcher's initial focus is to discern the hidden facets of both novels via stylistic analysis, to show the power stylistics bears in providing new insights into a text for both readers and analysts to consider.

The fourth reason is the uniqueness of the language; the use of African American Vernacular English is appealing to me, and the stylistic analysis of this language variety in both novels is both challenging and noteworthy.

3.3.2 The Pivotal or Trivial Nature of Stylistic Intuition

As mentioned in Chapter 1; stylistics being the marriage between linguistics and literary criticism directs the field towards subjectivity in analysis, since both spheres rely closely on the considered opinion of the reader or the analyst. The developments in stylistics throughout history and the multiple varieties brought forth in the field couldn't diminish the existence of intuition and personal judgment. The former is a restrained form of intelligence that people acquire via personal experience rather than through conscious learning, in stylistic analysis the final product is ultimately determined by the validation or revocation of the analyst's intuitions. Leech and Short affirm that one of the leading concerns of stylisticians is the process of testing and validating primary intuitions through comprehensive analysis (5); as it were, an intuitive response to a text is an inevitable first step in stylistic analysis.

Literary stylistic interpretation according to Ghazalah (57) embraces two components; theoretically different yet closely connected in practice, one is the effects and functions of stylistic devices the other is intuition. He emphasizes the importance of intuition as "the center of all stylistic analyses" (58). Katie Wales (400) in her definition of stylistics highlights the importance of intuition in analysis, she maintained that intuitions and interpretative skills are crucial in stylistics as they are in literary criticism; however, according to her; stylisticians tend to bypass any vague and undetailed judgments about the way formal

features are manipulated. Sinclair offers a distinctive role for intuitions “in evaluating evidence rather than creating it.”, he confirms the value of intuition as not being a “gut reaction to events, but rather, a sophisticated and educated process that involves training and familiarization with various theories. (39-40)

Intuition in the stylistic sphere attested to be of great value; for analysts, it is imperative to develop what Leech and Short call “Stylistic Competence” (49) that is in parallel to the “Linguistic Competence” introduced by Chomsky. They introduce stylistic competence as:

A capacity which we possess and exercise unconsciously and intuitively: only with special training can it be turned into explicit knowledge... an ability which different people possess in different measures so that although there may be a great deal in common between different English speakers' responsiveness to style, allowance must be made for differences of degree and kind. (49)

The numerous notions of intuition articulate nearly the same concept; that is the prior knowledge and understanding of the language structure and the methods of how to read and evaluate a text (literary and non-literary). For Evenson “... Intuition is not an endpoint but an initial response to be tested with the tools of narrative theory and the idea of means-ends relations between techniques and effects so that we can offer clearer reasons for our intuitions or come to a new evaluation.” (qtd. in Scott 458) that is; the personal opinion and initial intuition of the analyst ought to be tested and explored systematically using accessible and replicable procedures of analysis.

Ghazalah expanded on the notion of “Stylistic Competence” to introduce a large-scale notion that he labels as “Stylistic Intuition”. The notion according to him is different from Leech and Short’s stylistic competence in that the latter is only one part of its components, and his notion embraces both culture and personal ideologies (59). Ghazalah highlights

stylistic intuition as “all those factors which form the reader’s ability to discern stylistic devices and effects and the degree of their importance in a text, and the reasons behind interpreting the way he does” (59). In other words, stylistic intuition is a crucial element in stylistic analysis that entails the reader or analyst’s proficiency to systematically dissect a literary text, highlight stylistic devices and their importance, in addition to, illustrate *why* and *how* certain language elements are used and *how* meanings are constructed.

Since interpretation is the ultimate goal of any literary stylistic analysis; the initial intuitive approach adopted by stylisticians differs according to their experiences, ideologies, and knowledge of literary conventions; thus, it is unreasonable to assume a literary text to have one single interpretation. Yet, it is vital for stylisticians to systematically test their intuition and make sure the utilized stylistic approach is accessible and replicable for other analysts to reach the same results either by applying the approach to the same text or other texts.

3.3.2.1 Intuitive Response to *The Color Purple* and *Push*

Given that intuition is a necessary first step in any stylistic analysis; this research will instigate an intuitive response to *The Color Purple* and *Push*. The researcher starts her analysis from an indispensable subjective base of insights into the texts. The first intuitive outlook when reading *The Color Purple* is that Alice Walker’s style is raw, intimate, and transformative. As the researcher read the novel multiple times it springs that Celie is secluded, her experience with abuse, racism, and sexism is depicted with unflinching honesty in which Walker creates a sense of intimacy with Celie’s letters to God. The sole possible conversation she had about the dreadful life events was with God, her Silent protector. Celie undergoes a journey of self-discovery and empowerment, Walker's style reflects her transformation through shifts in language and narrative voice.

My intuitive response after reading *Push* is that Sapphire embraces an unfiltered and evocative style of writing. Precious' story is narrated without filter or censorship; adopting graphic language to present taboo subjects like incest molded her narrative in a bubble of emotional intensity that is channeled to the reader. My intuition also highlights the extensive use of the stream-of-consciousness technique that characterized Sapphire's style as fragmented; she takes us back and forth into the shocking life of Precious from childhood into adulthood in an emotional rollercoaster. The protagonist isolated herself mentally and spiritually to avoid any future abuse or exploitation by others, a trait she shares with her inspiring character Celie.

Another initial impression I have after repetitive reading of *The Color Purple* and *Push* concerning the implementation of some stylistic devices is the presence of repetition in both novels, prominently employed in *Push* than in *The Color Purple*. The narratives also manifest the use of other figures of speech such as metaphor and alliteration. The upcoming analysis will seek to thoroughly investigate the various stylistic devices employed by Walker and Sapphire on multiple levels, as well as foregrounding their significance to narrative structure, character development, and final interpretation of the novels. In my estimation, the textual references of *The Color Purple* in the novel *Push* suggest that Sapphire adopted some or all of Alice Walker's style, which we will attempt to determine with our analysis.

The strength of stylistic analysis lies in the researcher's ability to feel and connect with the text; with support of prior knowledge of reading and analyzing literary texts in particular. My intuitions about the two novels are not the sole impressions that could be concluded, other researchers may list a different set of intuitions that contradict mine because of the variations in experiences, ideologies, and knowledge of literary conventions. The following step is either to validate or invalidate my intuitions by the upcoming stylistic analysis; I will attempt to tie

together the style of Alice Walker and Sapphire by discerning the different stylistic devices present in the two texts to see whether the style of each author confirm my intuitions or not?

3.4 Breaking Down the Two Narratives

Initiating a stylistic analysis of a long literary text (novel) without breaking it down into phases is an unsystematic and unmethodical choice from the analyst. Ghazalah pointed out that dividing a narrative into stages can be based on one or two of the criteria of narrative division borrowed from Nash; one is the mode of narrative discourse and the other is the thematic development (81). The former represents the layout arrangement of the narrative; which is distinguished by the dialogue/ direct speech, or the descriptive narration (which can be displayed either by, soliloquy discourse: where the narrator talks to himself, descriptive account of characters, scenes, or events or the narrator's intrusive judgmental account of characters, scenes, or events. The latter can be characterized into two categories, one is progressive; where the story develops from one stage to another, and events are built up to reach a climax. The second is recessional; “which is a type of backward, sloping development of narrative theme; it also implies the circularity of that theme: it finishes where it started” (Ghazalah 81)

The thematic development of *The Color Purple* and *Push* is the researcher’s primary step in her analysis. In a standard conventional narrative, the events move forward gradually to reach a certain climax where it either continues to develop, otherwise slowly or rapidly declines. In the next section, the two novels are going to be divided according to the model of thematic development along with the mode of narrative discourse.

3.4.1 Dividing Scenario of *The Color Purple*

The Color Purple on the one hand follows the traditional model of thematic development; it can be divided into four (4) phases. Phase 1 (8-35) Celie writes letters to God

narrating her sufferings and extreme life circumstances she bears; in the second phase (36-70) Celie keeps writing to God yet in a slightly more pleasant tone with an arrival of Shug Avery into her life. In phase 3 (71-90) the story reaches its climax when Celie finds out her husband has been hiding letters from her sister Nettie whom she thought was dead; Celie's feelings along with her actions changed, and at this point, she is empowered by her anger at her husband, her happiness of her sister being alive and the peacefulness of finding out her two children are alive and living with her sister. The progressive thematic development of the story is evident in the final phase as the story continues to develop forward (91-131); Celie stops writing letters to God and starts writing to her sister; she leaves her husband and builds both an independent personality and a business of her own.

As regards the mode of narrative discourse, the most dominant form throughout the novel is a dialogue between the different characters of the novel (phases 1, 2, 4) with several interferences of descriptive narration. The third phase, however, continues in a descriptive account of characters and events, for most of the pages, it is Celie reading the previously hidden letters of her sister; with very few intrusions of dialogue between her and Shug Avery.

3.4.2 Dividing Scenario of *Push*

The second novel *Push* correspondingly keeps on the traditional model of thematic development. However, the researcher didn't feel the need to divide it; for it is already divided into four chapters by the author. The story begins with Chapter 1 (3-33) which is an account of Precious' dreadful childhood circumstances, (having her first child from her father at twelve years old) and continues to go back and forth depicting her earlier and current life events. The chapter finishes with Precious having a second chance at education after getting expelled for being pregnant again at sixteen. The second chapter (34 -66) opens with Precious' first day of school and despite the flashbacks to her shocking sufferings; the chapter continues to portray the promising and consistent desire of Precious to learn.

In Chapter 3 (67 -97) however, the events of the story start to take a positive turn; with Precious giving birth to her child, leaving her cruel mother's house, and winning a literacy award for her unfailing commitment to her education. As the chapter approaches its end; the narrative reaches its climax when Precious finds out she has HIV from her father and all her dreams and hopes of a better future for her and her son disappear in a blink of an eye. Chapter 4 (98- 140) follows the journey of Precious as an eighteen-year-old teenage girl with AIDS, she is scared, angry at everyone around her, and wants to give up. The novel finishes with Precious overcoming her fears with the support of the girls in her school in addition to being independent and finally having her children living with her. Concerning the mode of narrative discourse of *Push*; the four chapters of the novel are recited using both the descriptive narration with Precious' intrusive judgmental account of characters, scenes, and events. The novel also makes use of dialogue throughout the four chapters in addition to soliloquy discourse.

3.5 The Stylistic Scheme of *The Color Purple*

Alice Walker employs a range of different stylistic techniques to portray the oppression, racism, and sexism her protagonist Celie suffered her entire life. Several expressive means from *The Color Purple* are to be explored and analyzed using Leech and Short's model of stylistic categories (the model is thoroughly detailed in Chapter 1) in identifying the style of Alice Walker. The model will enable us to foreground the eminent stylistic devices adopted by Alice Walker with a focus on their stylistic importance in meaning construction.

3.5.1 Figures of Speech in *The Color Purple*

The power of language in *The Color Purple* transcends mere communication, taking on a life of its own through a rich tapestry of figures of speech. It serves as both artistic devices and potent instruments of expression. Through vivid metaphors, similes, evocative imagery,

and subtle symbolism, Walker weaves a narrative that resonates with readers on multiple levels. These literary devices enhance the novel's themes, deepen character development, and ultimately enrich the reader's experience. In this literary journey, I will unravel the beauty and depth of expression within the novel, showcasing the author's masterful use of language to convey the story's emotional and social intricacies.

3.5.1.1 Grammatical and Lexical Schemes in *The Color Purple*

Given that the current thesis follows Leech and Short's checklist of stylistic categories in approaching *The Color Purple*, in which the grammatical and lexical categories highlight the importance of formal and structural repetition in a literary text, in addition to its impact on the thematic development of the story. In tandem with the stylistic intuition of the researcher, this section will be devoted to illuminating repetition and anaphora in *The Color Purple* in addition to pointing out their rhetorical effect in the text.

3.5.1.1.1 Repetition in *The Color Purple*

Appreciating repetition in literary language is of great significance; the former may occur on multiple linguistic levels in a text (lexical, grammatical, phonological...), the current research work is concerned with repetition on the lexical level, it is the reoccurrence of the same word, phrase or sentence in the same passage. Repetition is also considered a characteristic of foregrounding; in his book on stylistics, Paul Simpson points out that foregrounding can be manifested in two different formats, one is "deviation from the norm", and the other is "more of the same". In other words, he maintains the latter to be highlighted through the replication of a pattern in the text either through repetition or parallelism. (50)

Repetition according to Galperin (211) embodies two different functions to the text, it can be adopted as an expressive means of language which is largely used to describe the overwhelmingly emotional state of the speaker, or a stylistic device which in the words Of

Galperin “aims at logical emphasis, an emphasis necessary to fix the attention of the reader on the key-word of the utterance.” I’m attentive to pointing out whether Alice Walker took on repetition as an expressive means or a stylistic device; assuming the latter, I should also highlight its importance to the meaning of the text. The following extracts are taken from the first phase of the novel:

1. Maybe you can give **me** a sign letting **me** know what is happening to **me**. (1)
2. Mr. _____ finally come right out an ast for Nettie hand in marriage. But He won’t let her go. He say she too young, no experience. Say Mr. _____ got too many children already. Plus **What about** the scandal his wife cause when somebody kill her? And **what about** all this stuff he hear bout Shug Avery? **What bout** that? (13)
3. I was in town sitting on the wagon while Mr. _____ was in the dry good store. I seen my baby girl. I knowed it was her. She look just like me and my daddy. Like more us then us is ourself. She be tagging long hind a lady and they be dress just alike. They pass the wagon and I speak. The lady speak pleasant. My little girl she look up and sort of frown. She fretting over something. She got my eyes just **like** they is today. **Like** everything I **seen**, she **seen**, and she pondering it. I think **she mine**. My heart say **she mine**. But I don’t know **she mine**. If **she mine**, her name Olivia. (17)
4. Mr. _____ children all bright but they mean. They say **Celie, I want** dis. **Celie, I want** dat. Our Mama let us have it. He don’t say nothing. They try to get his tention, he hide hind a puff of smoke. Don’t let them run over you, Nettie say. You got to let them know who got the upper hand. They got it, I say. But she keep on, **You got to fight. You got to fight**. But I don’t know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive. (19)
5. Nobody even sure exactly who her daddy is. I never care who her daddy is, say Mr. _____. And her mammy take in white people dirty clothes to this day. Plus all her

children got different daddys. It all just too trifling and confuse. Well, say Mr. _____ and turn full face on his daddy, All Shug Avery children got the same daddy. I vouch for that. Old Mr. _____ clear his throat. Well, **this my** house. **This my** land. Your boy Harpo in one of **my** houses, on **my** land. Weeds come up on **my** land, I chop 'em up. Trash blow over it I burn it. He rise to go. Hand me his glass. (39)

The repetition of **she mine** four (4) times in the third extract is an auto repetition (self-repetition) in which Celie keeps repeating the words to herself over and over again, refereeing to the child she saw in town assuming she is her lost baby girl, her assumption was based on the uncanny resemblance to her and her stepfather. This repetition has a reinforcement and emotive function to the text; in which Walker made sure to convey the accurate feelings and maternal instinct Celie had towards the little girl to her readers.

The repetition of “**You got to fight. You got to fight.**” the conversation between Nettie and Celie is a form of allo-repetition that bears a request function. Walker intentionally repeats this sentence with a rising tone; it carries both a piece of advice and an order to Celie, this stylistic technique is used to display the difference between Celie and Nettie. Despite Nettie being the youngest sister; she is intellectually sharper and more forceful than Celie, she courageously fights back against her father and Celie’s husband. Her advice of fighting back was a way of pushing her sister into rebellion and disobedience to any degradation or humiliation from her husband or his children. Contrariwise, Celie responding “But I don’t know how to **fight**. All I know how to do is stay alive.” (19) is a normal response from a child constantly raped, beaten, and insulted by every man in her life. In Celie’s view; her fear was the only thing keeping her alive, so she refused to take her sister’s advice and fight back.

Despite the miserable emotional and physical nature of Celie at the beginning of the novel, she is unable to express her state of mind, her interior monologue and exterior dialogue with her sister in the letters to God is her only outlet for feelings she has. Thus, it is requisite

to deduce that repetition at the beginning of *The Color Purple* is used as a stylistic device and not as an expressive means, mainly due to Celie's submissiveness that prevented any declaration of overwhelming emotions.

Throughout the novel; the eye-catching repeated element is the word, GOD, which is repeated more than 170 times throughout the novel.

1. Dear God (more than half of Celie letters are addressed to God)
2. Corrine and Samuel have a wonderful marriage. Their only sorrow in the beginning was that they could not have children. And then, they say, "**God**" sent them Olivia and Adam. I wanted to say, "**God**" has sent you their sister and aunt, but I didn't. Yes, their children, sent by "**God**" are your children, Celie. And they are being brought up in love, Christian charity and awareness of **God**. And now "**God**" has sent me to watch over them, to protect and cherish them. To lavish all the love I feel for you on them. It is a miracle, isn't it? And no doubt impossible for you to believe. (74)
3. DEAR NETTIE, I don't write to **God** no more. I write to you. What happen to **God**? ast Shug. Who that? I say. She look at me serious. Big a devil as you is, I say, you not worried bout no **God**, surely. She say, Wait a minute. Hold on just a minute here. Just because I don't harass it like some peoples us know don't mean I ain't got religion. What **God** do for me? I ast. She say, Celie! Like she shock. He gave you life, good health, and a good woman that love you to death. Yeah, I say, and he give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown dog of a step pa and a sister I probably won't ever see again. Anyhow, I say, the **God** I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown. She say, Miss Celie, You better hush. **God** might hear you. Let 'im hear me, I say. If he ever listened to poor colored women the world would be a different place, I can tell you. (97)

4. Sinners have more good times, I say. You know why? she ast. Cause you ain't all the time worrying bout **God**, I say. Naw, that ain't it, she say. Us worry bout **God** a lot. But once us feel loved by **God**, us do the best us can to please him with what us like. You telling me **God** love you, and you ain't never done nothing for him? I mean, not go to church, sing in the choir, feed the preacher and all like that? But if **God** love me, Celie, I don't have to do all that. Unless I want to. There's a lot of other things I can do that I speck **God** likes. Like what? I ast. Oh, she say. I can lay back and just admire stuff. Be happy. Have a good time. (97)
5. **God** love all them feelings. That's some of the best stuff **God** did. And when you know **God** loves 'em you enjoys 'em a lot more. You can just relax, go with everything that's going, and praise **God** by liking what you like. **God** don't think it dirty? I ast. Naw, she say. **God** made it. Listen, **God** love everything you love—and a mess of stuff you don't. But more than anything else, **God** love admiration. You saying **God** vain? I ast. Naw, she say. Not vain, just wanting to share a good thing. I think it pisses **God** off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it. What it do when it pissed off? I ast. Oh, it make something else. People think pleasing **God** is all **God** care about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back. (98)

During the first two phases of the novel (8-35) and (36-70), Celie's repetition of **Dear God** in all of her letters has a double function in the text, lexical function in which it serves as a stylistic device to render the cohesion of the text and maintaining its form as an epistolary novel. By contrast, the other function is rhetorical; the repetition of Dear God invokes emotions in the reader's hearts about Celie's loneliness and inability to express the brutalities she suffered to anyone else but God.

In the last two phases of the novel, Celie's relationship with God switches from her source of salvation to her reason for misery. The discussion between Shug Avery and Celie about whether God is good or bad witnessed the repetition of the word God more than 24 times in extracts 7, 8, and 9 respectively, Walker adopted such allo-repetition in the conversation between the two to highlight the negative attitude function of the text. Celie negatively reflects on Shug Avery's attempts to persuade her to return to the pleasures and warmth of God.

3.5.1.1.2 Anaphora in *The Color Purple*

1. **I am** fourteen years old. **I am** I have always been a good gi rl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me. (1)
2. I'm big. I can't move fast enough. **By time I git** back from the well, the water be warm. **By time I git** the tray ready the food be cold. **By time I git** all the children ready for school it be dinner time. **He** don't say nothing. **He** set there by the bed holding her hand an cryin, talking bout don't leave me, don't go. (9)
3. **I ast** our new mammy bout Shug Avery. What it is? **I ast**. **She** don't know but she say she gon fine out. **She** do more then that. **She** git a picture. The first one of a real person I ever seen. **She** say Mr. _____ was taking something out his billfold to show Pa an it fell out an slid under the table. Shug Avery was a woman. The most beautiful woman I ever saw. (13)
4. That's a real pretty dress you got on, he say to Nettie. She say, Thank you. Them shoes look just right. She say, Thank you. **Your** skin. **Your** hair. **Your** teefs. Everyday it something else to make miration over. First she smile a little. Then she frown. Then she don't look no special way at all. She just stick close to me. She tell me, **Your** skin.

