

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

"Black Womanhood" in Alice Walker's The Temple of My Familiar

Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for

The Degree of Masters of Arts in English

By

Tek Bahadur Paija Pun

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

September 2009

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Approval Letter

This thesis, submitted to the Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Tek Bahadur Paija Pun, entitled “Black Womanhood in Alice Walker's *The Temple of My Familiar*” has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

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Abstract

Alice Walker's novel *The Temple of My Familiar* weaves an intricate pattern of womanhood challenging the stereotypical canonical patriarchal representation of women down the centuries. This thesis shows that Walker's principal technique in doing so is to revise the Western representation of reality, which depicts itself as separate from and superior to other cultures, by telling stories that stress connection and equality. The female characters in the novel who occupy most of the detail and claim interest of the reader, reveal the tales of black contributions to American history that have been neglected or suppressed. They also present reinterpretations of ancient myths; recount horrors and heroism that would have been left in the jungle and out of recorded history. This way they claim attention of the readers and historians the world over.

This thesis examines how the novel relates the damage inflicted on blacks by the oppression of slavery in Africa and in the Americas. No less damaging is the effect of the racial prejudice working against the blacks whose female members suffer from gender oppression too. The novel hypothesizes that Western civilization adopted and subverted the ancient African deities, metamorphosing their worship of the Mother Goddess into a patriarchal line. The message of the novel is that Black women have suffered most since they were subjugated both by whites and by men. And the way to liberation is to spin the histories and stories of the past when women used to occupy equal or even special position in the society, and claim the same status at present.

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