Sexuality, in all its forms and varieties, is beautiful. Sexual orientation defines human behavior, shapes human personality and gives birth to a unique identity. It is only natural that people identify themselves as having a certain sexual orientation based on who they are attracted to or with whom they fall in love with, be it a sexual partner of the same or other sex. However, either because of the lack of information and understanding or belief that heterosexuality is the only “normal” sexual orientation, the homosexuals and bisexuals face constant criticism and are marginalized as “abnormal”. The findings of my research intend to show that homosexuality implies a variety of psychological, emotional and physical issues and that it is nothing to be ashamed or afraid of. Since racism has always been associated with Black men and sexism with White females, the paper brings the invisible Black lesbians to light.

**Keywords**: Alice Walker, The Color Purple, Celie, lesbianism.

Liberation Movement was intended for the liberation of the Black race, however it was mainly for the liberation of the Black male. Therefore “freedom was equated with manhood and the freedom of blacks with the redemption of black masculinity” (“Brave”). As a result, many Black men in the movement were interested in controlling the Black women’s body leading to the sexual discrimination of Black women. The term “womanist” coined by Alice Walker was of immense contribution to the movement of the sexually and racially oppressed Black women. Marc-A Christophe in the essay “The Color Purple: An Existential Novel” provides Walker’s definition of the term “womanist”, first mentioned in In Search of Our Mother’s Garden (1983):

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... Responsible. In charge. Serious. (Christophe 288–9)

The term brings immediately forth high relevance and quality in the literary studies and goes unnoticed for Napikoski Linda who makes the issue of womanism the cornerstone of her short essay. More specifically, Napikoski explains that through womanism the Black women beauty and strength is appreciated, but what is more important is that womanism also seeks connections and solidarity with Black men (Napikoski). The term is an expansion of the former term “feminism” and stands as an important foundation of the inclusion of race and class issues in African American feminism. Drawing on a common stock of ideas, the Black Feminist Movement focuses mainly on issues such as violence against women, rape, sexual harassment, lesbian and gay rights, anti-racist organizing as well as other sexually or racially concerns, nonetheless as already known, the utmost goal is the end of sexism. Alice Walker highlights the upper mentioned problems in her epistolary novel, and although she received devastating critiques regarding the negative portrayal of the male characters, Walker was admired for the powerful portraits of the Black women. The theme of double repression of the Black women strengthens the ideology of the Black Feminist Movement. In essence, Walker contends that their discussion is male centered, therefore, to their credit there are two possible interpretations: first, it expresses the idea that Shug does not have a lesbian desire for Celie, namely she only wants to help Celie to discover her sexuality as she did by making Celie smile to the mirror; second, it indicates that Celie might not have a lesbian desire for Shug as well, due to the fact that men have always mistreated her. (Boer 178)

Boer and Gatti totally deny the fact that Celie’s turn to lesbianism is due to her dissatisfaction toward men, because they believe that Celie lacks any form of desire and passion, that she is not aware of her sexuality and that homosexuality
is not a matter of preference. I strongly oppose their opinion and I pursue the idea that Celie was self-conscious of her becoming a lesbian. By way of illustrating my point, the following section will focus on the factors that causes Celie turn from heterosexual to homosexual.