Your hair, **Your** teefs. He try to give her a compliment, she pass it on to me. After while I git to feeling pretty cute. (19)

5. What that song? I ast. Sound low down dirty to me. Like what the preacher tell you its sin to hear. Not to mention sing. She hum a little more. **Something** come to me, she say. **Something** I made up. **Something** you help scratch out my head. (38)

6. She say, My first step from the old white man was trees. **Then** air. **Then** birds. **Then** other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. (98)

7. You'll be back, he say. Nothing up North for nobody like you. Shug got talent, he say. **She** can sing. **She** got spunk, he say. **She** can talk to anybody. Shug got looks, he say. She can stand up and be notice. But what you got? **You** ugly. **You** skinny. **You** shape funny. **You** too scared to open your mouth to people. All you fit to do in Memphis is be Shug's maid. Take out her slop-jar and maybe cook her food. You not that good a cook either. And this house ain't been clean good since my first wife died. And nobody crazy or backward enough to want to marry you, neither. What you gon do? (102)

8. **I** am so happy. **I** got love, **I** got work, **I** got money, friends and time. And you alive and be home soon. With our children. (105)

Anaphora is another stylistic marker in the lexical categories of Leech and Short's checklist, it is a form of structural repetition in which a word or sequence of words are repeated at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences. The prevailing anaphoric feature in *The Color Purple* is the repetition of first and third-person pronouns I, she, and different categories of nouns. In extracts 1,2,3,7 and 8 above, the personal pronouns are replicated in elucidative situations for reinforcement purposes; case in point, extracts 1, 2, and 8 are

devoted to the description of Celie and her state. In each extract, Alice Walker paints a picture of Celie's situation by making her repeat the pronoun **I** every time she seeks to intensify her state. The last extract demonstrates the positive change in Celie's situation compared to the first and second.

Just the same, the seventh extract also serves a descriptive scheme, yet, the repetition of the pronoun **you** and **she** by Celie's husband in positively describing Shug Avery and negatively depicting her is for emphatic function. The passage illustrates how men view women, particularly when feeling threatened by the possibility of their emancipation. Albert's comparison of Shug and Celie by the continuous anaphoric repetition of the pronouns **you** and **she** is Walker's technique in rigorously unveiling the startling state of Albert filled with anger and surprise when he realized Celie took a stand against him for the first time in her life.

Thus, via Galperin's (211) distinction of repetition function in a text, the former serves as an expressive means when the speaker is under the pressure of exhibiting strong emotions, considering that Walker intended to display clearly and vividly Albert's strong emotions, it is fair to say that anaphora being a form of repetition serves as an expressive means rather than a stylistic device in *The Color Purple*. The idea is also evident with the anaphoric repetition in extracts 1, 2, and 8 whereby Celie addresses her emotional state and parades the marvelous accomplishments she was lucky to attain.

The use of anaphora had a positive effect in describing the progression of the events throughout the novel, particularly those concerned with Celie's emancipation. The repetition of anaphoric elements in certain passages works to emphasize and reinforce the intended idea by the author, it also bears a rhetorical function to the text in which it heightens emotions in the reader's mind.

3.5.1.2 Phonological Scheme of *The Color Purple*

Analyzing a literary text on a phonological level entails the researcher highlighting the recurrent and important phonological devices used by the author in his/her text; additionally, stressing the motive behind the extensive use of such markers. The researcher by adopting Leech and Short's checklist will shed light on the Alliteration and Assonance laid out throughout the novel by pointing out their significance to the overall meaning.

3.5.1.2.1 Alliteration in *The Color Purple*

Investigating alliteration in a literary text involves underlining the repetition of consonantal sounds at the beginning of neighboring words, this repetition occurs in two or more words. Wales (15) sees alliteration as “a deliberate phonological device” that is used for “emphasis, and to aid memorability.” Dupriez developed the purpose range of alliteration to include comic effects and “making a text reverberant or narcotic” (23). Put simply, the extensive use of alliterative sounds gives the text an attractive and addictive mode to the reader.

In *The Color Purple*, Walker employs Alliteration in several scenes throughout the novel, the use of such a device by Walker was to reinforce meaning and stress context. The following extracts illustrate the utilization of glottal fricative alliterative sound /h/:

1. Mr.come finally one day looking all drug out. The woman **he had helping him** done quit. **His** mammy done said No More. **He** say, Let me see **her** again. Pa call me. *Celie*, **he** say. Like it wasn't nothing. Mr. _____ want another look at you. I go stand in the door. The sun shine in my eyes. **He's** still up on **his horse**. He look me up and down. Pa rattle his newspaper. Move up, **he** won't bite, **he** say. Pa say, Your sister thinking bout marriage. Didn't mean nothing to him. **He** pull my dresstail and ast can **he have** some blackberry jam out the safe. I say, Yeah. She good with children, Pa say,

rattling his paper open more. Never **heard her** say a **hard** word to nary one of them. Just give 'em everything they ast for, is the only problem. (15)

2. Celie, **he** say, you **have** my sympathy. Not many women let they **husband** **whore** lay up in they **house**. But he not saying to me, he saying it to Mr. _____. Mr. _____ look up at me, our eyes meet. This the closest us ever felt. **He** say, **Hand** Pa **his** **hat**, Celie. And I do. Mr. _____ don't move from his chair by the railing. I stand in the door. Us watch Old Mr. _____ begin **harrumping** and **harrumping** down the road **home**. (39)
3. I saw Pa once since I left home. One day me and Mr. _____ was loading up the wagon at the feed store. Pa was with May Ellen and she was trying to fix her stocking. She was bent down over her leg and twisting the stocking into a knot above her knee, and **he** was standing over **her** tap-tap-tapping on the gravel with **his** cane. Look like **he** was thinking bout **hitting her** with it. (92)

In the above extracts, the existence of the glottal /h/ sound implies a contrastive intention. Walker uses the foregrounded /h/ to deliver a sense of unkindness and insensitivity; both at the surface and deep meaning. “*Look like **he** was thinking bout **hitting her** with it,*” (92) considering the delicacy of the /h/; Walker deliberately employed it to indicate violence and aggression. In contrast to the natural potential of the sound, this suggests softness and compassion.

At certain moments, Walker uses the glottal /h/sound to serve its purpose which is used in sentences that do not express any harshness; however, the context of the extracts is as harsh as it could be. In the first extract; Celie, a human being was being displayed as a physical object by her stepfather to be wedded to an older man, not as a wife but rather as a servant for sexual and laboring purposes. Celie's stepfather uses the sentence “*Never **heard her** say a **hard** word to nary one of them.*”(15) Though the sentence positively complements

Celie for her parenting skills; it is used negatively as a persuading strategy for Albret to marry her.

The glottal fricative /h/ sound wasn't the only alliterative soft-sounding consonant in *The Color Purple*; other soft sounds such as bilabial /m/ and /b/, labiodental fricative /f/, labial approximant /w/ and harsh sounds like alveolar plosive /t/ and alveolar fricative /s/ are also highly used throughout the novel. Much like the /h/ sound; Walker made the most of these sounds to call attention to sentences that depict the various sufferings of women throughout the novel.

4. I was all dress **for** first day. You **too** dumb **to** keep going **to** school, Pa say. Nettie the clever one in this **bunch**. **But** Pa, Nettie say, crying, **Celie** smart too. Even Miss Beasley say so. Nettie dote on Miss Beasley. Think nobody like her in the world. Pa say, Whoever listen to anything Addie Beasley have to say. She run off at the **mouth** so **much** no **man** would have her. That how come she have **to** **teach** school. (15)
5. **When** **we** **was** **well** out of sight of the house he caught up **with** me and started **trying** **to** talk. You know how he do, You sure is looking fine, Miss Nettie, and stuff like that. I tried to ignore him and walk faster, but my bundles was **heavy** and the sun was **hot**. After while I had to rest, and that's when he got down from his horse and started **to** **try** **to** kiss me, and drag me back in the woods. Well, I started to fight **him**, and with God's **help**, I **hurt** **him** bad enough to make **him** let me alone. (71)
6. You say US where most folks say WE, she say, and peoples think you dumb. Colored peoples think you a hick and white folks be amuse. What I care? I ast. I'm **happy**. But she say I feel more **happier** talking like she **talk**. Can't nothing **make** **me** happier than seeing you again, I think, but I don't say nothing. Every time I say something the way I say it, she correct me until I say it some other way. Pretty soon it feel like I can't think. **My** **mind** run up on a thought, git confuse, run back and sort of lay down. You sure this

worth it? I ast. She say Yeah. **B**ring me a **b**unch of **b**ooks. Whitefolks all over them, talking bout apples and dogs. (105)

Either soft-sounding consonants or harsh-sounding consonants; the clever utilization of these foregrounded sounds in their standard position of representing flexibility and resilience or in embodying crudity and sharpness, reflects only one aspect of Walker's singular phonological style of her writings.

3.5.1.2.2 Assonance in *The Color Purple*

Assonance is another phonological pattern used in literature to reinforce textual and contextual meaning. Trask defines assonance from both a narrow and broad perspective. Narrowly speaking, it is the reproduction of the same or similar vowel sounds in two or more nearby words in a phrase, broadly, it is “any repetition of the same or similar sounds or sound sequences in a short text, including consonance (sense 2) but often excluding both rhyme and alliteration. \l: assonate” (38). Wales adds that the repetitive vowel sounds should hold different consonantal endings (35).

Alice Walker employs assonance in her text to reinforce the function of alliteration in enhancing both the surface and deep meaning she wishes to convey. The following extracts highlight some of the vowel sounds repeated throughout the novel:

1. He act like he can't stand me **no more**. Say I'm evil an always up to no good. He took my other little baby, a boy **this** time. But I don't think he kilt **it**. I think he sold **it** to a man an **his** wife over Monticello. (10)
2. What that song? I **ast**. Sound **low down** dirty to me. Like what the **preacher** tell you its sin to **hear**. Not to mention sing. She hum a little **more**. **Something** come to me, she say. Something I made up. Something you help scratch out my head. (38)

3. Sofia look like something on her mind, she just not sure what. She bend over the frame, sew a little while, then **rear** back in her **chair** and **look out** cross the yard. Finally she **rest** her needle, say, Why do people eat, Miss Celie, tell me that. (41)
4. **Although** I **work for** Corrine and Samuel and **look** after the children, I **don't** feel like a maid. I guess this is because they teach me, and I teach the children and there's no beginning or end to **teaching** and **learning** and working—it all runs together. (75)
5. You still **bothering** Sofia? I ast. She my wife, he say. That **don't** mean you got to keep on bothering her, I say. Sofia love you, she a **good** wife. **Good** to the children and **good looking**. **Hardworking**. **Godfearing** and clean. I **don't know** what **more you want**. (43)

The repetition of short vowel sounds /ɪ/, /æ/, /ʊ/ in words such as *little*, *think*, and *kilt*, others like *low* and *down* work beyond their conceptual meaning in the extracts to denote a more connotative meaning. The foregrounded sounds are said in a tuned-down voice, which reflects the submissive state of Celie, though her internal thoughts are strong; she is unable to courageously state her mind.

The assonance in sentences such as “**Although** I **work for** Corrine and Samuel and **look** after the children, I **don't** feel like a maid” and “I **teach** the children, and there's no beginning or end to **teaching** and **learning** and working—it all runs together.” (75) In Nettie's speech, Walker's conscious use of long vowel sounds as /ɜ:/ and /i:/ reinforces the meaning of Nettie's safety and liberty. Nettie found independence in places far away from her family and society, a positive circle to surround herself with. In contrast, her sister Celie's negative environment forces her into submissiveness.

3.5.1.3 Tropes in *The Color Purple*

Figurative language is an essential component of literary language; tropes are the classical figures of speech dominantly adopted by authors to not only decorate their texts but also create images in the reader's mind. This literary technique is established by authors to

induce special effect to the work; in addition to, highlighting their literary skills in managing language which gives the reader an insight into the author's abilities as a competent storyteller.

3.5.1.3.1 Metaphorical Framework in *The Color Purple*

A metaphor is a classical figure of speech that denotes the transference of similar qualities from one object to another; Dupriez sees metaphor as: “transfer from one meaning to another through a personal operation based on an impression or interpretation which readers must discover or experience for themselves.” (276) This transference is a form of comparison that emphasizes that one thing is another thing through attributing features of an object to the compared entity even if the two are unlikely to have similar comparable properties. Any metaphorical implications always consist of the target domain which is the topic described through the metaphor; while the source domain is the concept adopted to construct the required image.

The essential mechanism of metaphors in literary texts is to construct images in the reader's mind, to direct and shape his/her mind in converting abstract notions into concrete. Galperin based his definition of metaphor on this assumption; he maintained that a metaphor is “the power of realizing two lexical meanings simultaneously.” (140) Such power is a crucial element in creating images thus giving the text vibrant and distinctive features making it enjoyable for the reader. He argues that the notion of similarity of two objects is false, even if the two objects share one or several common features it does not make them similar. He adds that when two different phenomena (things, events, ideas, actions) are associated by appointing some or all the inherent attributes of one object to another which is naturally deprived of these properties; metaphor develops into a stylistic device (140)

The following extracts demonstrate the adaptation of metaphors by Alice Walker in her novel:

1. He act like he can't stand me no more. **Say I'm evil** an always up to no good. He took my other little baby, a boy this time. But I don't think he kilt it. I think he sold it to a man an his wife over Monticello.(10)
2. I'm gitting tired of Harpo, she say. All he think about since us married is how to make me mind. **He don't want a wife, he want a dog.** He your husband, I say. Got to stay with him. Else, what you gon do? My sister husband caught in the draft, she say. They don't have no children, Odessa love children. He left her on a little farm. Maybe I go stay with them a while. Me and my children. (44)
3. It was the funniest thing to stop over in Monrovia after my first glimpse of Africa, which was Senegal. The capital of Senegal is Dakar and the people speak their own language, Senegalese I guess they would call it, and French. They are the blackest people I have ever seen, Celie. They are black like the people we are talking about when we say, "**So and so is blacker than black, he's blueblack.**" **They are so black, Celie, they shine.** (77)
4. Celie is coming with us, say Shug. Mr. ____'s head swivel back straight. Say what? he ast. Celie is coming to Memphis with me. Over my dead body, Mr. ____ say. You satisfied that what you want, Shug say, cool as clabber. Mr. ____ start up from his seat, look at Shug, plop back down again. He look over at me. I thought you was finally happy, he say. What wrong now? **You a lowdown dog is what's wrong,** I say. It's time to leave you and enter into the Creation. **And your dead body just the welcome mat I need.** (99)

In the first extract, Celie's stepfather describes her as **evil**; Walker adopted the verb 'to be' not to create an image between Celie and evilness but rather to assert that her stepfather believes she is without certainty evil. The similarity between Celie and evilness is not remotely true; yet her stepfather made such an assumption to justify his savage actions of

raping her because, in his conviction, she is bad. The metaphorical conception in the first extract is based on Celie's appearance more than her actions, in a conventional context; evilness is related to harmfulness and danger which young Celie never promoted nor initiated. In my view, depicting a young innocent child as evil is a monstrous act; it reflects the intrinsic qualities of Celie's stepfather, he tries to escape his atrocious nature by deliberately echoing his evil features on Celie.

The metaphors in extracts 2 and 3 are deliberate; in the second extract, Walker adopted animal epithets comparing a person to a dog, such comparison was based on Sofia believing Harpo wants a dog rather than a wife. The target domain was chosen for its loyalty, hard work, and giving nature without any expectation of reciprocation. The use of this comparison by Walker is not only limited to Sofia; she deliberately opted for such a metaphor to mirror the notorious conventional thought of all African males in 19th century America, the conviction that women are demanded to work unconditionally beyond their limits and deprived of all rights not just as women but also as human beings. Celie's answer to Sofia also depicts the mindset of women at that time, they are brainwashed since childhood to unquestionably accept the superiority of males over females, believing they ought to stay with their husbands regardless of any psychological or physical abuse they are exposed to.

In excerpt 3, the use of metaphor "he's blue-black. They are so black, Celie, they shine." (77) about the people of Senegal, is an implied and extended metaphor. The target domain is vaguely stated; however, it is expected that Walker used such a metaphor deliberately. The origin of the word black is traced back to Indo-Europeans; it indicates fire, shining white, or flashing in various white colors (Joys 307). However, the denotation of the term black changed over the centuries bearing multiple other associations; Alice Walker merged the original use of the word with one of its various descriptions which refers to darkness without light. Though the whole novel revolves around black people; Walker used

the term blue-black which refers to something extremely dark to, create an image in Celie's mind about the darkness of the skin tone of the people in Senegal.

The adaptation of animal epithets as metaphors is also evident in extract 4, the metaphor is unplanned; the violent and surprising reaction of Celie is an unconscious comeback which was provoked by her husband, Celie finally said the words she has been holding back for years. Comparing someone to a dog is a trite (dead) metaphor that is generally immediately understood; however, sometimes it depends on the context in which the metaphor is used. Dogs could have different denotations; they could be loyal, brave, and good company, as they could be dangerous and repulsive. In the context of the novel, Albert was compared to a lowdown dog meaning a cruel, repulsive, and mean person. Though the comparison was unconscious, it was cognitively driven by several years of humiliation, silence, and endurance of violence.

The use of tropes in fictional texts that convey graphic representations is crucial to the realistic concepts the author tries to transfer to the reader, this technique is also important to engage the reader in the story. The different metaphorical exertions in *The Color Purple* were not intentionally resorted to by Walker to give the novel a stylistic effect; rather, she opted for this figurative device to stress the natural use of metaphors in African-American everyday speech. Her intention was not to decorate the text but to give a chance to the reader to immerse him/herself into the character's experiences and their discourse.

3.5.1.3.2 Simile in *The Color Purple*

Same to metaphor, a simile is a figure of speech and a stylistic device concerned with passing similarities of one object to another, Wales points out that a simile is a figure of speech that compares two concepts either imaginatively or descriptively using the connectors 'like' and 'as' (383) Dupriez also affirms that a simile is a form of comparison in which the

vehicle is connected/compared to the tenor by 'like' or 'as' (416). On another note, Geoffrey Leech & Mick Short provide an extension to the conventional denotation of similes which they label as quasi-similes; according to them, the connectors 'like' and 'as' designate conventional similes, another form of simile in literary clauses that express or imply similitude involving the use of phrases like: as if; resembling; suggesting, as of, corresponding, etc.

Galperin stressed the importance of distinguishing between ordinary comparison and simile, in agreement with him, the former signifies the identification of the degree of equivalence or difference between two objects belonging to the same class. The latter, however, is connecting the qualities of one object to another that belongs to a different class of objects. He adds that, in simple comparison, the entirety of features of the two compared objects are highlighted; emphasizing the compared object, meanwhile, simile disregards all the attributes of the compared objects except the one that is in common (167). In *The color purple*, Simile is unquestionably the most reoccurring stylistic device employed by Walker in her novel. Nevertheless, Walker also opted for ordinary comparison notably in the first and third extracts.

1. Next time you come you can look at her. She ugly. Don't even look like she kin to Nettie. But she'll make the better wife. She ain't smart either, and I'll just be fair, you have to watch her or she'll give away everything you own. **But she can work like a man.** (14)
2. I mean he just brought her here, dropped her, and kept right on running after Shug Avery. That what I mean. Nobody to talk to, nobody to visit. He be gone for days. Then she start having babies. And she young and pretty. Not so pretty, say Carrie,

looking in the looking glass. Just that head of hair. **She too black. Well, brother must like black. Shug Avery black as my shoe.** (20)

3. **Harpo nearly big as his daddy.** He strong in body but weak in will. He scared. Me and him out in the field all day. Us sweat, chopping and plowing. I'm roasted coffee bean color now. **He black as the inside of a chimney.** His eyes be sad and thoughtful. **His face begin to look like a woman face.** (25)

4. What you staring at? she ast. Hateful. **She weak as a kitten. But her mouth just pack with claws.** You never seen a naked woman before? No ma'am, I said. I never did. **Cept for Sofia, and she so plump and ruddy and crazy she feel like my sister.** She say, Well take a good look. Even if I is just a bag of bones now. She have the nerve to put one hand on her naked hip and bat her eyes at me. Then she suck her teef and roll her eyes at the ceiling while I wash her. **I wash her body, it feel like I'm praying. My hands tremble and my breath short.** (36)

5. **I work on her like she a doll or like she Olivia—or like she mama.** I comb and pat, comb and pat. First she say, hurry up and git finish. Then she melt down a little and lean back gainst my knees. That feel just right, she say. That feel like mama used to do. Or maybe not mama. Maybe grandma. She reach for another cigarette. Start hum a little tune. (38)

6. Won't you have a seat? I ast, pushing him up a chair. How bout a cool drink of water? Through the window I hear Shug humming and humming, practicing her little song. I sneak back to her room and shet the window. Old Mr. _____ say to Mr. _____, Just what is it bout this Shug Avery anyway, he say. **She black as tar, she nappy headed. She got legs like baseball bats.** (39)

In the first extract, Alfonso compares Celie to a man for enduring heavy labor her entire life, Walker decided on this simple comparison as a tactic to highlight a positive characteristic among the various negatives Alfonso attributed Celie with; to sell the marriage deal to Albert hoping to take Celie instead of Nettie. The third extract merges between simile and ordinary comparison; “Harpo nearly big as his daddy” and “His face begin to look like a woman face.” (Walker 25) are simple comparisons that appear contradictory yet somehow convincing. Sofia first compared Harpo to his father regarding his weight; she continued the comparison by emphasizing that his strength is only physical. Walker settled on such a comparison to establish the paradox of men being physically strong yet weak in resolution, nevertheless, they can oppress fiercer and stronger women. Walker also painted a conservative picture of those oppressed women as being miserable yet kindhearted; this image was by comparing Harpo’s face to a sad and thoughtful woman’s face.

Most of the similes in *The Color Purple* are used by Walker concerning Shug Avery; the various descriptions and comparisons of her hair, complexion, and even her body allow the readers to create a vivid image of Shug Avery. The Image was diverse; according to the character forming the comparison and his/her relationship with Shug Avery, Celie for instance, in extracts 4 and 5 compared Shug to a weak kitten, the correlation of a person to a small, innocent animal was out of sympathy and compassion towards Shug. The simile continues “But her mouth just packs with claws.” (36) to illustrate the strength of character Shug still possesses regardless of losing her physical strength due to illness; this is another stylistic strategy from Walker to highlight the difference between African American females in the 19th century. Women like Shug are independent and perseverant; rejecting society’s norms that dictate women ought to be tied to and leaning on men the same as Celie.

The simile in extract 4 displays reflexively the relationship between Celie and God and the depth of her relationship with Shug Avery. Celie worships God unconditionally; she

transfers her pure feelings of love and admiration toward Shug. Consequently, it is foregrounded through the comparison of washing her body to something most sacred like prayer; accompanied by vivid descriptions of the physical reactions Celie is subjected to from a simple experience of giving a shower to another person. The simile was not representative of the experience itself; rather of Shug Avery, Walker made certain to manifest the enthusiasm that completely consumes Celie with Shug Avery. These deep feelings continue in extract 5 as well.

Walker carries on with a similar simile concerning Shug; Celie continues to praise Shug Avery and compares her to a doll, her lost daughter or dead mother; the sentence calls attention to the psychological state of Celie, though it showcases a traumatized young girl with limited intellectual skills yet it was deliberately constructed to make an adequate comparison. Comparing a human being to a nonhuman character such as a doll bears different aspects according to the context of use; one is the beauty and charm aspect, and another is the emotionless or unintelligent aspect, as it could be familiarity with the person. Walker paralleling Shug Avery with a doll as a reflection of her beauty and charm; at the same time she is cold and careless of people around her, Celie uses this term and follows it with the comparison to her mother or daughter is her method of trying to make Shug as familiar and precious as her mother and daughter were. Celie's attraction and admiration towards Shug are interwoven with intimacy and maternalistic feelings she never had the opportunity to experience, thus she feels responsible for taking care of Shug as an attempt at compassion and redemption.

Metaphors and similes are part of everyday discourse; they are used both consciously and unconsciously, Walker used conventional similes unlike quasi-similes along with ordinary comparisons because of the classical nature of her novel; which depicts the social and cultural background of her African American characters. She sought to make her novel

relatable to the readers; Walker deliberately introduced the characters' speech as simply as possible to mirror their humble educated background, the extensive use of this device had also the same impact as a metaphor which is to create images in the reader's mind to engage with the characters.

3.6 The Stylistic Scheme of *Push*

As already mentioned in section one, the stylistic model adopted in this thesis is Leech and Short's model of stylistic categories. The researcher will go through the same process of highlighting the figures of speech (phonological, grammatical, and lexical categories) in the second novel *Push* for comparison. Sapphire's novel like any other literary text is uploaded with stylistic devices to help convey the general thematic and textual meaning of her text.

3.6.1 Figures of Speech in *Push*

In the novel *Push*, figures of speech are employed as powerful linguistic tools that amplify the raw, unfiltered narrative and immerse readers in the world of the protagonist, Precious Jones. Sapphire crafted a literary landscape rich with metaphors, similes, vivid imagery, and other figures of speech that add depth and complexity to her story. Her use of figurative language in "Push" serves not only as a stylistic element but also as a means of shedding light on the multifaceted layers of Precious's life. These figures of speech bring to life her emotions, fears, and aspirations, painting a vivid portrait of her inner world and the challenges she faces. Through this exploration, I will uncover how Sapphire masterfully employs figures of speech to illuminate the novel's themes of resilience, identity, and the pursuit of a brighter future. The use of these linguistic devices, while at times unsettling, ultimately contributes to the novel's unique narrative voice and its ability to leave a lasting impact on readers.

3.6.1.1 Grammatical and Lexical Schemes in *Push*

Given that the current research is a comparative study, it is significant to analyze the same lexical markers utilized in both novels. Accordingly, repetition and anaphora in *Push* are the focus of this section; the researcher maintains the need to highlight the repetitive elements in the novel to distinguish their textual and rhetorical functions in the text.

3.6.1.1.1 Repetition in *Push*

Sapphire's lexical scheme in *Push* is heavy with repetition. The extensive implementation of such a device in the novel is neither incidental nor marginal; based on Galperin's (211) differentiation of repetition functions in the text being either a stylistic device or an expressive means; I will attempt to identify Sapphire's repetition approach in the novel by distinctively pointing out whether this figure of speech is adopted as a stylistic device or an expressive means. In addition, illuminates its function to the overall coherence of the novel either one of emphasis or emotive.

Referring to the excerpts below, taken from various incidents throughout the novel, we observe that the frequently repeated elements are verbs, nouns, and pronouns. The action verbs **slam** and **hit** are used as keywords in extracts 1 and 2, Sapphire intentionally repeated such physical verbs that denote violence in contexts of education and childbirth to stress the upbringing of Precious. The repetition of the verb **hit** while describing her contractions is a discourse of a seven years old child giving birth to her first baby, unfamiliar with proper wording to express her pain, 'I jus' standing there 'n **pain hit** me, then **pain** go sit down, then **pain** git up 'n **hit** me harder!.... **Pain hit me** again''(9). Sapphire's continuous repetition and analogy of the word **pain** with the verb **hit** while describing Precious' labor pains mirrored the abuse she constantly received from her mother.

Sapphire combined repetition both as an expressive means and a stylistic device at the same extract; the repetition of **pain** and **hit** is a stylistic device which Sapphire adopted to paint a clear picture of the adversity Precious finds herself in; to steer the emotions of the reader and give an emphatic effect to the text. "**Mommy please, Mommy please, please Mommy! Mommy! Mommy! MOMMY!**" (9) is an expressive means in which Precious is begging her mother to stop beating her while having her labor contractions; this allo repetition serves a request function, it is exhibited with a rising tone at the end of the utterance, this is evident through the use of capital letters at the last repeated word **MOMMY**.

1. **I** still don't answer her. **I** was standing a t this sink the last time I was pregnant when them **pains hit**, wump! Ahh wump ! I never felt no shit like that before. Sweat was breaking out on my forehead, **pain** like fire was eating me up. I jus' standing there 'n **pain hit** me, then **pain** go sit down, then **pain** git up 'n **hit** me harder!.... **Pain hit me** again, then she **hit me**. I'm on the floor groaning, "**Mommy please, Mommy please, please Mommy! Mommy! Mommy! MOMMY!**" (9)

The repetition scheme in *Push* is not confined to the duplication of verbs and nouns; Sapphire took on another approach, the double repetition of the same utterance as in:

2. "I wanna die **I hate myself HATE myself. Giggles giggles** but I don't move I barely breathe I just sit. They giggle. I stare straight ahead. They talk me. I don't say nuffin". (39)
3. "Miz Rain say we almost finished for the day, say she wanna spend some time with each student in little office room to side before we go. Say she gonna call us out one by one in alphabetical order. I feel **panicking panicking!** don't know alphabetical order-whas that!" (51)
4. Once I'm outside the door I stop at top of the stairs, look hard at her. She still foaming at mouf, talking about her husband I spoze to steal. I do tell her one thing as I going

down the stairs. I say, "Nigger **rape me**. I not steal shit fat bitch your husband **RAPE me RAPE ME!** " I screaming holding little Abdul, hospital bag with Pampers 'n his stuff, 'n a shopping bag from Woolworth's with my stuff in it. (74)

together with the repetition of the same consonants and vowels within the same word as with: "I think I AM MAD. **ANGERREEY angerry** very mi life not good i got dizeez. Ms Rain say NOT dizeez I say whut is it then. I Talk angr to Ms Rain.'" (100). This artistic touch is deliberate to reinforce and call much attention to the traumatized psych and paralysis Precious feels each time she finds herself in high anxiety situations. She repeats the same word twice and vowels and consonants within the same word to clarify the intensity of her feelings; for the reader to vividly feel her inner struggles and empathize with her experience through the repeated words. Accordingly, the approach performs an expressive emotive function in addition to triggering a stylistic effect on the text.

Sapphire took on repetition generously throughout her novel; to accentuate the emotionally troubled mindset of young Precious, an account of the emotional, sexual, and physical abuse she constantly received from her parents. Her communication skills are not well delineated; Precious conveys ideas through vulgar verbalization and violent actions:

5. He **slam** his han' down on the book and say, "Try to have some discipline." He a skinny little white man about five feets four inches. A peckerwood as my mother would say. I look at him 'n say, "I can **slam** too. You wanna **slam**? " 'N I pick up my book 'n **slam** it down on the desk hard. The class laugh some more. He say, "Miss jones I would appreciate it if you would leave the room right NOW" I say, "**I ain'** going nowhere mutherfucker till the bell ring. **I** came here to learn maff and you gon' teach me. " (4)
6. I press TALK on the intercom and holler, "**Stop ringing the goddam buzzer** mutherfucker! " and go back to the kitchen to finish the dishes. The buzzer ring again. I go back. "**Stop ringing the goddam buzzer,** " I say again. The mutherfucker ring

again. "**Stop it!** " It ring again. "**STOP IT!** " I shout again. It ring again. My muver jump in and say, "Press LISTEN stupid! " I wanna say I ain' stupid but I know I am so I don't say nothin', 'cause also I don't want her to go hit me, 'cause I know from my hand in the dishwater holding the butcher knife, I am through being hit. I am going to stab her she ever hit Precious Jones again. (14)

Given the violent environment of her household; Precious' aggressive communication skills both verbal and physical are managed as a coping mechanism and a self-defense strategy to shield her from the evils of the outside world. Setting out to seek exclusion from normal social interactions with others, the thing she lacked her entire life either with family or classmates who only abused and bullied her for years.

An additional repetition tactic frequently observed throughout the novel is the repetition of the verb **push**; which had a prominent role in the recreation journey of Precious. As well as, conveying a sentimental touch that reoccurs several times in critical moments throughout the novel to reinforce the emotive function of the text. The repetition of the imperative verb **push** in both instruction and request mode in pivotal moments in Precious' life is a stylistic approach by Sapphire; to stress the influential figures that impacted reshaped and, helped rebuild the broken entity of Precious.

The imperative verb was mostly associated with Ms Rain; a figure advocating for literacy, women's empowerment, and self-discovery. She motivated Precious to push into a better educational realm thus a better life for her and her children. However, The repetition of push was first introduced in the early pages of the novel when Precious recalled having her first baby on the kitchen floor and a Hispanic paramedic encouraged her and asked her to push:

7. Some mens, these ambulance mens, I don't see 'em or hear 'em come in. But I look up from the pain and he dere. This Spanish guy in EMS uniform. He **push** me back on a cushion. I'm like in a ball from the pain. He say, "RELAX! " The pain stabbing me wif a knife and this spic talking 'bout relax. He touch my forehead put his other hand on the side of my belly. "What's your name?" he say. "Huh ? " I say. "Your name?" "Precious," I say. He say, "Precious, it's almost here. I want you to **push**, you hear me momi, when that shit hit you again, go with it and **push**, Preshecita. **Push**." And I did.
- (10)

Another pivotal moment in Precious' life that witnessed the repetition of the verb **push** is the night before her first day at the alternative school; her heart was warm, full of happiness and excitement of having another chance at education and learning. When she fell asleep thinking about the alternative school, the Hispanic paramedic returns in her dreams as a guardian angel and asks her to push:

8. I go to sleep thinking nineteenth floor Hotel Theresa, an alternative. I don't know what an alternative is but I feel I want to know. Nineteenth floor, that's the last words I think before I go to sleep. I dream I'm in an elevator that's going up up up so far I think I'm dying. The elevator open and it's the coffee-cream-colored man from Spanish talk iand. I recognize him from when I was having my baby bleeding on the kitchen floor. He put his hand on my forehead again and whisper, "**Push**, Precious, you gonna hafta **push**." I wake up remembering the last time I **pushed**. It was two whole days before they brought the baby to me, 'n I git to see what "a little trouble breathing" mean. (16)

In light of the despairing mindset and violent behaviors of Precious consequence of her troubled family, the young girl was introverted and a disbeliever of happiness and freedom. Ms. Rain was the vessel carrying Precious into literacy, thus holding a means of escape for her and her children. After having the courage to admit being illiterate; Precious

was neither ridiculed nor neglected as it happened in her old school. On the contrary, Precious found a support system from her teacher and classmates; Ms. Rain repeatedly requested Precious to push herself into a new exceptional literacy journey to help her overcome her dreadful past and intolerable present:

9. "What's wrong Precious? " **I** struggles for air, " I . . . the pages look alike to me. " I breathe i n deep, there I said it. Miz Rain sigh sad like. "I think I understand you, Precious. But for now, I want you to try, **push** yourself Precious, go for it. " I reach out my hand for book. "Just do the best you can, if you don't know a word skip-" She stop. "Just look at the page and say the words you do know. " (54)
10. Miz Rain say, "Write what's on your mind, **push** your self to see the letters that represent the words you're thinking." She turn to me ax real fast, "Precious what's on your mind? " I say, "What? "" She say, "What you was thinking just then." I go to open my mouf. She say, "Don't say it, write it." I say, "I can't." She say, "Don't say that." She say, "DO what I say, write what you was thinking." (61)

3.6.1.1.2 Anaphora in *Push*

Anaphora is another form of structural repetition in the lexical scheme adopted by Sapphire in her novel. The anaphoric approach in *Push* differs from *The Color Purple* in the anaphoric repetition of phrases; in addition to the repetition of first-person pronouns. Extracts 1-5 selected from diverse scenes throughout the novel showcase the extensive use of the first personal pronoun **I**. Sapphire deliberately adopted such repetition in excerpts 1 and 2 to display the discourse of young Precious; the little illiterate girl is unable to properly construct a sentence without repeating herself over and over again. Making use of such a technique has an experiential effect on the text; Sapphire is attentive to immerse the reader into the cruel life experience of Precious.

1. **I** can see by his eyes Mr Wicher like me too. **I** wish I could tell him about all the pages being the same but I can't. **I**'m getting pretty good grades. **I** usually do. **I** just wanna gone get the fuck out of I.S. 1 46 and go to high school and get my diploma. (6)
2. **I** big, **I** talk, **I** eats, **I** cooks, **I** laugh, watch Tv, do what my muver say. But I can see when the picture come back I don't exist. **Don't nobody** want me. **Don't nobody** need me. **I know** who I am. **I know** who they say I am-vampire sucking the system's blood. Ugly black grease to be wipe away, punish, kilt, changed, finded a job for. (31)
3. It's 8 a.m. o'clock! I know I woketed up at 6 a.m., lord where the time go! **I got to** get dress for school. **I got to** be at school by 9 a.m. Today is first day. **I been** tessed. **I been** incomed eligible. I got Medicaid card and proof of address. All that shit. I is ready. Ready for school. **School** something (this nuthin ' !). **School** gonna help me get out dis house. (35)
4. But I look my friends in the circle and I tell them, test say I'm HIV positive. And all the tongues dead, can't talk no more. Rita Romero hug me like I'm her chile and I cry and Ms Rain rub my back and say let it out, Precious, let it out. **I cry** for every day of my life. **I cry** for Mama what kinda story Mama got to do me like she do? And **I cry** for my son, the song in my life. (96)
5. What is a normal life? A life where you not 'shamed of your mother. **Where** your friends come over after school and watch TV and do homework. **Where** your mother is normal looking and don't hit you over the head wif ironskillet. I would wish for in my fantasy a second chance. Since my first chance go to Mama and Daddy. (115)

In extract 2, each time Precious describes herself or her life she repeats the pronoun **I** to emphasize the self-portrait image she painted for herself. She only attributes negative qualities to herself “**I** big, **I** talk, **I** eats, **I** cooks, **I** laugh, watch Tv, do what my muver say.

But I can see when the picture come back I don't exist.” (31) Precious believes her life is in vain, such downhearted virtues are a result of the rejection and abuse she received her whole life “Don't nobody want me. Don't nobody need me. I know who I am. I know who they say I am-vampire sucking the system's blood. Ugly black grease to be wipe away, punish, kilt, changed, find a job for.” (31)

The anaphoric repetition of phrases such as **I know, I got to, I been, I cry** in extracts 2, 3, and 4 has an emphatic function. Sapphire exclusively intends to arouse the reader's emotion in sympathizing with Precious. Though the storyline of the novel doesn't require such repetition to arouse the reader's emotions due to its harsh and cruel context; Sapphire repeated certain phrases to ensure emphasis in certain scenes in the novel. Such repetition is used to push the reader into Precious' world, to feel what she feels, to mentally experience what she experienced, to fall and get back up in different scenes as the poor Precious did.

The conscious selection of such a device by Sapphire is for reinforcement purposes, even though her text is already reinforced through several other devices in addition to the diversified thematic schemes communicated through the text, Sapphire opted for anaphora to assert and emphasize the savage environment the novel wishes and can vividly portray. The anaphoric framework in *Push* was essentially connected to the speech of Precious; such stylistic choice foregrounded and stressed the position of Precious and highlighted her mental and educational abilities as an illiterate sixteen-year-old girl. This form of repetition prompts the reader's attention to follow up with Precious' journey into shallow independence.

3.6.1.2 Phonological Scheme of *Push*

3.6.1.2.1 Alliteration in *Push*

The adoption of alliteration in the literature, on the whole, is for rhythmic, aesthetic, or functional purposes; Sapphire employs alliterative sounds extensively throughout the novel.

Precious's unique discourse of vernacular English is full of alliteration that is mostly used for rhythmic and functional purposes. The subsequent extracts have been drawn out from different scenarios across the novel; the researcher will highlight the common alliterative sounds used by Sapphire and see their function in meaning-making.