Some consideration should be given to Risanti Intan Al Baluni's paper on Celie's sexual orientation and to Linda Wilson and Phyllis Robertson for providing a presentation whose aims are to improve the understanding of ethical guidelines for working with LGBTQ youth. From a psychological point of view, homosexuality and bisexuality are not indicative of mental illness. Celie turns from an involuntary heterosexual – before having a relationship with Shug she had nonconsensual sex with her stepfather and her father— to a homosexual – where she embraces her new identity of lesbian. Both the sources under present discussion, introduce the Troiden model of sexual identity development according to which the development occurs in four steps: sensitization, identity confusion, identity assumption and commitment, while Baluni surveys that the factors leading Celie to lesbianism are psychological and social/environmental. In order to shed some light over Celie’s transformation, the above-mentioned theories are applied to the novel by the use of quotation example in form of the following schema:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors of Heterosexuality</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Quotes from the novel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abusive father and husband</td>
<td>1. Celie’s fear of men as a result from her abusive father and husband</td>
<td>She went to visit her sister doctor over Macon. Left me to see after the others. He never had a kine word to say to me. Just say You gonna do what your mommy wouldn’t. First he put his thing up gainst my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold my lüties. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git use to it. (Walker 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The comfortable feeling with another woman as recalling mother-daughter connections</td>
<td>2. The comfortable feeling with another woman as recalling mother–daughter connections</td>
<td>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 felt just right, she say. That feel like mama used to. Or maybe not mama. Maybe grandma. She reach for another cigarette. Start hum a little tune. (Walker 57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social Factors</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Quotes from the novel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Abusive father and husband as a result of patriarchal society</td>
<td></td>
<td>She ugly. He say. But she ain’t no stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she ain’t gonna make you feed it or clothe it. (Walker 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The existence of Shug in Celie’s life</td>
<td>Shug saying Celie. Miss Celie. And I look up where she at. She say my name again. She say this song I’m bout to sing is call Miss Celie’s song. Cause she scratched it out of my head when I was sick. First she hum it a little, like she do at home. Then she sing the words. It all about some no count man doing her wrong, again. But I don’t listen to that part. I look at her and I hum along a little with the tune. First time somebody made something and name it after me. (Walker 75)</td>
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</table>
| Sensitization | Occurs prior to puberty  
Feelings of marginality  
Perception of being different  
The difference is usually not sexual |
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<td>He beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in church. I may have got something in my eye but I didn't wink. I don't even look at mens. That's the truth. I look at women, tho, cause I'm not scared of them. Maybe cause my mama cuss me you think I kept mad at her. But I ain't. I felt sorry for mama. Trying to believe his story kilt her. (Walker 15)</td>
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| Identity Confusion | Same-sex arousal  
Absence of heterosexual arousal  
Inner turmoil  
Anxiety |
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<td>Before I know it, tears meet under my chin. And I'm confuse. He love looking at Shug. I love looking at Shug. But Shug don't love looking at but one of us. Him. But that the way it spose to be. I know that. But if that so, why my heart hurt me so? (Walker 74-5)</td>
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| Identity Assumption | Homosexual identity is established  
Self-definition as homosexual  
Tolerance or lesbian identity  
Sexual experimentation |
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<tr>
<td>All the men got they eyes glued to Shug's bosom. I got my eyes glued there too. I feel my nipples harden under my dress. My little button sort of perk up too. Shug, I say to her hi my mind, Girl, you looks like a real good time, the Good Lord knows you do. (Walker 82)</td>
<td></td>
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| Commitment / First Relationship | Homosexuality adopted as a way of life  
Integration of sexuality and emotionality  
Commitment to a same-sex love relationship  
Disclosure of homosexual identity to non-homosexuals  
The dream world phase  
I wanted to build me a round house, say Shug, but everybody act like that's backward. You can't put windows in a round house, they say. But I made me up some plans, anyway. One of these days... she say, showing me the papers. It a big round pink house, look sort of like some kind of fruit. It got windows and doors and a lot of trees round it. What it made of? I ast. Mud, she say. But I wouldn't mind concrete. I figure you could make the molds for each section, pour the concrete in, let it get hard, knock off the mold, glue the parts togethers somehow and you'd have your house. (Walker 188-9)  