1. "Go **t**ell them assholes **t**o stop ringing the bell," she say. She closer to the door than **m**e but I **m**ean **m**y **m**uver don't **m**ove 'less she has to. I **m**ean that. (14)
2. After **m**y baby and **m**e come out of the hospital **m**y **m**uver take us down to welfare; say I is **m**other but just a chile and she taking care of bofe us' es. (34)
3. I just sit in back classroom, somebody say something I shout on 'em, hit 'em; rest of the time I **m**ine **m**y bizness. (35)
4. I wanna die I hate myself **HATE** myself. Giggles giggles but I don't move I **b**arely **b**reathe I just sit. They giggle. I **s**tare **s**traight ahead. They talk me. (39)
5. Dear Precious, Being a good **m**other **m**ight **m**ean letting your **b**aby **b**e raised **b**y someone who is **b**etter able than you to meet the child's needs. (72)
6. My **b**aby is **b**orn. My **b**aby is **b**lack. I am girl I am black. I want house to live. (76)
7. I'm at armory not **f**ar **f**rom hospital. This shit ain' gonna work. "What time is it? Six a.m. Miz West! Live down the hall from us, stop **M**ama from kicking **m**e to death when **M**ongo **b**eing **b**orn. She like me. I always did go to the store for her since I was little. "**P**recious, **b**ring me **b**ack a **p**ack of Winstons and a **b**ig **b**ag of **p**ork rinds." (78)
8. **M**ama don't look **m**e in eye. She never did 'less she was shouting on me or telling me what to do-cook her something or go to store. She look down say, "Your **d**addy **d**ead. " She come out the house **t**o **t**ell me that! So what! I'm glad the nigger's dead. No, I don't mean that, but so what. Mama quiet. Mama say, "Carl had the AIDS virus." (85)

The extracts illustrate Sapphire's broad use of the voiced bilabial nasal sound /m/ and voiced bilabial plosive /b/. Alliterating the first, second, and fifth sentences with the /m/ sound

gives an emotive function to the text; Precious' terrible childhood reflects emotions of hate and shame towards her mother, this is evident in Sapphire's adoption of more voiced consonants than voiceless; the former provides a sense of power to the word hence to its meaning.

It is expedient to mention that alliteration in *Push* is not restricted to the use of voiced consonants as we have highlighted above with the illustrations:

9. First grade boy say, Pick up your lips Claireece 'fore you trip over them. Call me **shoe shine shinola**. Second grade I is fat. Thas when fan sounds and pig grunt sounds start. (38)

10. The **skinny light-skin Spanish** girl speak, "My name is **Rita Romero**. I was born right **here in Harlem**. I'm here because I was an addict and dropped out of school and never got my reading and writing together. (44)

11. **She** say **she** sorry to see me **back** here, **had hoped** I **be** done learned from **my** **mistakes**. What kinda shit is that! I didn't **make** no **mistake** unless it **being born**, 'n Miz Rain say I was born for a purpose, 'n Mr Wicher **had** said I **had** aptitude for maff. I don't know what **purpose** but I know I got a **purpose**, a reason, and according to Farrakhan I **got** a almighty allah **god**. (75)

The voiceless fricative sounds are also utterly alliterated; the /h/, /f/, and /s/ sounds are exploited consciously by Sapphire, though they are voiceless sounds they indicate sharpness. The foregrounded alliteration of the sounds /f/ and /s/ in the aforementioned extracts reflects on the harsh vicious insults from Precious' classmate and a rude comment from a hospital nurse while she was giving birth to her second child; the alliteration here serves Sapphire's intention of reinforcing the meaning of the sentences that is the harassment Precious receives not only from her family but from different individuals in her environment.

The study of alliteration in *Push* is an initial step in identifying her writing style. Every word and sound alliterated by Sapphire is a conscious decision; it bears an aesthetic and functional purpose. The violent and aggressive context of the novel also dictates the use of certain phonological stylistic devices to strengthen the stylistic meaning of the text.

3.6.1.2.2 Assonance in *Push*

Following the definition adopted in (3.5.1.2.2), the repetition of some vowel sounds in a sentence or a passage stimulates the reader and forces him/her to place more emphasis on the written piece. Authors use this stylistic technique to draw attention to certain implicit or explicit ideas they wish to be properly conveyed or critically dissected by the reader. Sapphire decided on assonance as a key phonological stylistic device to emphasize several issues in her text. The subsequent extracts demonstrate a sample of Sapphire's use of such a device in her novel, the researcher will identify the repeated vowel sounds and their effect in the text.

1. I was left back when I was twelve because I had a baby for my fahver. That was in 1983. I was out of school for a year. This gonna be my second baby. My daughter got Down Sinder. She's retarded. (1)
2. I got suspended from school 'cause I'm pregnant which I don't think is fair. I ain' did nothin' ! (3)
3. After I come home from hospital baby go live over on 1 50th and St Nicholas Avenue with my grandmother, even though Mama tell welfare the baby live with us and she care of it while I'm in school. (19)
4. Rhonda look me, say, I got you. I look up in her eye. She smile. I feel like I'm gonna cry again. Everybody gonna think I'm a punk, crying, crying. I'm not used to this. But this what I always want, some friendly niceness. I say I pay you back. She say I know you will, what you want. I say barbecue potato chips. She gone! Rhonda move fast for a big girl. (48)

5. So anyway **by** February I'm pretty settled in Advancement House. So I work all **spring**, memoriz**ing** letter sounds, writ**ing** in journal, read**ing** books. (82)

The repetitive vowel sounds /æ/, /u:/, and /a:/ in the excerpts above serve a double purpose in the text; Sapphire's use of assonant sounds particularly in the opening pages of her novel is a stylistic approach to set the mood for the readers. The novel begins with a disturbing statement "I was left back when I was twelve because I had a baby for my fahver." (1) the sound /a:/ in *had*, *baby* and *fahver* is calculated by the author and works as a hook to the reader to fill his curiosity in knowing the upcoming events of the novel that lead a young girl to issue such a repulsive statement.

Assonant vowel sounds in *Push* stress words that bear extra stylistic meaning; in an attempt to make the text as appealing as possible for the readers, also serve the author's intention in setting the mood of the text. The repetition of vowel sounds in words that bear harsh and depressing connotative meanings simultaneously establishes the mood of the text, the opening paragraphs of *Push* explicitly introduce a dark and sorrowful mood, due to harsh and staccato-sounding word choices.

3.6.1.3 Tropes in *Push*

3.6.1.3.1 Metaphorical Framework in *Push*

Since metaphor works as a mechanism of creating images in the reader's minds, Sapphire adopted this mechanism repeatedly throughout the novel in distinguished scenes to explicitly highlight the trauma that dictated Precious's life and future. The various metaphors in *Push* in addition to their figurative meaning to the text; bear a gloomy and derogatory effect on the understanding and judgment of the reader; Sapphire's stylistic choices were decided to put more emphasis on the horrific storyline of the novel in addition to providing the necessary aesthetic and emotional effect to her text.

1. **I jus' standing there 'n pain hit me, then pain go sit down, then pain git up 'n hit me harder!** 'N she standing there screaming at me (9)
2. Miz West screamin' now. She call Mama a fool. **Pain walking on me now. Jus' stomping on me.** I can't see hear, I jus' screamin', "Mommy! Mommy!" (10)
3. And I did. And always after that I look for someone with his face and eyes in Spanish peoples. He coffee-cream color, good hair. I remember that. God. **I think he was god.** (10)
4. The nurse is saying something I don't hear. I hear kids at school. **Boy say I'm laffing ugly.** He say, "**Claireece is so ugly she laffing ugly.** " His fren' say, "No, **that fat bitch is crying ugly.** " Laff laff. Why I'm thinking about those stupid boys now I don't know. (12)
5. "No, I'm sorry Ms Rain"-**I see right now Jo Ann is clown-**"but I jus' want to say, do anyone need an extra notebook I faun' in the chicken place ? " (41)
6. Then crying stop. Rita go to her purse and get magazine call Body Positive say I got to join HIV community. Jezus ! It's a community of them? Us, I mean. But I tell her, Not now. **I just need to think. Is life a hammer to beat me down?** Jermaine jump up do boxing dance (she think she Mike Tyson!) say fight back! I laugh, a little. (96)
7. Ms Rain say, You not writing Precious. **I say I drownin' in river.** She don't look me like I'm crazy but say, If you just sit there the river gonna rise up drown you! **Writing could be the boat carry you to the other side.** One time in your journal you told me you had never re!lly told your story. I think telling your story git you over that river Precious. (97)

8. **They money dogs. If they sniff money they will try to take it.** I guess. Thas whut I always here. I nevr reely had a dope addict hurt me. (105)

Sapphire repeatedly compared the feeling of pain to a human being in excerpts 1 and 2, making an analogy of something abstract to something concrete. Attributing pain with verbs such as hitting, sitting down, getting up, walking, and stomping is a reflection of what Precious endured as a child from her father. The description of a fourteen-year-old pregnant girl with labor pains is irritating but still, it is what she is familiar with. The verbs and words used by Sapphire provide a striking stylistic effect to the text; it administers a vivid image of Precious' experience to the reader, working on showing not telling the continuous sufferings and abusive environment Precious was compelled to be part of.

Inside her household; Precious felt invisible and worthless her entire life. The school was supposed to provide a haven to hopeless, abused, and oppressed children, the educational environment Precious was part of conversely contributed to her illiteracy and self-hatred. Extract 4 conveys the major account for amplifying Precious' troubled psychological frame of mind, the analogy is sensibly integrated into the racist, cruel context the novel was built in. Sapphire opted for a different stylistic technique that employs two antonyms in conveying the same concept; comparing beauty with laughter and crying was remarkable. The choice of laughter and crying for this metaphor worked as a scale to measure the degree of Precious' unattractiveness, on the flip side, her classmates are the definition of ugliness deliberately. The verbal abuse Precious was exposed to by her classmates over her physical appearance provided the real image of the bullying and abuse black girls were experiencing at the time.

The stylistic vehicle in extracts 6 and 7 extends a more painful image to the reader. After Precious found out she was HIV positive her entire life broke down. The overwhelming experience of waiting for her led to describing life as a hammer beating her down like a nail. This analogy was made because of the cruelty of life on Precious, just when she started

believing in the beauty of life, the power of education, and happy endings, she was dispirited and crushed.

Sapphire continues using metaphorical connotations in the seventh extract by correlating Precious' psychological state to drowning in a river. The verb drowning means consuming too much water into the lungs making it impossible for the person to breathe, the choice of the verb drowning instead of dying which is commonly used by people with HIV is to give the reader an image of the flooding sensations overpowering Precious. Sapphire used such a metaphorical connection coupling sickness with drowning to view Precious's hopeless and catastrophic state. Her overwhelming sensation was not regarded as crazy talk by Ms. Rain; on the contrary, she pushed Precious to write for it could be the boat to carry her and save her from drowning.

Sapphire and despite the extended use of negative connotations; which are not subjectively integrated but are a necessity to the transmission of the critical stages in Precious' life, She decided on other alternatives that would offer the novel and its protagonist a light at the end of the tunnel. Ms. Rain and the girls in Precious's class were her support system to help her overcome the dilemma she was bound to face. Sapphire was successfully able to exhibit lively experiences through metaphorical connotations to give her readers an evocative image of the overall scenario of the novel, in addition to feeding the text with an emotionally resonant spirit.

3.6.1.3.2 Simile in *Push*

1. But I'm big, five feet nine-ten, I weigh over two hundred pounds. Kids is scared of me. "Coon fool," I tell one kid done jumped up. "Sit down, stop ackin' silly." Mr Wicher look at me confuse but grateful. **I'm like the polices for Mr Wicher. I keep law and order.** (6)

2. "Claireece Precious Jones I'm talkin' to you ! " I still don't answer her. I was standing at this sink the last time I was pregnant when them pains hit, wump! Ahh wump ! I never felt no shit like that before. Sweat was breaking out on my forehead, **pain like fire was eating me up**. I jus' standing there 'n pain hit me, then pain go sit down, then pain git up 'n hit me harder! (9)
3. Do all white people look like pictures? **No, 'cause the white people at school is fat and cruel like evil witches from fairy tales but they exist**. Is it because they white? (31)
4. The whole class quiet. Everybody staring at me. God don't let me cry. I takes in air through my nose, a big big breath, then I start to walk slow to the back. **But something like birds or light fly through my heart**. An' my feet stop. At the first row. An' for the first time in my life I sits down in the front row (which is good 'cause I never could see the board from the back).(40)
5. "Where you sneak your ass off to this morning? " **She look like whale on couch**. My muver have not left the house in, let's see- 1 983 , '84, ' 8 5 , '86, 'n now ' 8 7 . Ever since Little Mongo was born. Social worker come here. I be at school. My grandmuver, Toosie, bring Little Mongo over on days social worker come; game is Little Mongo live here, my mama take care of Little Mongo and me. My mama get check 'n food stamps for me 'n Lil Mongo. But it's my baby. Little Mongo is money for me ! (55)
6. But when it happen, **when she git up off that couch 'n charge toward me like fifty niggers, I ran**. I just grab Abdul, my bags, 'n hit the door. I got new baby boy in my arms 'n she calling me bitch hoe slut say she gonna kill me 'cause I ruin her life. Gonna kill me wif her "BARE HANDS!" **It's like a black wall gonna crash down on me, nuthin' to do but run**. (74)

7. I don't have nothing to write today-maybe never. Hammer in my heart now, beating me, **I feel like my blood a giant river swell up inside me and I'm drowning.** My head all dark inside. Feel like giant river I never cross in front me now. (96)

Sapphire's well-grounded comparison scheme in *Push* is heavy with similes rather than ordinary comparisons. In the first extract; Sapphire parallels Precious to the police, comparing a young girl to a high authority is uncommon due to the countless differences between the two, however, Sapphire highlights the one quality that could bear resemblance between the two is keeping law and order inside the classroom. Precious is portrayed as a big overweight girl; despite being oppressed and alienated inside and outside her household, she engages in a few moments of rebellion from time to time. Her rebellious actions persist during Mr. Wicher's class; he is constantly intimidated by Precious mostly for her aggressive verbalization and the remarkable physical variation between the two.

The confused look in his eyes stemmed from her astonishing actions, he never expected she would defend him but he was grateful she did; what Mr. Wicher didn't know was that all of Precious' violent actions in his class were an attempt to be noticed, because she admired him and because of her violent background in her household she didn't know the proper way to show love or admiration for anyone. The use of this analogy by Sapphire is a circling approach to parallel Precious' experiences and actions with girls of the same despicable background as hers.

Extracts 2, 4, and 7 demonstrate the diverse ways Precious describes her experiences; in extract 2, Sapphire compares pain to fire to feed the reader with a live image of Precious' feelings and sufferings. Fire has several contrastive denotations varying from hope, passion, and desire to destruction, and resurrection and the most known is hell. The simile adopted in the second excerpt summarizes the agonies Precious experienced while giving birth; the high

body temperature she felt caused her to sweat generated this simile, giving the experience of labor the indication of hell and destruction.

A contradictory approach was adopted in excerpt 4; Sapphire depicted a positive experience in Precious' life, the opportunity of moving to a different school and being blessed with another chance at education. At her first step into the classroom, Precious' unconsciousness led her towards the back of the class however, a sudden feeling that was compared with birds flying through her heart forced her to stop at the front seat for the first time in her life. This analogy mirrors the peaceful stage Precious is beginning to touch down with the first step of receiving proper education.

Sapphire continued with portraying Precious' feelings in a distinctive phase in her life; the poor girl couldn't absorb the news about AIDS; she held the pause button of education and life in general. Precious made the analogy of drowning in a giant river due to the overwhelming emotions she is experiencing; in a previous metaphor, writing was depicted as a boat that could carry Precious to the other side of the river, however, Sapphire's use of a contrasting comparison between drowning and writing was to visualize the disinterest of Precious in writing and education due to her loss of the newly gained power and control over her life to the fatal illness. Her stroke of ill luck blew in after she was given a second chance at life and education by her teacher and classmates; this caused the shift from a determined illiterate young mother who was hungry for change and success to being hopeless and detached, unable to settle on a plan of action regarding her present and future.

Excerpts 5 and 6 manifest two of the most disturbing instances between Precious and her mother. The simile adopted in both extracts is related to how Precious views her mother. In extract 5 she compared her mother to a whale on a couch, this comparison was not attributed to the many positive skillsets of a whale; but rather to its powerful enormous obese

size. Comparing someone's size to a whale is an exaggeration; such dramatization continued in extract 6 by comparing Precious' mother to a wall that will crash down and kill her, Sapphire continued associating Precious' mother with dark violent features to pinpoint her as the deeply-rooted source of the misery and despair Precious undergoes.

Sapphire attributed certain diction to her protagonist to provide a realistic image that echoes convincingly to the reader, along with highlighting how Precious' imagination results from the dark environment she grew up in. The stylistic implication of the pervasive adoption of simile in *Push* is producing a text with a striking impression that resonates with the audience. Sapphire strived to simplify her frame of mind to the reader by providing an extra descriptive image of the repressive circumstances of her protagonist. The use of this stylistic device was mostly about her mother to amplify her thoughts and emotions to the reader. Precious' inadequacy in expressing her thoughts forced her to use comparison with familiar objects to clarify her intentions.

3.7 Divergent Stylistic Paths of *The Color Purple* and *Push*

Exploring the stylistic journey of *The Color Purple* and *Push* is not solely concerned with the examination of the figures of speech, the process bears substantial other elements to be finalized. The analysis encompasses the different narrative techniques (discussed in Chapter 2) and linguistic devices highlighted in the current chapter, in addition to the thematic concerns of the two novels (to be studied in the next chapter). The result of this exploration will provide valuable insights into the author's artistry in communicating similar themes and evoke similar emotions to resonate with the readers.

The strategy of adopting Leech and Short's checklist of stylistic categories as the basis for illuminating the linguistic devices prominent in each novel was restricted to the investigation of the different figures of speech employed by Alice Walker and Sapphire. Due

to its initial objective of analyzing short excerpts from literary texts; the checklist has some limitations when applied to longer texts like novels, thus the current study must adopt one category that is supported by the literary analysis.

Concerning the grammatical and lexical schemes in the two narratives, the analysis reveals the use of repetition by Sapphire more extensively and explicitly than Alice Walker. The Latter opted for repetition as a stylistic device rather than an expressive means of language, her approach bears a reinforcement and emotive function to the narrative. However, the former enriched her approach with both stylistic devices and expressive means; reflecting the internal struggles of her protagonist. For Sapphire, Precious' story requires more emotionally charged utterances to paint the precise image of her struggles.

The study on the phonological patterns laid out Sapphire's divergent approach from that of Alice Walker. In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker foregrounded the use of alliteration mostly with soft-sounding consonants such as the glottal fricative /h/, bilabial /m/ and /b/, labiodental fricative /f/ and labial approximant /w/. These stylistic choices are a reflection of Celie's powerlessness in communicating the reality of her unseen struggles in the harsh and oppressive nature as they are. Conversely, *Push* Sapphire settled on the use of voiced consonants such as a bilabial nasal sound /m/ and voiced bilabial plosive /b/ rather than voiceless consonants, most of the alliterative sounds in the novel are harsh sounding consonants that worked to intensify the connotative meaning of the distressing nature of her protagonist's story. Assonance in the two novels promoted the function of alliteration in drawing attention to the difficult experiences Celie and Precious go through, it also assisted in setting the mood for the reader from the first pages of the narratives.

Our analysis closely examined the metaphorical framework adopted by the two authors. In *The Color Purple*, surprisingly Alice Walker developed metaphors not as stylistic

devices but rather to showcase the different graphic representations given to African American individuals, in my view, her choices even though having a decorative impact; intended to immerse the readers with the characters' circumstances, working in partnership with the variant stylistic devices that take up the novel. Regarding *Push*, our study unveiled that the majority of the metaphors employed by Sapphire are a vehicle to carry out the inner trauma and sufferings of her protagonist, despite being illiterate, Precious managed to convey her suffering in a simple metaphorical fashion that accurately communicates the depth of her pain. Metaphors in the novel also succeeded in addressing sensitive and complex topics like racism, incest, and child pregnancy, Sapphire's outlook is both intelligent and provocative. Both authors adopted metaphors not as artistic ornament, but rather as literary force to give prominence to their protagonists' adversities.

The research also highlights Alice Walker's play on similes in her novel making it the most recurrent stylistic device. The analysis illustrated that Similes were frequently employed to describe emotions, natural settings, and most importantly characters. Shug Avery had the lion's share of similes in *The Color Purple*, due to Celie's limited literacy and the intense emotions she holds for Shug Avery, her descriptions are molded to confirm her admiration and love for Shug. It also serves as a testament to Shug Avery's larger-than-life presence in Celie's world; a guiding star and a candle lighting her dark existence. In comparison to *The Color Purple*, the study marks the difference in the frequency of Similes in *Push* as less prevalent; the majority of the similes are in connection to Precious' mother, stressing the dark image of the oppressive individual in Precious' life. Sapphire made certain the similes in her novel echo the gloomy nature of Precious' thoughts and the impact of the violent chaotic relationship with her mother on her self-worth.

Alice Walker and Sapphire's stylistic schemes in *The Color Purple* and *Push* are not merely decorative ornaments, but rather a line of action to deepen the readers' thematic

exploration and the dynamic characterization of African American females undergoing numerous forms of oppression including racism, sexism, physical and emotional violence. Sapphire had the advantage of reading, contemplating, and analyzing *The Color Purple*, thus her stylistic touch in *Push* differs drastically from that of Alice Walker's. Artistically, Walker's narrative serves as a foundation for Sapphire and an inspiration to build a new raw and authentic voice for marginalized females. *Push* mirrored Celie's character in a more complex, unfiltered, and evocative character of Precious; the stylistic choices of the two authors effectively expand the literary conversation of identity, trauma, and the pursuit of self-empowerment, creating two narratives that resonate with the reader for generations.

3.8 Conclusion

The primary goal of the current chapter was to provide a new vision of the stylistic strategy employed by Alice Walker and Sapphire in crafting their literary works. Taken together; the results of the analysis suggest the two authors have taken on different stylistic approaches to their texts, Alice Walker's rich use of simile and anaphora in *The Color Purple* serves to vividly depict the struggles and experiences of her characters, adding depth and emotional resonance to the narrative. On the other hand, Sapphire's use of repetition in *Push* creates a rhythmic and intense portrayal of the protagonist's inner thoughts and feelings, emphasizing the urgency and rawness of her voice. The next chapter will address the major thematic concerns of the two novels in which the researcher aims to uncover deeper insights into the authors' respective narratives and shed light on how they use language and literary devices to engage with complex social issues.

Chapter Four: Ink and Empowerment: The Intersection of Style and Themes in *The Color Purple* and *Push*

4.1 Introduction

As delineated in the first chapter, the effective application of stylistic analysis within the realm of literary critique requires an exploration of the linguistic attributes used to display the significance of the text. Such a process encompasses two fundamental tents of relevance; a literary criterion and a linguistic criterion. The present chapter is assigned to study the literary aspect of *The Color Purple* and *Push*; these novels not only offer poignant narratives of survival and resilience but also provide profound insights into the complexities of race, gender, and identity in America. Our analysis focuses on the thematic exploration of these works, particularly how the authors use language, namely African American Vernacular English. Furthermore, the exploration of the relationship between the stylistic analysis and thematic concerns is central to our investigation; we maintain that a close examination of linguistic features enhances the reader's understanding of the broader thematic dimensions of the novels.

4.2 Intent and Interpretation: Themes in *The Color Purple* and *Push*

One of the initial concerns of authors before drafting their literary works is deciding on what universal ideas the story should communicate to the reader; what is known as a literary theme that assists in a deeper understanding of the literary work, writers implicitly convey such ideas for the reader to interpret and make it as explicit as possible. In other prominent cases; readers explore new themes that were not intended by the author, this makes literature such a hypnotizing realm for its admirers.

The decision to flavor the literary work with memorable themes is controlled by several factors; it could depend on the trends of the era the work is part of or the literary

movement the author is affiliated with. It could also depend on the personal ideologies the author takes in his/her literary approach; it might also be grounded based on divulging the theme through characters, plot, dialogue, or a combination of all. The universal ideas the literary work conveys are often what resonate most deeply with readers across time and culture.

In connection to exploring the stylistic approach of Alice Walker and Sapphire completed in the previous chapter, the current chapter tends to evaluate the authorial intent in *The Color Purple* and *Push* via thematic properties. I will strive to illuminate the major notions communicated through the narrative; from the harsh realities of oppression, sexism, and racism to underlining resilience, identity, and independence. Furthermore, I will attempt to reach a deeper understanding of how stylistic choices adopted by Walker and Sapphire shape the thematic concerns and overall impact of their literary works.

4.2.1 *The Color Purple*: Thematic Concerns

Stereotyped images assigned to female African American women are prolific. The literature is a fertile ground for authors especially whites to appoint prejudiced ideas about black females in their works. Alice Walker's realistic depiction of the tyrannized actions carried out on black females by black and white men is what gave *The Color Purple* the desired attention Walker sought. Through her characters, Walker challenges the reader to confront uncomfortable truths about society's treatment of African American women.

The novel sketches different snapshots of the classical social construct upheld for women; the diverse rendition of female characters in *The Color Purple* casts light on women's inequality despite their age, social class, or profession. On this account, it is gainful for the current thesis to highlight whether the female characters and heroin could break the stereotyped image and classical gender roles allotted to them.

4.2.1.1 The Refutation of Traditional Gender Roles and Inequality in *The Color Purple*

The Color Purple addresses the theme of gender discrimination as a central element of its narrative. As elaborated in the second chapter, the story follows the life of Celie, an African American woman, as she navigates through various forms of oppression and finds her own identity and voice. The novel sheds light on how societal norms, cultural expectations, and institutional structures contributed to the discrimination and marginalization of women, particularly women of color, during that period.

The common beliefs of how males and females should behave, speak, dress, and, interact are deeply rooted in societal norms; these expectations eternize inequality that is mostly reserved for females, who are universally demanded to conform to the community standards that impose selected traits of femininity. Alice Walker was able to demolish the classical gender roles for both men and women in her novel; she sought to render the double discrimination African American women faced for both gender and race. The novel witnessed several deviations of female characters from the norm of society, Celie, Nettie, Sofia, and Shug Avery retaliated against patriarchy and inequality in different facets throughout different periods in the novel.

The Color Purple displays gender discrimination through sexual and physical abuse, the power dynamics between genders establish acts of violence and domination, highlighting how women, particularly African American females are subjected to mistreatment and degradation. Sofia Butler, a strong and independent woman, is introduced as a character who breaks the stereotypical image imposed by society. Her relationship with Harpo, which is built on love and sacrifice, takes a violent turn, reflecting the consequences of growing up in a violent family. Despite her resilience and desire to survive, Sofia is suppressed by patriarchy and racism, showcasing the cruelty towards black women who revolt against injustice and

established gender roles. Her failure to construct a family according to her standards and be treated equally is the catalyst for Celie's journey toward independence and freedom.

Gender discrimination was also evident in the lack of educational opportunities for women, Walker continued the journey to equality and the endeavor to tear down gender roles through Nettie. The sister was younger than Celie, intelligent, courageous, and beautiful; unfortunately, the two sisters were obliged to quit formal education, Celie however was forced to leave school due to the violent environment imposed by her father. Her refusal of being a victim of abuse and rape by both her father and Celie's husband and escaping home is unconventional in the code of the African American society, in the first half of the twentieth century where women are expected to solely be housewives, mothers and, servants to men's sexual desires.

Nettie exiting her life to travel young and unmarried with a married couple was highly criticized at that time. It is believed to be another tactic from Walker to establish her character's intellectual and economic independence and rebellion against gender norms; most of her letters to Celie address themes concerning feminism and women's place in society in addition to, the African experience and the nature of women's lives in the Olinka tribes. The novel also highlights Doris Baines, a white woman who defied society's tags of a man and a woman; she successfully labeled herself as masculine, through her writings which were believed to be written by a man. This addition to the narrative in my perspective is another tactic by Walker to highlight how women can break the conventional image established by the society.

Education was an influential facet of the narrative. Walker stressed the notion of equal educational opportunities for women, according to my understanding, Celie's illiteracy serves as a symbol of her disempowerment, reflecting how women were denied access to education

and the consequences of such acts on their lives, which could have enabled them to challenge their circumstances and achieve self-empowerment. The novel highlights different female characters who emphasize the importance of education and awareness in challenging racist attitudes and stereotypes. These characters encourage others to question societal norms and consider alternative perspectives.

The theme of gender discrimination is reinforced through the lack of autonomy and stereotypical gender roles, Celie's early life is marked by her being treated as property, reflecting the broader societal view of women as possessions rather than individuals with agency. Walker continues the journey to refute such classical beliefs prominent in the African American community with the most fearless and independent women in the novel. I find creating a self-reliant character such as Shug Avery as the most important contribution to the individuality of the story; Shug was given certain traits that were unacceptable by the patriarchal society, but extremely admired by oppressed young Celie. Women in the novel are often economically dependent on men, who reinforce their subordinate status; however, Shug purposely attributes psychological and economic freedom to weigh in Celie's journey to sovereignty.

The novel portrays the restrictive gender roles imposed on women, which dictate their behavior and expectations; Shug Avery breaks every stereotypical image attributed to African American women. She was presented as beautiful, talented, strong, and, independent; which birthed and matured Celie's admiration for her. Walker mapping Celie's transformation journey from a submissive figure to a more self-assured individual is a testament to her rejection of these traditional roles.

Throughout the story, characters like Shug, Celie, and Sofia resist gender discrimination by reclaiming their identities and asserting their worth. They challenge the idea that women

must conform to societal expectations and demonstrate that they deserve respect and equality. The novel also explores the potential for transformation in male characters. For example, Albert evolves from a cruel and abusive figure to one who learns to understand and respect women as equals. Such transformation was realized as a result of Celie achieving a sense of agency and self-worth, and earning everyone's admiration; which forced him to change his rooted prejudiced notions about women's values and the unquestionable positive role they hold within the society.

In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker confronts the deeply entrenched gender discrimination that permeated society during that period, highlighting the various ways women were oppressed and marginalized. Through the characters' struggles and triumphs, the novel explores the complexities of gender dynamics, the power of resilience, and the potential for change and growth.

4.2.1.2 Confronting Racism and Violence in *The Color Purple*

The main tenet of African American authors was to delve into the issues of racism and slavery of African American people, Alice Walker concerned her writings with the issues of racism and slavery of African American women in a post-slavery era. In *The Color Purple*, racism is a significant and pervasive theme; the novel delves into the lives of African American characters and exposes the various forms of racism they encounter in a racially divided and discriminatory society. Through the experiences of its characters, the novel sheds light on the deeply entrenched racism of the early 20th century and its devastating impact on individuals and communities.

The theme of racial oppression is closely intertwined with gender-based oppression. The protagonist Celie along with the other Female characters faces systemic racism, segregation, sexism, and violence, leading to a sense of powerlessness and marginalization. Walker

highlighted these issues to give her literary work the necessary worth and appreciation and to accentuate the social injustice females face due to power dynamics and the unjustified superiority of whites.

The racial hierarchy is reflected through multiple layers in the novel; institutional racism is reflected through characters like Celie and Sofia, the two were subject to racial prejudice and discrimination in different settings. Sofia's characterization of being strong and independent does not adhere to the white mayor and his wife, one act of rebellion against racism and fighting back against the mayor's wife's attempts of domination and subjugation leads Sofia to physical punishment that is both racially and gender-based. Walker's depiction of Sofia's rejection and resistance to humiliation and oppression of the white system is a contemplation of the consequences of the racial hierarchy and its impact on the physical and mental health of its victims.

Racism acts as an overarching backdrop for all characters' experiences. Racist and violent acts serve as a reflection of the power imbalances and gender dynamics prevalent in the society of the time. Walker's major interest is whether or how change can occur in the lives of her black characters, Celie navigates her life against prejudiced systems where being black subjected individuals to subjugation and limited opportunities. Her journey throughout the novel illustrates the possibility of empowerment and liberation for women who challenge the oppressive systems that perpetuate their suffering. Shug Avery is another major character in the rejection trek of racism; she has relationships with white men, thus catalyzing and challenging racial boundaries and stereotypes. Her presence in Celie's life exposes the hypocrisy and double standards of racial prejudices.

The intersectionality of racism and sexism also plays a significant role in the novel's exploration of race. Female characters were intensely discriminated against twice; for their

gender and race, Alice Walker ensured her novel would unearth the vivid challenges faced by black women in a society that devalues and marginalizes them. Celie is the utmost oppressed female in the novel; she is a victim of discrimination and mistreatment for being black and female. By examining Celie's journey of self-discovery and empowerment, we can appreciate how the novel deconstructs racial stereotypes and challenges racist ideologies.

The racial segregation in the novel is manifested by Walker with separate spaces, schools, and communities for African Americans. The characters' lives are constrained by these racial boundaries, limiting their opportunities for personal growth and development. In the novel; Nettie was fearful to bring back Celie's children to live in America, due to the racial segregation that dominated the country. She was certain they would suffer from racism and be victims of white supremacy; something unusual to them because fortunately they never experienced racism before. Walker positioned her novel within the struggle for civil rights in the United States, exploring the engagement with the racial consciousness of its time and its impact on subsequent discussions about race and social justice.

The theme of race and violence be it either physical or psychological in *The Color Purple* critically explores various dimensions and implications within a historical context of racial segregation. Alice Walker delves into the theme of racist violence towards African American women in the novel by the men who themselves are victims of patriarchy; Celie's husband not only insults her for being ugly but for being black as well as if he were white. He constantly abuses her using white domination and prejudice, thus he not only prisons her within the walls of racism but of slavery as well. Walker ensured to showcase the significant transformation of the male characters at the end of the novel and their rejection of traditional roles of dominance.

4.2.1.3 The Power of Narrative in *The Color Purple*

Based on my perception, the success of *The Color Purple* owes to both the ingenious depiction of its female characters, their depressing experiences, and their journey to sovereignty; in addition to, the unique choice of the epistolary form that gave the story new dimensions. The novel treats the importance of writing in its characters' empowerment and self-discovery notably for its main character Celie; the theme of the power of narrative is a central and transformative element in the novel, it explores how personal storytelling, in the form of letters and written accounts, empowers individuals to confront their pasts, express their identities, and ultimately find healing, connection, and agency. Walker used the epistolary form as a vehicle to approach the different kinds of oppression African American women suffered from through the words of a 14-year-old girl.

The sense of alienation and fear are the central causes to launch Celie's writing journey, she lacks the necessary confidence to openly communicate her struggles with rape from her stepfather and later physical, sexual, and emotional violence from her husband, she was feeling isolated and unable to share her thoughts and feelings with anyone. At the outset of the story, Celie is a voiceless and oppressed character, enduring horrific abuse and suffering in silence, her decision to start writing to God marks a critical turning point in the narrative; her letters serve as an outlet to express herself freely and as a window into her inner world. Writing letters to God and later letters exchanged with her sister shape the very essence of the novel, it shaped her self-discovery and empowerment.

As Celie continues to write, her letters evolve in parallel with her personal growth. Her writing style becomes more sophisticated, reflecting her growing self-assuredness and understanding of the world around her. This transformation underscores the theme of resilience and the power of self-expression. Celie's writings become a form of catharsis and healing, providing her with a therapeutic outlet for the pain she has endured. This healing

journey resonates with readers, illustrating the profound impact of self-expression and storytelling in overcoming adversity.

The power of writing and its significance as I see it is closely intertwined with other major themes within the narrative, Celie and Nettie's writings illuminate broader social issues such as racism, sexism, and the intersection of power dynamics in the early 20th-century American South. Celie's letters expose the harsh realities faced by African American women during this time, shedding light on the systemic oppression and violence they endured. Nettie's letters weave another layer into the narrative, the reader gains insight into Nettie's experiences and the larger world beyond Celie's immediate surroundings. The exchange of letters between sisters fosters a connection that transcends physical separation. It exemplifies the idea that narrative not only empowers the individual but also serves as a bridge that connects people, transcending the boundaries of time and space.

Ultimately, the theme of the power of narrative in *The Color Purple* extends beyond individual characters. It symbolizes the broader struggle of African American women in the early 20th century to assert their voices and challenge oppressive systems of racism and sexism. The characters' stories collectively expose the harsh realities of their time, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and confronting these injustices. In doing so, the novel underscores the transformative potential of storytelling as a catalyst for social change, inspiring readers to reflect on the power of their narratives and the narratives of those who have been historically marginalized.

4.2.1.4 Sisterhood: Igniting the Flames of Female Empowerment

The themes of friendship, sisterhood, and African American Female empowerment are an influential and uplifting aspect of *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker beautifully captures the power of female solidarity in the face of male dominance, as well as the resilience required to

overcome racial and sexual oppression. Within her narrative, all of Walker's female characters harmoniously navigate their interconnectedness, riding alongside Celie on her inspiring journey toward independence. Celie's relationship with her sister Nettie and her later bond with strong and independent women like Sofia and Shug Avery serve as the pillars of support and empowerment that help her find her voice and reclaim her identity.

One of the most profound aspects of sisterhood in the novel is the way women uplift and inspire each other. Celie's bond with Nettie transcended mere sisterhood; it blossomed into a profound mother-daughter relationship. Celie assumed the role of protector, ensuring that her sister would never endure the same horrors she had. She protected Nettie from the destructive forces of both their stepfather and her abusive husband. Celie's actions are a symbol of unwavering sisterly love and support. Despite being separated for years, their letters keep their spirits alive; they not only bridge the physical gap but also serve as a lifeline for both sisters, providing solace, hope, and a sense of familial love in the face of adversity. Nettie's letters, especially, bring light to Celie's world, as they offer glimpses of a life beyond the oppressive confines of her marriage and circumstances.

The friendship between Sofia Butler and Celie serves as a source of inspiration and empowerment; while their relationship begins with some tension due to their contrasting personalities and beliefs, it eventually evolves into a deep and enduring friendship. Sofia's unwavering commitment to standing up for herself and demanding respect becomes a guiding light for Celie, encouraging her to question the oppressive forces that have governed her life. The two women unite against male oppression; they form a strong bond, sharing their experiences and frustrations as African American women in a discriminatory society.

The most influential connection between women in the book, which delves into the theme of female empowerment, is the intimate link shared by Celie and Shug Avery. Their

relationship serves as a pivotal and transformative element in shaping the novel's exploration of self-discovery. Shug encourages Celie to assert her worth and self-respect, challenging her to question the oppressive societal norms that have kept her submissive and defeated for so long. Shug's example as a strong and independent woman helps Celie recognize her strength and potential. Shug also undergoes growth through her relationship with Celie. She learns to appreciate the simplicity and authenticity of Celie's love, which contrasts with the shallow relationships she's had in the past. Shug's evolving understanding of love and connection is a significant part of her character.

The Color Purple beautifully portrays the theme of sisterhood and female empowerment as a driving force in the lives of its characters. Through the bonds formed between women and their collective resilience, the novel showcases the transformative power of female solidarity. It is a testament to the enduring strength of women who support, inspire, and uplift one another in the face of adversity, ultimately finding the empowerment to redefine their lives on their terms.

4.2.1.5 Exploring the Divine: A Journey into the Heart of Religion and Spirituality

The exploration of God and spirituality in *The Color Purple* forms a profound and central thematic halo to the novel and the lives of its characters. The rendition of the theme is complex and multifaceted due to its sensitive nature, yet Walker invites readers on a journey of spiritual discovery that challenges conventional religious norms, she preserved the presence of God in multiple scenes throughout the novel to showcase the power of personal connection with the divine on Celie's life and the lives of those around her.

Spirituality in the novel is channeled in multiple ways; mostly through the experiences of its characters which force them to form their unique understanding of God. In my understanding, Walker consciously stressed the connection of African spirituality in her

novel, many of her characters maintain a solid bond with their African heritage, and the letters provide a source of strength and cultural identity for Celie. Her relationship with God often transcends traditional religious structures. Celie's letters to God serve as a form of personal prayer and expression in a society that devalues and marginalizes Black women, the act of writing these letters is a way of resistance and a step toward empowerment.

Celie's religious devotion evolves drastically throughout the story; she questions the traditional notion of God that has been presented to her by the church, and through her relationships with women like Shug and Sofia, she begins to form her understanding of spirituality and the divine. Shug, on the other hand, represents a more unconventional and free-spirited approach to spirituality, as she sees God in everything around her and finds joy in expressing her love and sexuality. Sofia, with her fierce independence and rejection of traditional gender roles, challenges the restrictive and oppressive interpretations of religion that are forced upon her.

Moreover, the theme of God and spirituality serve as a tool for empowerment and resistance against the dominant structures of oppression in the novel. Celie can find strength and agency through her connection with God. Despite her hardships, she maintains a resilient faith and uses it as a source of hope and perseverance. Additionally, Shug's belief in a more personal and intimate relationship with God allows her to break free from societal expectations and embrace her sexuality and desires. Similarly, Sofia's rejection of the misogynistic teachings of the church empowers her to challenge the oppressive power dynamics in her marriage and society.