Misery Phase  
My heart broke. Shug love somebody else. Maybe if I had stayed in Memphis last summer it never would have happen. But I spent the summer fixing up the house. I thought if you come anytime soon, I want it to be ready. And it is real pretty, now, and comfortable. And I found me a nice lady to live in it and look after it. Then I come home to Shug. (Walker 218)  
Enlightenment  
The only thing bother me is she don't never say nothing bout coming back. And I miss her. I miss her friendship so much that if she want to come back here dragging Germaine I'd make them both welcome, or die trying. Who am I to tell her who to love? My job just to love her good and true myself. (Walker 236) |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
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At this point I shall permit myself to refer to Celie’s transition from a heterosexual to a homosexual as a transformation based solely on the impact the negative patriarchal society has imposed upon her. The habitual psychological, emotional and physical abuse received by her stepfather and her husband over the years, have led Celie into accepting an invalid evaluation of herself. She drowned in the idea of nothingness by believing that she is ugly and unworthy. Being sexually abused by two men since her childhood, it was only natural for her to develop a fear of men. Her stepfather took away her womanhood and confidence by raping her and her husband continued into this morbid tradition. Wang Ling makes a point worthy to be noted. According to Wang, by selling Celie’s children, her stepfather deprived her of her identity as a mother, while Celie’s husband through beating and sexually abusing Celie, he deprived her of her identity as a wife (Wang 63). I would extend Wang’s theory of identity deprivation and mention that above the identity of mother and wife is the identity of human being. When the stepfather tries to convince Mr. ___ to take Celie as a wife, he says: “she ain’t gonna make you feed it or clothe it [emphasis is mine]” (Walker 18). It is thereby to be understood, that the stepfather views Celie as something close to an animal since it does not need food or clothes and since he does not call Celie by her name, but chooses instead to call her “it”. Deprived of identity and experiencing unhappy heterosexual experiences, it was only natural and normal to seek understanding and comfort in a woman. Celie’s passivity towards the male oppression enabled the stepfather and her husband into treating her even worse than an animal, but as a slave. April McCray is suggesting that Celie lives a life of “marital slavery” (McCray 26). Although Celie is not a slave, her stepfather sells her to another man as if she were a slave, suggesting the transfer from one master to another. Instead of being treated as a married woman, she is treated as a slave woman. McCray strengthens this point by referring to Celie’s identity as a mother and wife. McCray proposes that Celie’s transition from heterosexual to homosexual is a process taking place step-by-step, giving Celie time to adjust to her body (Frias 52). Walker does not position Celie in a lesbian relationship with Shug right from the beginning, but allows Shug to help Celie first explore and acknowledge her body without inducing any more psychological or physical damage, than the male counterparts have already done. Once Shug becomes a positive influence in Celie’s life and Celie gains control over her life, she escapes the last form of slavery. Christophe points out that “Celie’s subservience to Mr. ___ was so complete that she could not bring herself to pronounce his name” (Christophe 284). Celie had to endure a negative sexual experience make you feed it or clothe it. [...] 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. I go closer to the steps, but not to close cause I’m a little scared of his horse. Turn around, Pa say. I turn around. (Walker 16–20)
before she could realize the beauty of sexual and emotional exchange with another person. “In Shug’s lesbian embrace, Celie finds not only a refuge but also the crystallization of an otherwise unformulated wish: the wish to be other that what society wants her to be. It is Shug who helps her transcend her objectification by Mr. __ and to finally accede to the rank of subject” (Christophe 288). If homosexuality involves narcissism, as Freud believes and Linda Abbandonato writes, then learning to love herself was the best thing Celie could ever do. “In loving Shug, Celie becomes a desiring subject, and in being loved by Shug, she is made visible to herself as an object of desire” (Linda 1112).

After a history of incest, abuse, rape and lack of love, Celie achieves a sense of wholeness which is the cornerstone of the womanist ideology. Walker encourages people with different sexual orientation to be themselves, to stand for their choice and fight against the tradition. A womanist text aims to reach a sense of wholeness and Walker succeeds it by bringing in the foreground the oppressed Black women whose sexual desire are against the communities’ norms. Making the invisible visible and beautiful is what I call a good story.

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