As I delve into the heart of spirituality in the novel; it's only fitting to say that Walker used her literary voice to critique the damaging aspects of organized religion. Through the character of Reverend Samuel, who is portrayed as a hypocritical and abusive figure, Walker

exposes the power dynamics and manipulation within the institution of the church. This critique of organized religion highlights the novel's larger themes of liberation and self-discovery, as characters are encouraged to question and redefine their relationships with God. Overall, the theme of God and spirituality in *The Color Purple* is a powerful and multifaceted one that adds depth and complexity to the novel's exploration of identity and resistance against oppression.

In conclusion, *The Color Purple* masterfully challenges and refutes traditional gender roles and inequality, shedding light on the experiences of African American women and their relentless pursuit of empowerment. Through the various female characters, Walker deconstructs societal norms and highlights the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women of color. The novel illustrates the impact of gender discrimination, physical and sexual abuse, and a lack of educational opportunities on the lives of these women. It also exemplifies the transformative power of self-discovery, sisterhood, and resistance in the face of oppression.

Moreover, the novel delves into the theme of race and racism, portraying the deeply entrenched racism in the early 20th century and its detrimental effects on African American individuals and communities. Walker skillfully connects racial oppression with gender-based oppression, showcasing the complexities faced by African American women. Through the characters' struggles and triumphs, the novel explores the potential for change and growth, emphasizing the importance of empowerment and liberation for those who challenge oppressive systems.

The Color Purple also celebrates the power of narrative, spirituality, and religion in the lives of its characters. The novel emphasizes the significance of personal storytelling and the written word as a means of self-expression, healing, and empowerment. It portrays the

transformative journey of Celie, as she uses her letters to God to find her voice and assert her worth. The exploration of spirituality challenges conventional religious norms and highlights the personal connection with the divine as a source of strength and resistance against oppression. Additionally, the critique of organized religion within the story reflects the broader themes of liberation and self-discovery.

In essence, *The Color Purple* is a powerful and multifaceted work that explores themes of gender, race, spirituality, and the potential for transformation. Through its compelling characters and narrative, the novel invites readers to reflect on the significance of these themes in the context of social change and individual empowerment. It remains a timeless and impactful literary masterpiece that continues to inspire and resonate with audiences today.

4.2.2 *Push*: Thematic Concerns

The novel *Push* is a powerful and emotionally charged narrative that addresses a range of thematic concerns with remarkable depth and sensitivity. Embarking on the journey of Precious Jones, the young African American girl living in Harlem, the narrative delves into themes such as abuse, trauma, resilience, identity, and the pursuit of education. These thematic concerns are interwoven to shed light on the struggles faced by marginalized individuals in society, offering a raw portrayal of the human experience.

Sapphire's exploration of these themes invites readers to confront uncomfortable truths about African American society and the individuals often overlooked or silenced within it. The novel invites deep reflection on the struggles faced by females while offering glimpses of hope amid adversity. This research work will attempt to explore the major themes in the novel to uncover layers of meaning built by Sapphire that lead to a more comprehensive analysis. By dissecting the themes unearthed in *Push*, the researcher will foster new knowledge and

interpretations that deepen the readers' understanding of the narrative and the hidden connections it tries to convey.

4.2.2.1 Incest, Verbal and Physical Abuse in Push

The most prevailing and disturbing theme throughout the novel is the experience of incest that the protagonist tolerated for several years. Deconstructing such a taboo notion is both challenging and provoking for the researcher due to the detailed depiction of the silent horrors inflicted upon Precious, nonetheless, it is a crucial phase for the research process. The choice by Sapphire to address such a sensitive topic is deliberate to parallel the domestic violence experienced by numerous African American women. Using a narrative style that is raw and emotionally charged, Sapphire exposes the harsh reality of Precious' life, where she faces not only the challenges of her education and poverty but also the traumatizing abuse she endures from her father.

Throughout the story, it is revealed that Precious has experienced sexual abuse at the hands of her father, resulting in her becoming pregnant twice. This recurring theme of incest is portrayed in a raw and unflinching manner, shedding light on the prevalence of incestuous abuse within families. Sapphire does not shy away from the graphic nature of these events, using them to illustrate the depths of Precious' trauma and the profound impact it has on her mental and emotional well-being. The representation of incest serves to highlight the cycle of abuse that Precious is trapped in. It reveals the dark secrets hidden behind closed doors and the devastating effects it has on the victims. Precious is both physically and emotionally scarred by these experiences, leading to her withdrawal from the world and her struggle with self-worth.

Precious' mother has a complex role in the cycle of abuse her daughter endures. Mary failed to protect her daughter despite her knowledge of the abuse; which contributed to the

perpetuation of the abuse over time. Her negligence was a result of a lack of emotional bonding and motherly instinct towards her child; primarily due to her feelings of jealousy and resentment towards Precious as she perceives her as a competition for the attention of her husband. Despite the several disturbing events in the novel, Mary's thoughts in my view are the most sickening and atrocious, intensifying the already distressing narrative and further highlighting the depth of depravity within the character's psyche.

The theme of incest and abuse in *Push* serves to highlight the patriarchal domination over women and children, reinforcing conventional feminine sexual norms and power imbalances in relationships. Sapphire intends to highlight the power imbalances and how society's expectations and gender roles perpetuate abuse, especially within families. Additionally, it conveys that men hold more power and control, reinforcing their dominant position in society. In the end, the inclusion of incest and abuse in *Push* exposes and criticizes the widespread patriarchy, which harms women and children.

4.2.2.2 Exploring Invisibility and Alienation in *Push*

Sapphire's masterpiece delves into the notion of invisibility and alienation; stressing the different factors instigating Precious' feelings of distress and detachment. The young girl consistently feels isolated and cut off from the world around her, primarily due to the harsh circumstances and emotionally abusive environment she endures from both her parents. In addition, her race, socioeconomic status, and illiteracy contribute to her feelings of being overlooked in society. Precious' family, community, and even the educational system perpetuated her sense of invisibility and neglect.

Growing up in a deprived and abusive environment, Precious experiences a profound sense of alienation and nonexistence. She is abused and mistreated by her mother; who blames and resents her for the difficulties their family faces, raped and impregnated twice by

her father making her a mother at a very young age. This familial alienation further intensifies Precious' sense of invisibility and isolation as she lacks love, support, and understanding within her household. It reinforces a deep disconnection between herself and her family members.

Another aspect of detachment that Precious faces is social alienation. The societal environment she was part of heightened her sense of invisibility; she was constantly bullied by her peers at school due to her weight, physical appearance, and social background. Precious becomes an outcast, unable to connect with her classmates or find acceptance among her peers, leading to a lack of opportunities and resources. Precious represents a larger group of individuals who are often disregarded and devalued. This theme exposes how systemic issues such as racism, classism, and societal prejudice contribute to the invisibility of marginalized groups.

Sapphire also highlights the intellectual alienation Precious experiences due to her illiteracy. She was left back in school twice; the first time when she was seven because she couldn't read and still peed herself and the second time at twelve years old because she was pregnant. Her second baby at sixteen got her suspended from school, intensifying her sense of loneliness even further. The inability to read and write creates a significant barrier for her educationally, leading to a lack of knowledge and opportunities.

Throughout the novel, Precious slowly begins to break free from her invisibility, she starts to find connections and support systems, and her second chance at education in the alternative school opens a door to new horizons. Precious finally feels a sense of belonging mostly because all of the girls in her classroom have been through the same or worse circumstances as she did, Sapphire ensured to depict a mother figure for Precious, Ms. Rain

not only provides academic guidance but also helps Precious build self-esteem, develop her voice, and discover her potential.

The invisibility in *Push* symbolizes the marginalization and oppression faced by individuals who are considered socially insignificant. It is evident that through the theme of alienation, Sapphire invites readers to witness the profound impact that isolation and neglect can have on an individual's psyche. It serves as a critique of the structures and systems that perpetuate the marginalization and mistreatment of vulnerable individuals, shedding light on the urgent need for compassion, empathy, and support in fostering a more inclusive and compassionate society.

4.2.2.3 Empowering Minds: The Role of Education in *Push*

In a broader context, any discourse surrounding education would posit it at the heart of the journey to self-discovery and sovereignty; Sapphire used her literary voice to highlight the dark side of the educational system; emphasizing the struggles Precious had to endure for the sake of knowledge. Education emerges as a transformative force in the novel; it serves as an incentive for Precious to begin her journey of personal growth and empowerment defying the cycle of abuse and oppression she constantly finds herself in. However, at the beginning of the novel, the educational system is one of the villains in Precious' story along with her father and mother.

The narrative reflects broader issues related to race and socio-economic status, at the beginning, young Precious narrates instances where she never felt support nor understanding from her teachers or classmates, bullied constantly for being poor, black, fat, and ugly which aggravated her psychological trauma. The education system is depicted as not fully equipped to address Precious's complex needs, following her adolescent pregnancy, Precious was negatively stereotyped to run down a predetermined path of failure. Sapphire openly

addressed the deficiencies of the schooling system in providing support for students like Precious facing significant personal challenges; she underscored the fact that it hinders their progress, breaks their will, and undermines their potential for academic success and personal growth.

In the face of persistent challenges, including her suspension from school due to her second pregnancy, Precious was granted a second chance at life by Sapphire through an alternative school program "each one teach one", which provides a beacon of hope for the less fortunate. Sapphire skillfully illustrated the transformative impact of education on other characters' lives. In Precious' class, each girl had her share of hardships, but they all came together in a small classroom, sharing a collective belief in education's ability to reshape their lives and open the door to freedom.

Acting as a mentor and inspiration for Precious, Ms. Rain adopts a nurturing approach, employs innovative teaching methods, and provides unwavering support. Beyond academic instruction, Ms. Rain fosters Precious's confidence and resilience, resulting in a transformative influence that extends outside the classroom. She symbolizes positive intervention and mentorship, highlighting the profound difference a dedicated teacher can make in the life of a student facing adversity.

The connotation of the power of education in *Push* goes beyond the ability to develop literacy skills and expanding knowledge for Precious, It is through education that she gains the ability to articulate her thoughts, express her emotions, and reclaim her identity. With her newfound knowledge comes self-awareness and critical thinking, allowing Precious to question and challenge the circumstances that have held her back. Education exposes her to diverse perspectives, inspiring her to envision a different future for herself and her children, she was fortunate enough to alter her life around and the lives of her children.

Through the portrayal of education as a liberating force, Sapphire highlights how education can break the cycle of poverty, challenge social norms, and provide opportunities for marginalized individuals to rise above their circumstances. The theme underscores the importance of equitable access to education and the potential it holds for personal and societal transformation. It emphasizes that education is not solely about academic knowledge but also about fostering self-worth, empowerment, and the ability to transform one's own life.

4.2.2.4 Motherhood, Home, and the Family Dynamic in *Push*

The family mechanism in the novel is complex and challenging; Sapphire highlighted Precious as a victim of her home environment, underscoring the profound impact that one's upbringing and family dynamics can have on an individual's life. In *Push*, Precious is portrayed as a victim not only of her circumstances but also of the systemic issues and societal failures that contribute to the perpetuation of abuse. By emphasizing Precious as a victim, Sapphire sheds light on the cycle of abuse and the challenges individuals face when trying to break free from destructive family patterns.

Precious faces severe maternal violence and neglect from both her parents; her mother Mary inflicts physical, emotional, and psychological abuse that mothered all of her inner traumas. Enduring abuse in a hostile home environment can lead to intense emotional distress; having a rapist father and abusive mother shattered Precious' sense of self-worth and security. Mary's physical cruelty towards her daughter not only leaves physical scars on Precious but also contributes to her deep-seated emotional trauma; the so-called mother is neglectful and hostile, showing no empathy for Precious, these actions affect Precious' relationships with others, especially with her teachers and classmates, which affected her educational journey.

Mary's actions mirror the lack of the nurturing qualities typically associated with motherhood; the constant beating, cursing, and bullying of her daughter is a reflection of her

inner struggles and insecurities, though she is knowledgeable of the cruel actions carried out on her daughter by her husband, she despicably blames Precious claiming she seduced and stole her man. Sapphire explicitly called attention to the consequences of the continuous accumulations of trauma on Precious' mental health; the young girl exhibits signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) experiencing repeated nightmares and flashbacks related to her traumatic childhood experiences. She also suffers from depression, low self-esteem, and social anxiety; which significantly contributed to intensifying her learning disabilities including dyslexia, which added a layer of stress to her life.

Sapphire opted for journaling as a coping mechanism for Precious to put her sufferings into words in a therapeutic attempt. Because of her alienation and lack of a supportive and understanding environment, she keeps a diary as an outlet for the pain, anger, and sadness she carries. Through journal writing; Sapphire allowed Precious to self-reflect and contemplate her life and future, to gain a sense of agency and control over her narrative, the one thing she can control in her repressed life. A silenced and victimized character like Precious was bound to release her restrained emotions on someone, and Mary was the perfect target for Precious to unload her stress, by standing up to her mother; Precious breaks free from the boundaries that shaped and suppressed her life.

The narrative brings to light another form of motherhood; Precious faces numerous obstacles as a mother, and the novel explores the impact of her traumatic upbringing on her ability to care for her children. Precious' version of motherhood is characterized by love, care, and empathy. Though she lacks role models for positive parenting; she strives to provide a nurturing and supportive environment for her children, firmly believing that following parenting methods contrary to those used by her mother is the ideal approach. Depicting Precious' motherhood to contrast her mother's is Sapphire's intention to break the cycle of

abuse; in addition to illuminating the broader message of her narrative which suggests that individuals have the power to overcome adversity and transform their lives.

By showcasing the dynamic family in *Push* and depicting the contrastive motherhoods of Precious and Mary, Sapphire challenges stereotypes and societal expectations. Precious becomes a character who defies the odds, illustrating that even in the most difficult circumstances, individuals can exhibit qualities of love, resilience, and determination in their roles as parents. Her protectiveness of her children demonstrates her commitment to breaking the cycle of abuse and dreaming of providing a better life for them showcasing strength and perseverance.

4.2.2.5 The Influence of Friendship on Precious' Quest for Self-Worth

Precious has undergone significant traumatic experiences, including sexual abuse by her father and emotional abuse inflicted by her mother. The poor child has never been loved; most of her memories are painful and traumatic incidents from her childhood. The narrative contemplates the significance of female bonds in fostering a nurturing and supportive environment for marginalized women offering a means to ameliorate some of the damage done, Precious' journey to self-discovery was marked by considerable challenges however, finding other females grappling with similar or even more severe difficulties than her own provided Precious with a glimmer of hope, motivating her to transform her life. The biggest contributor to Precious' independence and agency was ultimately herself, if she had abandoned her pursuit of soul searching and declined the opportunity to attend the alternative school, she would have lost the opportunity to ride on the journey to self-realization.

One of the first friendships that influence Precious' transformation is with her classmate, Rita. Despite their initial differences, Precious and Rita form a bond based on empathy and understanding. Rita encourages Precious to open up and share her experiences, allowing her to

unload the shame and guilt she has carried for so long. This newfound friendship empowers Precious to find her voice and confront her past, ultimately leading her toward healing and self-discovery. The other girls in the literacy program assisted in elevating Precious' self-esteem, for once in her life she felt a sense of belonging; knowing the hardships they went through made her feel understood and supported.

The most influential character in Precious' life is her teacher at the Alternative school Ms. Rain; who provides a nurturing environment not only for Precious but for all the girls in a predicament. She perceived the ambition in Precious' eyes and worked to encourage her to build a powerful future for herself and her children; through education that works as the primary leader in her journey into independence. Ms. Rain was both a mentor and a friend for Precious; offering a service of listening that Precious hungered for her entire life, the young girl waited to be heard and understood to face and heal from the traumas she had endured.

Ms. Rain worked on both the academic and personal levels of Precious; she recognized the intellectual potential of Precious and pushed her beyond her comfort zone. Customizing her teaching techniques to meet the needs of all the girls in her class, but most importantly to promote Precious' low self-esteem and thus cater to her desire to grow and succeed academically. Her faith in a brighter future for Precious was the driving force behind the unexpected triumph of the young girl who was cast out and unacknowledged her entire life, it fueled Precious' determination to overcome her past predicaments and create new opportunities for herself and thus for her children. The personalized approach Ms Rain followed not only addressed Precious' specific academic requirements but also fostered a desire for improvement, further motivating her to pursue her educational goals and aspirations.

4.3 Thematic Variations in *The Color Purple* and *Push*: A Comparative Perspective

The initial thought any reader may acquire after reading *The Color Purple* and *Push* is the resemblance of concern of both narratives; which highlight the dreadful experiences of black females in a male-dominated society, suffering from violence, incest, oppression, and marginalization due to their race and sex. The subject matter, narratives, and characters were approached differently by the two authors, each using their unique lens, resulting in the foregrounding of numerous themes prominent in each novel and bearing significant weight in the literature.

Considering *Push* being written and published more than a decade after *The Color Purple*; it is fair to believe that Sapphire inspired some of the elements in her novel *Push* from *The Color Purple*. An in-depth exploration of the thematic concerns of the two narratives in the current chapter refuted my initial theory of having more similarities than differences. The first half of this chapter established that the two authors opted for different approaches to highlight the main concepts they aspired to communicate to their audience. The focus of Alice Walker was more on themes of racism, sexism, and the struggle for identity and self-empowerment, Sapphire on the other hand emphasized themes of illiteracy, and the dreadful outcomes of physical and psychological abuse.

The portrayal of self-discovery is prominent in both novels, in the first novel, Celie undergoes a journey of empowerment supervised by the female relationships in her life, aspiring to be as beautiful, powerful, and independent as Sofia, Shug Avery and her sister Nettie is what empowered Celie to search for self-love, happiness and finding her voice. Alice Walker emphasized the importance of society and sisterhood as transformative forces in the lives of oppressed and marginalized females.

In *Push*, Sapphire's presentation of self-discovery was much harsher; with vivid embodiments of abuse and trauma, she opted for a more confrontational approach. Precious' journey was much more dramatic, with a focus on breaking through societal barriers and reclaiming her agency. Unlike Walker's emphasis on the power of sisterhood, Sapphire highlights the isolation and unpleasant realities faced by Precious, who struggles with severe abuse, illiteracy, and societal neglect.

The two narratives diverge on another important theme which is the exploration of sexuality by its two protagonists. Walker's concept of sexual orientation is provoking and daring to the societal norms and traditions of its time; the ultimate freedom awarded to Celie to engage in a sexual relationship with another female and normalizing such undertakings is one of the main reasons behind the backlash *The Color Purple* received at the time. In my opinion, the idea of a distressed young woman engaging in an intimate relationship with her husband's mistress was unreal and unacceptable, Celie and Shug Avery could have had a normal friendly relationship which could have had the same impact on Celie's liberation journey and her quest for personal growth. Through my analysis, I believe Walker intentionally celebrated such taboo subjects as an approach to stir the opinion of the readers as well as furnishing her literary work with such a controversial theme.

Sapphire decided on a different approach in portraying sexuality in her work; the novel explores in a detailed manner the sexual abuse Precious experiences at the hands of her father. Unlike *The Color Purple*; the in-depth depiction of the traumatic ordeal the young girl faces in *Push* kills any sexual interests she might have; in my view is more logical to lose any sexual curiosity following such dreadful experience than increasing the sexual attraction as in the experience of Celie. *Push* not only addresses the sickening sexual experience of young African American females but also its devastating consequences on its victims.

The heavy challenges Precious faces after surviving her horrific childhood and sexual abuse are identifying the pathway to removing her scars as an endeavor to reclaim her sense of self-worth and rebuild trust in herself and others. Sexuality for Sapphire was as important as it was for Walker; yet Sapphire approached it prudently recognizing its significance in shaping Precious' identity and relationships thus shaping the identity of other females. As well as acknowledging the complexities of sexual orientations in such cases as that of Precious and its weight on societal values.

Despite the powerful nature of both narratives; and the undeniable success of *The Color Purple*, based on my analysis, it is believed that *Push* bears more impact and is more representative of the cruel realities African American women face. Sapphire's style in approaching taboo subjects like incest was grating and explicit; the choice of painting such a realistic detailed image of abuse and trauma through the words of a young child was daring. Walker's style on the other hand was more attentive to the idea of incest; playing it safe by coercing the narrative to take an interesting turn of events as Celie's rapist father turned out to be her stepfather.

When contrasting the struggles of the two protagonists it is evident that Precious' journey is more complex and delves into systemic issues such as poverty, violence, and education inequality. In summary, Sapphire's choice to use a different approach in *Push* compared to the style employed by Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* can be attributed to differences in time, context, voice, and the desired emotional impact on the reader. These factors shaped their respective choices in terms of language, style, and portrayal of their characters' experiences.

4.4 African American Narrative Voices in *The Color Purple* and *Push*

The weight of *The Color Purple* and *Push* bear in the African American literary tradition is enormous; the unfiltered themes and characters were only one aspect that contributed to the success of the narrative and the authors. For Walker and Sapphire the use of AAVE as a vehicle for literary expression was not celebrated by many scholars; Roden (qtd. in Wilson 53) believed the use of vernacular English paints blacks in a negative light, portraying them as uneducated and tracing them back to the slavery era, an ugly time no African American individual wants to recall. Both authors considered the use of African dialect in their works as a celebration of their literary heritage, offering their readers an authentic experience and depth into the lives of their struggling characters.

When you read *The Color Purple* and *Push* in the first pages and for the first time there is no sign of the characters' race or culture; the only indication they are Blacks is the variety of vernacular language the protagonist use in her narration. Without a shred of a doubt if the two stories of these young African American women were told in Standard English; the narratives would not be as powerful and influential. The vernacular not only adds depth and authenticity to their voices but also serves as a stark reminder of the racial and cultural contexts in which these characters exist. It helps to convey their unique experiences, struggles, and triumphs in a way that Standard English simply could not capture.

When comparing the linguistic competence of Celie and Precious and their rebelliousness from Standard English; it is noted that Precious' language is more deviant and nearly incomprehensible than Celie's. For instance, Celie says "My mama dead. She die screaming and cussing. She scream at me. She cuss at me. I'm big. I can't move fast enough. By time I git back from the well, the water be warm. By time I git the tray ready the food be cold. By time I git all the children ready for school it be dinner time. " (Walker 9) the utterance expresses several grammatical discrepancies with Standard English, including the

omission and non-standard use of the auxiliary verb 'to be' by using "be" instead of "is" in addition to the use of "by time" instead of "by the time." plus the non-formal use of certain verbs like "git" instead of "get," and "died" instead of "die".

In *Push*, Sapphire utilizes a stream-of-consciousness technique to give voice to Precious, making her reciting voice more coherent despite several language discrepancies. An example of this is seen in the passage, "Precious! Precious!" my mother hollering but my head not here, it in four years ago when I had the first baby. I was standing at this sink when the pain hit me, and she hit me (Sapphire 13). This sentence demonstrates the elimination of the verb "to be," yet it remains comprehensible. This stylistic choice not only reflects Precious' fragmented thoughts but also adds depth to her character and highlights her struggles.

It is revealed that the socioeconomic backgrounds delineate one of the major differences in the use of Vernacular English by the two protagonists. Celie speaks a dialect that reflects her environment, which is a rural poor town in the American South. Her language is characterized by colloquialisms, non-standard grammar, and phonetic spellings that convey her lack of formal education and isolation from mainstream society. Meanwhile, Precious lived in a more contemporary environment in New York City, her language incorporates elements of street slang, urban vernacular, and code-switching between Vernacular English and Standard English, reflecting her multifaceted identity and the cultural melting pot of her surroundings.

Another contrast in the implementation of Vernacular English in both novels is the narrative voices of Celie and Precious. The recitation in *The Color Purple* is contemplative, attentive, and personal, echoing the inner thoughts and emotional state of Celie. Her language is more intimate which deeply connects the readers with her experiences eliciting empathy for her struggles and triumphs. In *Push*, on the other hand, the narrative voice is raw,

confrontational, and evocative, mirroring Precious' unfiltered personality and rebellion and resilience in the face of adversity. Her language is powerful in expressing her frustration and determination to overcome the misadventures she had, challenging societal norms and asserting her identity on her terms.

When the teacher Ms.Rain asks Precious to write in her journal the first thing she writes are the incoherent words "li Mg o mi m," (Sapphire 61) which means "little Mongo on my mind". When Ms.Rain asks whose little Mongo Precious wrote "Litte mony is mi cie" meaning little Mongo is my child (Sapphire 62). This sentence illustrates Precious' initial level of illiteracy before attending the alternative school; she could neither read nor write. The stark contrast between Celie's and Precious' linguistic journeys underscores the different forms of marginalization and oppression they face, adding layers of complexity to their narratives.

Through the progress of the novel, it is noted that Precious' language develops drastically, however Celie's language level is constant. In *The Color Purple*, Celie refuses to conform to 'white English' for she believes it is an act of rebellion against white culture, her reluctance to learn proper English is tied to her sense of identity and agency. Precious on the other hand is passionate about learning and enthusiastic to obtain new skills to tell her story; Ms Rain demands Precious to move forward and not give up on her studies, stressing the importance of writing as the boat that carries her to the other side of the river (Sapphire 97) a place where she can share her story. Precious' acceptance and eagerness towards learning stem from her desire for self-empowerment and self-expression.

In essence, the two authors' stylistic choices of presenting their works in African American vernacular English hold significant weight within the African American literary tradition. Despite the numerous criticisms surrounding the linguistic approach of the narratives, Walker and Sapphire claimed it was a celebration of Black heritage and culture.

Comparing the linguistic competence and rebelliousness from Standard English between Celie and Precious, it's evident that Precious' language is more deviant and incomprehensible. However, Sapphire's use of the stream-of-consciousness technique makes Precious' voice more coherent despite these discrepancies. The stark contrast between Celie's and Precious' linguistic journeys underscores the different forms of marginalization and oppression they face.

4.5 The Art of Functionality Between Alice Walker and Sapphire

In literature, each author has his/her unique voice and artistic vision; Walker and Sapphire opted for different stylistic approaches because they resonated with their writing style and aligned with their intentions for the novels. In the two narratives, they approached the AAVE with ease to convey the protagonist's frightful stories and experiences. The language choices adopted by Walker and Sapphire differ according to the style of writing implemented; choosing the epistolary form as a literary technique pushes the writer to take on certain language functions that work to help convey his/her intended philosophies through his/her work. The same thing goes for a writer authoring a first-person narrative with a stream-of-consciousness technique.

The two authors present several instances in the narratives that bear strong language functions. From my interpretation, we can affirm that the most recurrent language function in the two novels is the interpersonal and emotive function; the protagonists share their stories with an expressive urgency that allows readers to deeply feel their emotions. For Sapphire, the writing style serves to mirror Precious' internal thoughts and emotions via graphic language aiming to provoke an emotional response from the reader. Her journal entries reveal a roller coaster of emotions; ranging from anger and frustration to voicing her pain and fragility. This unfiltered expression of Precious' inner world allows readers to empathize with her struggles and understand the depth of her experiences.

For Alice Walker, the power of language lies in establishing and maintaining social relationships; Celie's first true and honest relationship was with God, even though the element of interaction and negotiation in her letters with God was absent, the language function of the utterances was interpersonal and emotive maintaining a connection that nourished her through years of abuse and hardship. Celie found a means of expression that allowed her to convey her emotions and struggles privately to God since she was unable to communicate her thoughts to others. This demonstrates how language, even when used in a seemingly one-sided manner, can serve as a powerful tool for interpersonal communication and emotional connection.

While the novel's frequent language function is interpersonal along with the expressive function that is mostly present in the letters between Celie and God; it also draws on the referential function of language, Celie and Nettie's letters express their pain, joy, and longing, offering a window into their innermost thoughts and feelings. Similarly, provides insight into the cultural and social context of their lives. The two characters share their experiences and interactions with others, serving the referential function by conveying factual details about their lives and surroundings. This function helped to enrich the reader's understanding of the characters' backgrounds and the social and cultural context in which they live.

In conclusion, the unique voices and artistic visions of authors such as Walker and Sapphire shine through their intentional language choices and narrative styles. While Sapphire uses graphic language to mirror Precious' internal thoughts and emotions, creating an empathetic connection with readers, Walker's use of language in Celie's letters to God demonstrates the power of language in maintaining interpersonal relationships and conveying emotions privately. Both authors effectively use language functions such as interpersonal, emotive, and referential to enrich their narratives and provide deeper insights into their characters' experiences and the social contexts of their stories.

4.6 Thinking Out the Stylistic Choices and Thematic Concerns in *The Color Purple*

Attempting to understand how authors use language as a playground to showcase their creativity and convey their messages is a fascinating endeavor. The first chapter of this research highlighted the importance of analyzing a literary work from two crucial criteria, the literary and linguistic criteria which according to Leech and Short intertwine in the concept of foregrounding. The current section highlights the connection between the stylistic scrutinies of *The Color Purple* conducted in chapter 3 thus exhibiting the linguistic criterion; and the author's broadcasted themes highlighted in this chapter which covers the literary criterion, aiming to underline the deviations from the literary and stylistic perspective that set the story apart from traditional narratives.

The stylistic scrutiny realized in the previous chapter; highlighting the tropes as well as the grammatical and phonological schemes in *The Color Purple*, resulted in foregrounding several stylistic devices employed in the novel. Alice Walker used the power of language not only to communicate themes of womanism, oppression, sisterhood, and exploring the divine in her novel but also as a vehicle that carries the reader into a world of emotional depth and social commentary. The adopted stylistic devices such as metaphors, repetition, and assonance contribute to a narrative that is both powerful and transformative, allowing readers to deeply engage with the themes of the novel and empathize with the character's struggles.

From my perspective, the epistolary style stands as the central stylistic device within the novel; Walker's choice of narrating the story via first person narrative through letters is a creative and unique stylistic scheme that promoted her work along with the other stylistic choices and themes and upgraded her to a prizewinning African American female writer. The letters from Celie to God and Later to her sister Nettie are Walker's literary agency to make the voice of her protagonist in front and center, giving the readers the opportunity to a first-class seat into her thoughts, emotions, and experiences. The adoption of this stylistic device

proves Walker's skillfulness, gives depth to Celie's character, and foregrounds the novel's various themes, making her story all the more poignant and impactful.

The linguistic criterion of my research foregrounded simile and anaphora as the most recurrent stylistic devices in the novel. Despite the multiple deviations Walker adopted in crafting her literary work; ranging from the use of African American Vernacular English and epistolary format to approaching taboo subjects like gender and sexuality, the extensive use of simile redirects the story towards a more accessible and relatable narrative. By using similes, Walker can bridge the gap between the characters' experiences and the readers' understanding.

The multiple similes employed by Walker heighten the thematic properties of the narrative; supporting the themes of disputing traditional gender roles, womanism, and sisterhood. The female characters in the novel are presented with different physical traits that capture their unique personalities. Sofia is depicted as "big strong girl. Arms got muscle. Legs, too. **She swing that baby about like it nothing**"(Sapphire 28) I find that this simile challenges and refutes the traditional gender stereotypes. I believe Walker intended to create a female character that embodies physical strength and resilience which is typically associated with masculinity, in opposition to the conventional notions of femininity that emphasize delicacy and fragility. Through this character, Walker seeks to break the classical image of submissive and passive women offering a powerful representation of female empowerment and autonomy.

Nettie is another character that defies the stereotype of Black women as illiterate and inferior; she is depicted as young, beautiful, intelligent, and the perfect model of a housewife. In contrast to her sister Celie who was called ugly and dumb multiple times throughout the novel by her stepfather "She ugly. Don't even look like she kin to Nettie. But she'll make the better wife. She ain't smart either, and I'll just be fair, you have to watch her or she'll give

away everything you own. But she can work **like** a man. " (14) The simile of comparing Celie to a man specifies the physical strength and endurance she possesses; reflecting on her ability to manage the household. This comparison in my view is a play by Alice Walker to reflect the societal expectations of Black women, highlighting the dichotomy of where some are valued for their physical appearance and others who do not fit the conventional beauty standards are valued for physical strength and labor.

Throughout this research; I closely examined the dynamic relationship between the two major female characters in the novel Celie and Shug Avery, noting that the remarkable divergence between the two characters serves as a hallmark of *The Color Purple*. Alice Walker masterfully coupled two contrasting figures in terms of their background, physical appearance, spirituality, and sexuality into a profound and transformative relationship that surpasses societal norms and fosters mutual growth and empowerment.

The first thoughts the two characters had of each other were conflicting, Celie viewed Shug Avery's picture and considered her as the most beautiful woman she ever saw, "**She** more pretty then my mama. **She** bout ten thousand times more prettier then me." (13) Walker opted for anaphora to emphasize the charm Shug Avery possessed and the inferiority Celie has of herself. On the contrary, when laying eyes on Celie for the first time Shug considered her as ugly, bluntly stating, "You sure *is* ugly." As if she was told Celie is ugly but she didn't believe it. (34)

It is noted that Celie employs several similes when describing Shug Avery that differ from her initial thoughts, her description is more precise and filled with both fear and admiration, Celie states: "Under all that powder **her face black as Harpo**" emphasizing the dark nature of Shug's complexion that despite her efforts to conceal it with makeup she still black. (34) Another simile in Celie's description is used by Walker to emphasize female

empowerment, she continuously recites the delicate state of Shug Avery "**Like, sick as she is, if a snake cross her path, she kill it.** She look me over from head to foot. **Then she cackle. Sound like a death rattle**"(Walker 34) the use of powerful words such as kill, cackle, and death rattle portrays Shug's defiance and determination despite her physical weakness, echoing the overarching theme of women asserting their power and agency in the face of adversity throughout Walker's narrative.

Anaphora is also employed generously by Walker in *The Color Purple*, the repetition of the same word successively is used for emphasis, rhythmic, or reinforcement effect. One passage from the novel that stands out is the first confrontation between Celie and her husband, after she decides to finally leave him he lashes out saying: "**You** ugly. **You** skinny. **You** shape funny. **You** too scared to open your mouth to people." (102) this anaphoric description of Celie reflects and emphasizes the continuous verbal abuse she endures from her husband, he continued to say "Who you think you is? he say. You can't curse nobody. Look at you. **You** black, **you** pore, **you** ugly, **you** a woman. Goddam, he say, **you** nothing at all."

It is worth noting that the nature of the insults Celie received is a reflection of the masculine mentality among African American men at that time, which often regarded black women, particularly those from poor backgrounds as insignificant. Drawing from my interpretation, Alice Walker exploited her narrative as a platform to question social issues experienced by women through the vivid and intense portrayal of Celie's experiences, the evocative imagery, and the unvarnished themes and personal philosophies. Walker employs similes to depict the stark realities faced by African American women, illuminating their struggles as sharply as a blade. Moreover, her strategic use of alliteration savors the prose with a rhythmic quality, echoing the relentless persistence of societal inequalities.

To conclude, the interplay of language, stylistic choices, and thematic properties in *The Color Purple* unveils Alice Walker's unique literary skillfulness and social commentary. She masterfully crafted a narrative that captivates and challenges the reader, by foregrounding both the literary and linguistic criteria; this research underscores the profound impact of Alice Walker's creative choices. Through techniques like the epistolary style, the use of African American Vernacular English, similes, metaphors, repetition, and anaphora, Walker brings characters to life and confronts societal norms. By highlighting the relationships between Celie and the other female characters, Walker showcases themes of empowerment and growth. Overall, her use of language not only tells a powerful story but also prompts reflection on important social issues.

4.7 Thinking out the Stylistic Choices and Thematic Concerns in *Push*

The process of unraveling the allusive messages in the novel *Push* and filtering out the stylistic choices Sapphire opted for to foreground the characters' experiences and thematic notions rooted in her narrative was challenging yet thrilling. Sapphire in my view is one of the most talented African American female writers; the ability to create such a vivid and relatable character like Precious proves her raw talent, when you start reading the first page of the novel you can't help yourself but continue immersing in Precious's world, feeling every emotion she experiences, and rooting for her throughout her journey.

In her novel *Push*, Sapphire employs a range of stylistic choices to convey complex thematic concerns. Through my examination of these stylistic elements such as narrative structure, language, and figures of speech, in chapters 2 and 3 of the current thesis, we can gain a deeper understanding of the novel's central themes, including trauma, resilience, and the power of literacy. The current section is devoted to foregrounding the connection between the stylistic analysis of *Push* carried out in the previous chapter, thus exhibiting the linguistic

criterion suggested by Leech and Short; with Sapphire's literary themes highlighted in this chapter which takes account of the literary criterion.

Through a careful stylistic analysis conducted in Chapter 3, it becomes evident via Leech and Short's stylistic checklist that Sapphire makes extensive use of rhetorical figures. Such element encompasses various stylistic devices such as repetition, parallelism, anaphora, and antithesis, however, she foregrounded repetition more than any other device. Deciding on one specific device rather than others is conscious and calculated, her literary work is rich with repetition that helps to underscore the trauma, struggles, and resilience of the protagonist Precious, Sapphire strategically repeats certain words and phrases to highlight the recurring hardships that Precious faces, as well as to emphasize her internal thoughts and emotions.

The narrative structure employed by Sapphire draws attention to journal entries as the adopted style of writing; from my perspective, settling on the first-person narrative technique was a brilliant choice for Precious' story. Using the pronouns "I," "me," and "my" allowed me to vividly experience the hardships and triumphs of Precious as if I were living them myself; this choice in Sapphire's style of writing forces the reader to live through Precious's eyes and to gain insight into her thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Despite the story being told through fragments and stream-of-consciousness technique it preserved the cohesiveness and emotional intensity necessary to convey the protagonist's journey effectively.

By employing a nonlinear narrative structure along with the various stylistic devices in the novel, Sapphire effectively mirrored her thematic concerns. As determined in my analysis; the frequent use of repetition served as an expressive means and a stylistic device in the novel, stressing the themes communicated. Regarding the theme of violence, incest, and motherhood; Sapphire employed repetition as a potent literary device to underscore the savagery of incest and domestic violence Precious suffered from, the repetition of utterances

such as "**Pain hit** me again, then she **hit** me. I'm on the floor groaning, "**Mommy please, Mommy please, please Mommy! Mommy! Mommy! MOMMY!**" (9) the multiple repetitions used by Precious to recount the abuse she endured from her mother are powerful and heartbreaking. Sapphire's graphical depiction serves the emotive function of the text offering readers a direct view into the sufferings of Precious.

Repetition was also frequently present for reinforcing the turbulences in Precious' educational journey, the excerpt "The nurse is saying something I don't **hear**. I **hear** kids at school. Boy say I'm **lauffing ugly**. He say, "Claireece is so **ugly** she **lauffing ugly**. " His fren' say, "No, that fat bitch is crying **ugly**. " **Laff laff.**". p12 entails the repetition of the word ugly 4 times which serves as a powerful stylistic device. Precious recalling the insults she constantly received in school while giving birth to her baby adds fuel to the fire; this repetition not only emphasizes the frequency and intensity of the insults directed at her but also underscores the profound impact they had on her sense of self-worth and identity. Each repetition amplifies the emotional weight of the remarks, intensifying the reader's understanding of the psychological trauma Precious endured.

The use of repetition pertains also to the theme of friendship in the narrative. The following excerpt "Rita Romero hug me like I'm her chile and **I cry** and Ms Rain rub my back and say **let it out**, Precious, **let it out**. **I cry** for every day of my life. **I cry** for Mama what kinda story Mama got to do me like she do? And **I cry** for my son, the song in my life. "(Sapphire 96) highlights the repetition of "I cry" several times which emphasizes the emotional intensity of the moment and conveys the depth of Precious's pain. The young girl is not crying for one specific event but for the cumulative weight of a lifetime of hardships. The repetition conveys the strong relationship Precious has with her friends and serves to intensify the complex emotions Sapphire intended the reader to identify with.

Other stylistic devices explored in the previous chapter such as metaphors, similes, alliteration, and assonance bear a powerful role in foregrounding the themes of the narrative. Through my interpretation, it is noteworthy to point out that the most striking effect these devices hold is creating evocative imagery through the comparisons deployed by metaphors which provoke the readers' emotions to connect with Precious' dreadful story. Alliteration and assonance rhythmic effects also resonate with the reader and provide harmony to the text. Sapphire not only creates an aesthetic text with different literary and stylistic devices but she also navigates her way into the reader's mind; inviting him/her to bond with the characters and engage more deeply with the thematic layers of her story.

After a long and passionate journey into Sapphire's work; and considerable time in analysis and interpretation, it is revealed that the stylistic authenticity of *Push* accurately serves its thematic concerns. Without a doubt, the novel's narrative voice, Vernacular speech, characterization, and stylistic devices offer an intimate literary environment for the reader to experience Precious' world. Sapphire's choices serve as a symbolic bridge between the personal struggles of the characters and the broader social issues they represent. Overall, the stylistic scheme of *Push* is masterfully tailored to its thematic concerns, creating a powerful and immersive reading experience.

4.8 Beyond Inspiration: Tracing Alice Walker's Legacy in Sapphire's Novel

The 1980s witnessed a significant advancement in African American Literature; Alice Walker winning the Pulitzer Prize award for fiction was one of the landmarks in African American literature and feminist literature. In the 1990s, Sapphire built her narrative by conforming to the foundations laid down by Walker and the other prominent African American women writers, the fifteen-year gap between the publications of the two novels highlights differences in the narratives' language, structure, and themes. Thus to answer the research question of how is the legacy of Walker Present in Sapphire's work it is crucial to

consider the points of convergence between the novels, which I will work on identifying in the next section.

4.8.1 The Color Purple in *Push*

Sapphire touches on several literary works in her novel; referencing authors such as Langston Hughes, Moira Crone, and Ann McGovern in addition to several others. However, Alice Walker is the most powerful and inspirational writer to be celebrated in her novel. The choice of implementing *The Color Purple* as an allusion in her work proves Walker's legacy as an inspirational figure within the empire of African American female writers, it also demonstrates the profound impact it has on the literary and linguistic levels in shaping her novel and drawing parallels between the struggles and triumphs depicted in both works.

The Color Purple was the most recurrent literary work in *Push*, it was mentioned six times and considered one of the most important and mandatory literary works in Ms. Rain's classroom. However, given the challenging linguistic nature of *The Color Purple*, Precious finds it difficult to read, she says: "We reading **The Color Purple** in school. Which is hard for me. Ms Rain try to break it down but most of it I can't read myself" (Sapphire 81) in my view, the difficulty referred here is based on two levels, one is Precious illiteracy that hinders her from reading the language, the second is the resemblance of Celie's story with her own and its emotional weight on her psychological state.

After a long educational journey; Precious is finally able to read and comprehend *The Color Purple*, due to its heavy impact on her self-discovery she reads it to her baby as well, "Things going good in my life, almost like **The Color Purple**. Abdul nine months old, walking! Smart smart. He smart. I been reading to him since day he was born damn near. I love **The Color Purple**, that book give me so much strength." (Sapphire 82) Precious's words reflect the parallel Sapphire created between her novel and *The Color Purple*. Precious finally

finds herself in a good place; she attributes Abdul's intelligence to the constant reading of *The Color Purple* she has been doing for him since he was born, this reflects the inspiration it has on Precious as she tries to find light at the end of the tunnel for her and her children hoping for a brighter future and a happy ending similar to Celie's.

The Color Purple in *Push* was not only celebrated but also criticized for its fairytale ending. "Ms Rain say one of the criticisms of **The Color Purple** is it have fairy tale ending. I would say, well shit like that can be true. Life can work out for the best sometimes. Ms Rain love Color Purple too but say realism has its virtues too." (Sapphire 83) Sapphire deliberately mentioned the criticisms Walker received for the ending of *The Color Purple* as a sign of her critique of Walker's choice. This also demonstrates that Sapphire directed the ending of *Push* to be more realistic and representational of the cruel life of black females.

Despite the variety of elements Sapphire inspired from Walker; she ensured the originality of her novel, regarding the context, characters, themes, and narrative style. The intertextual reference of *The Color Purple* in *Push* not only honors Walker's legacy; but also enriches Sapphire's exploration of thematic and linguistic properties. Through her unvarnished and genuine representation of trauma, her investigation of urban life, and her focus on the issues of identity and survival, she managed to contribute to the rich tapestry of African American literature.

4.8.2 Celie and Precious' Parallel Paths

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, one of the major inspirations to Sapphire from *The Color Purple* is the characterization of her protagonist Precious Jones. Much like Celie; Precious embarks on a journey of self-discovery and empowerment, the two girls suffered unspeakable trauma and abuse in their households that shaped their frightful personalities and killed their

inner drive and passion toward life. Sapphire's motivation to create such a character was challenging due to the complex societal norms and cultural background of the story.

Despite the various criticisms Alice Walker received for her characterization of Celie as a stereotypical image of the black female being submissive and continuously abused by men; Sapphire according to my understanding had a different opinion, she perceived the portrayal of Celie as genuine and not overdramatized. The lack of agency and powerlessness Celie holds are sincere and truthful depictions of the state of African American women who are oppressed and devalued by men or society. Sapphire's attitude influenced the depiction of her protagonist; giving her more aggravated characteristics than Celie, the constant violence Precious received from both her parents along with the racist mistreatment in school pushed her to be more aggressive and violent toward her teachers and classmates, yet submissive in her household.

4.8.3 The Linguistic Legacy: From *The Color Purple* To *Push*

Language in *The Color Purple* is another dimension from Walker's legacy that inspired Sapphires' work. The vernacular English was one of the reasons *The Color Purple* was both praised and criticized, and Sapphire took the same path as Walker with less concern for the consequences of such a choice on the success of her work. Based on my interpretation of the two novels; I find Precious Vernacular language more explicit, aggressive, and unfiltered than Celie's, the author's deliberate choice to employ such language is to reflect the blunt repressed life the black females endure. Sapphire not only inspired Walker's artistic language usage but she unapologetically amplified her linguistic approach with more graphic language that forces the readers to engage deeply with Precious' brutal experiences.

Conversely, the stream-of-consciousness narrative style is one aspect that Sapphire independently decided on as the literary approach in her novel. Settling on this technique,

which opposes the Epistolary form adopted by Walker, is a calculated step by Sapphire to serve the story and characters. Due to the various mental and psychological issues developed by Precious attributable to the oppressed life she experienced, Sapphire felt the need to capture the flow of her inner thoughts, mirroring the immediacy and intensity of Precious' experiences. In opposition to Walker's epistolary format, which is more intimate and confessional, Sapphire's style creates an immersive reading experience that emphasizes the psychological depth of the protagonist.

4.8.4 Pushing Forward Black Feminism

Another point of convergence between the two novels that I believe is the cornerstone of Sapphire's novel is Alice Walker's womanist ideology. Both narratives center on the experience of black women, giving them a voice to proclaim their struggles and triumphs and celebrating their resilience and strength. The character of Precious was a notion for pushing black feminism at the center of the reader's interpretation of the novel, echoing the spirit of Celie's character, as well as cherishing Walker's heritage of black women's emancipation. Through Precious and Celie, readers gain insight into the complexities of black women's lives, identities, and relationships, challenging white dominant narratives that marginalize their experiences.

Continuing the tradition that began more than a decade ago with Alice Walker, Sapphire furthered the discourse on womanism and empowerment within African American literature; she emphasized the importance of graphically depicting the cruel reality of black females being victimized by patriarchy, hoping her novel would contribute to Greater awareness, empathy, and social change. From my perspective, the criticism Walker received for her depiction of male supremacy is the foundation of Sapphire's advocacy for the freedom of oppressed black females, promoting educational and social equality, and highlighting the importance of education in breaking the cycle of abuse and empowering

individuals. By building upon Walker's exploration of womanist ideology, Sapphire continues the tradition of amplifying the voices of marginalized women and challenging systemic injustices, contributing to a rich literary tradition that uplifts black women's voices.

4.9 Conclusion

As the final chapter of the current thesis, it was devoted to examining the thematic concerns of *The Color Purple* and *Push* as the second crucial stage of our research, highlighting the authors' central ideas framing their works. In addition, we brought to light the use of African American Vernacular English as a vehicle for exploring cultural identity and resistance in both novels. We also explored the interpersonal and emotive functions of language as the most recurring approaches adopted by the two authors in an attempt to evoke the reader's emotions to resonate with Celie and Precious' story. The chapter concludes by analyzing the relationship between the linguistic analysis conducted in Chapter 3 and the thematic concerns highlighted in this chapter, revealing the strong union between the stylistics and literary interpretation in uncovering deeper layers of meaning within the novels. By examining the intricate interplay between language and theme, we elucidated how linguistic choices serve as a vehicle for conveying the emotional and psychological experiences of the protagonists. Through detailed textual analysis, we demonstrated how the authors strategically deploy language to immerse readers in the characters' inner worlds, fostering empathy and understanding.

General Conclusion

Literary stylistics is the compass guiding the present research; in an attempt to uncover the treasures of the author's linguistic and literary choices in crafting unique pieces of literature that mirror the intricacies of human experience. Within this framework, the present study adopts stylistics not as a descriptive tool alone, but as an analytical lens through which meaning, ideology, and representation are systematically examined. This journey enabled a comparative understanding of how language functions as a vehicle for representing African American women's lived experiences under conditions of racism, sexism, and social exclusion. Uncovering a world of two literary works that would change our perspective on the experiences of African American women.

Embarking on a stylistic voyage into the hearts of two of the most celebrated works in African American literature was satisfactory; Alice Walker and Sapphire styled two narratives that push a new outlook on the lives of African American women into the world. *The Color Purple* and *Push* quenched the reader's thirst through captivating stories, emotional roller coasters, and raw, authentic female experiences that transcended the pages. The present study goes beyond narrative appreciation by demonstrating how specific stylistic and narrative choices shape these experiences and guide readers' emotional and ideological responses. The present study endeavored to illuminate the stylistic features and thematic explorations in the two narratives, aiming to shed new light on the author's style.

The numerous studies on *The Color Purple* and *Push* have been limited to literary analysis and have been relatively overlooked concerning stylistic analysis. Very few studies, to the best of our knowledge, examined *The Color Purple* and *Push* via stylistic analysis, leaving a gap in our understanding of the authors' stylistic choices and their impact on the broader interpretation of the novels. This research addresses that gap by offering a focused

stylistic comparison grounded in figures of speech and narrative techniques, thereby contributing a linguistically informed reading to African American literary scholarship.

Through its four chapters, the current thesis delineated an odyssey navigating through a series of conceptual frameworks and a literary rundown of the novels embodied in two theoretical chapters. Rather than merely reviewing content, these chapters established the conceptual and analytical foundations necessary for systematic stylistic interpretation. The third and fourth chapters featured methodological approaches with stylistic and literary renditions of the two novels, and the stylistic devices and thematic concerns that shaped the narratives were detailed. Chapter Three constituted the core analytical chapter of the thesis, where stylistic analysis was systematically applied to selected excerpts from both novels. Chapter Four synthesized the stylistic findings with thematic interpretation, demonstrating how stylistic patterns reinforce the novels' central concerns.

Through our exploration of narrative techniques in *The Color Purple* and *Push* we marked a rich ground of literary approaches adopted by Alice Walker and Sapphire. These findings directly address the central research question concerning how narrative techniques and stylistic choices contribute to the portrayal of African American women's experiences. The former opted for the Epistolary form to convey the character's sufferings and emotions directly without any interference from the author; the personal and intimate nature of the letters was the perfect literary choice by Walker to mirror the inner thoughts of Celie and to trace her psychological development that motivated her sovereignty.

Following the same path yet with a different approach, Sapphire favored the first-person narrative technique to create an immediate and intimate connection between the characters and the reader. Other narrative techniques implemented are the Bildungsroman, Stream of Consciousness, and Flashbacks, which strengthened the story by following the

journey of Celie and Precious from servitude to sovereignty and celebrating female empowerment in the face of adversity.

The results of carrying out the research via Leech and Short's checklist; predominantly the exploration of the Figures of Speech in *The Color Purple* and *Push* pointed out the frequent use of several stylistic devices. The analysis revealed clear stylistic divergence between the two authors rather than general similarity. It was centered on the grammatical and lexical schemes, phonological schemes, and tropes utilized by both authors, highlighting repetition, anaphora, alliteration, assonance, metaphor, and simile. These devices were not treated as decorative features but as functional elements contributing to characterization, emotional intensity, and thematic development.

In *The Color Purple*, it became evident that Alice Walker generously employed simile as one of the primary vehicles for depicting the characters' emotions and Suffering. Simile functions as a stylistic marker of Celie's limited linguistic repertoire and as a narrative strategy that enhances emotional accessibility for the reader. This selection is to showcase Celie's inability to use complex language structures, such as metaphors, to convey her thoughts. The young girl's main approach in explaining an idea or voicing a sentiment is through the comparison of something unfamiliar with a familiar object. Another incentive is to reach the aim of creating a piece of literature that works as an open stage that visibly displays African American female experiences. The extensive similes evoked vivid imagery, which transported the readers into the heart and mind of the character.

It is also revealed that Sapphire operated on a different mindset, though following Walker's path to communicate the internal conflicts and challenges their female characters live through, she opted for repetition as a tool to accomplish her aim. Repetition emerges as the dominant stylistic feature in *Push*, serving both psychological and thematic functions. This deliberate stylistic approach gives prominence to the tormented psyche of Precious, the

constant repetition of words and phrases is her way to express her emotions, and thus this stylistic device reinforces the emotive function in the text. The frequent repetition of the verb “push” operates as a structural and symbolic motif, emphasizing endurance, resistance, and self-transformation.

Another central stylistic choice that furnished the two narratives with a unique style of writing is the African American Vernacular English. The study demonstrates that Vernacular English functions as an act of linguistic resistance rather than mere realism. Alice Walker and Sapphire didn’t hold back from celebrating the African heritage, which molded the narratives into groundbreaking works of literature. The evaluation of Celie and Precious’ language revealed a substantial difference between their uses of Vernacular English. Celie’s language is described as more colloquial, personal, and heavy with phonetic spellings. Precious’s language, however, is perceived as raw and evocative, incorporating street slang and code-switching. Despite these differences, both authors use Vernacular English to challenge linguistic hierarchies and legitimize marginalized voices.

The present research continued to illuminate the relationship between the authors’ stylistic and thematic choices within their narratives. The findings confirm that stylistic choices are inseparable from thematic construction in both novels. We managed to give insight into the authors’ interplay with language, the journey of the characters, and the interaction of the readers with the stories. It is ascertained that Alice Walker’s stylistic choices, from adopting the Epistolary style and the Vernacular English to making use of extensive similes and anaphora, reinforced the thematic concerns communicated through the novel.

Significantly, this combination was adequate to reflect the refutation of traditional gender roles, highlighting the confrontation of racism and violence, and the journey into the heart of religion, specifically the repetition of Dear God multiple times throughout the novel.

Sapphire's implementation of various collections of stylistic options decorated her novel as well as promoted the universal notions she aspired to share; her scheme of adopting stream of consciousness technique, the Vernacular English, and the considerable repetitions worked conjointly to unveil the dark side of verbal and physical abuse, alienation, and racism in the novel.

The findings of the literary as well as the linguistic rundown of the two novels conducted in chapters three and four of the current thesis confirm the study's central argument regarding stylistic divergence and influence. According to the narrative structures, stylistic devices, and thematic concerns, we validate Alice Walker's style in *The Color Purple* as raw, intimate, and transformative. We also confirm Sapphire's style as unfiltered, insistent, and psychologically intense. The study further clarifies that Sapphire's engagement with Walker's legacy is dialogic rather than imitative, reflecting continuity and innovation within African American women's writing.

To better understand the implications of the conclusions the current thesis had on the style of Alice Walker and Sapphire, future studies could address the two novels from an alternative stylistic standpoint. Future research may also adopt corpus-based or multimodal stylistic approaches to expand the analytical scope. The remaining categories in Leech and Short's checklist present a fertile ground for stylistic analysis. Future research could also expand upon this study by incorporating a comparative analysis of a broader range of novels within the same literary genre. Another important direction for future researchers is to examine how the themes and narrative techniques in *The Color Purple* and *Push* resonate with contemporary readers and their relevance in today's society. Pedagogically, the study highlights the usefulness of stylistic analysis in teaching African American literature by promoting closer attention to language as a source of meaning. It also confirms the relevance of stylistics as an effective approach for literary analysis in higher education.

The journey of navigating through the mechanics of *The Color Purple* and *Push* was as enriching as I expected. This study ultimately demonstrates that stylistic analysis provides a rigorous and productive framework for interpreting African American women's narratives. Delving into the intricacies of the narrative structures, characterization, stylistic choices, and thematic concerns of Alice Walker and Sapphire gave a new outlook on the authors' distinct styles in foregrounding the adversities African American females endure. May the journeys of Celie, Precious, and countless other African-American women depicted in literature continue to inspire empathy and foster a deeper appreciation for the complexities of the human experience.

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ملخص

يسعى هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على عمليتين بارزتين في الأدب الأمريكي الإفريقي، وهما اللون الأرجواني لأليس ووكر وادفع لسافاير. وقد حظي النسق الأسلوبي لهاتين الروايتين، ولا سيما في إطار مقارنة، باهتمام محدود في الدراسات الأكاديمية. وانطلاقاً من هذا النقص، يتناول البحث الحالي كيفية توظيف كل كاتبة لاستراتيجيات لغوية وسردية متميزة للتعبير عن تجارب متشابهة من القهر والصمود وتشكل الهوية لدى النساء الأمريكيات الإفريقيات. يعتمد البحث مقارنة وصفية نوعية ضمن إطار المنظور النقدي/التحويلي. ويوجّه التحليل وفق إطار ليتش وشورت الأسلوبي، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على التقنية السردية، وتنويعات اللغة، والتعبير المجازي. ومن خلال القراءة النصية المتعمقة، يستند التحليل إلى فحص تأويلي لمقاطع نصية مختارة للكشف عن الأنماط الأسلوبية الوظيفية. وتُظهر النتائج أن

الهوية الأسلوبية لأليس ووكر في اللون الأرجواني تتشكل من خلال الأسلوب الرسائلي، والاستخدام المكثف للغة العامية الإفريقية الأمريكية، واللغة المجازية ولا سيما التشبيه، مما يضيف على السرد طابعاً حميمياً وتحولياً. وعلى النقيض من ذلك، تتسم رواية ادفع لسافاير بالسرد بأسلوب تيار الوعي، والتكرار، واستخدام اللغة العامية، وهو ما يسهم في بناء تمثيل خام وغير مصفى للتجربة المعاشة. وتعكس هذه النتائج النسق الأسلوبي المتميز لكل من الكاتبتين؛ فعلى الرغم من تأثر سافاير برواية اللون الأرجواني، فإنها حرصت على تقديم سرد يتميز بأسلوب مستقل يؤكد هويتها الأدبية الخاصة. ويسهم هذا البحث في إثراء الدراسات الأسلوبية من خلال توسيع نطاق تطبيقها على الرواية الأمريكية الإفريقية المقارنة، كما يقدم منظوراً لغوياً راسخاً لفهم التأثير الأدبي وأوجه التمايز بين النصوص

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة العامية الأمريكية الإفريقية، دفع، التحليل الأسلوبي، الإطار الأسلوبي، اللون

الأرجواني

Résumé

La présente recherche vise à mettre en lumière deux œuvres majeures de la littérature afro-américaine, *The Color Purple* (1982) d'Alice Walker et *Push* (1996) de Sapphire. Le dispositif stylistique des deux romans, notamment dans une perspective comparative, a reçu une attention scientifique limitée. Afin de combler cette lacune, cette étude examine la manière dont chaque auteure mobilise des stratégies linguistiques et narratives distinctes pour exprimer des expériences similaires d'oppression, de résilience et de construction identitaire chez les femmes afro-américaines. L'étude adopte une approche qualitative descriptive inscrite dans un paradigme critique/transformateur. L'analyse est guidée par le cadre stylistique de Leech et Short, avec un intérêt particulier pour les techniques narratives, la variété linguistique et les procédés figuratifs. À travers une lecture rapprochée des textes, l'analyse repose sur l'examen interprétatif de passages sélectionnés afin de mettre en évidence des schémas stylistiques fonctionnels. Les résultats montrent que l'identité stylistique d'Alice Walker dans *The Color Purple* se construit à travers la forme épistolaire, l'usage soutenu de l'anglais vernaculaire afro-américain et le recours au langage figuré, notamment la comparaison, produisant une voix narrative intime et transformatrice. En revanche, *Push* de Sapphire se caractérise par une narration en flux de conscience, l'usage de la répétition et de la langue vernaculaire, qui façonnent une représentation brute et non filtrée de l'expérience vécue. Ces conclusions mettent en évidence la spécificité stylistique de chacune des auteures ; bien que Sapphire s'inspire de *The Color Purple*, elle veille à construire un récit stylistiquement distinct afin d'affirmer sa propre identité littéraire. Cette étude contribue aux recherches en stylistique en élargissant leur application à la fiction afro-américaine comparative et propose une perspective linguistiquement fondée sur l'influence et la divergence littéraires.

Mots-clés : Anglais vernaculaire afro-américain, *Push*, analyse stylistique, cadre stylistique, *The Color Purple*.