Chapter II

Racism

The term racism usually denotes race-based prejudice, violence, dislike, discrimination, or oppression. Racism is an action, practice or belief, or social or political system that considers different races to be ranked as inherently superior or inferior to each other, based on presumed shared inheritable traits, abilities, or qualities. It may also hold that members of different races should be treated differently. And all so it is a kind of unidentified disease which exists everywhere in the world. It leads to social divergence, imbalance, inequality, and a wedge to divergence. According to Bhavani:

Racism is a system of domination and subordination based on spurious biological notions that human beings can be fixed into racially discrete group. It is a ‘natural’ process and is seen to be logical consequence of the differentiation of human beings into races. (28)

So many leaders arose in the earlier to fight against this disease. For instance, Abraham Lincoln, who was born as a white raised his voice against this deadly disease - Racism. The blacks, in some sense, deal with this incurable disease every day of their life and all of them have developed complicated strategies just to live out their everyday life.

The daughter of a Georgian sharecropper, Alice Walker is the significant black women novelist of this generation to concentrate on the sensibility of the South as a way of perceiving the perennial conflict between the human spirit and
societal patterns. She has long insisted that until the solids and prints of the South are sorted out and stitched into clarity, the relationship in this country between men and women, blacks and whites, will continue in disorder. According to Barbara Christian:

As a craftsman, Walker sorts out the throwaways, the seemingly insignificant and hidden pieces of the lives of Southerners, particularly black families, and stitches them into a tapestry of society. (48)

Her novels continually stitch a fabric of the everyday violence that is committed against her characters and that they commit upon one another in their search for regeneration and regeneration is what they as black people desire.

Walker’s first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, exposes the pattern of terror over a span of sixty years in the lives of one black family of sharecroppers. The story is marked throughout by the motifs of physical and spiritual murder, by suicide and infanticide, by wife beating and killing, set against a background of the horror of racism in the South. Her novels deal number of socio-economic, political, and psychological issues, as a result of racial discrimination. This novel is saturated with murder and violence of all kinds and Walker is substantiating the pervasive myth of black people, particularly black men, are by their very nature violent and that they inflict their full violence on their own blood. In fact *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* effectively proves the racist myths about African-Americans.
Of all the topics discussed in her novels, she particularly talks about some issues. She consciously selects all the nasty bits and pieces about black people that they as well as white people believe. Then she analyses each bit, clearly arranges the pieces so that one can easily understand the savage nibbling of everyday oppression at the souls of black southerners. All the savage nibbling of racism, the most poisonous bite is the renouncement of responsibility for one’s own soul.

The novel, through its juxtapositions of parts, relates the monstrous ramifications that result from blacks believing what society, at every turn, teaches them that they are not capable of being responsible for their own actions, that white folks are to blame for everything. The renouncement of responsibility is what it means to be a ‘nigger’. All the bits and pieces of violence in the book are arranged to reiterate the motif. A motif that Grange Copeland in his true communication with his son Brownfield explores:

By George, I know the danger of putting all the blame on somebody else for the mess you make out of your life. I feel into the trap myself! And I’m bound to believe that that’s the way the white folks can corrupt you even when you done held up before. ‘Cause when they got you thinking that they’re to blame for everything, they have you thinking they’s some kind of gods! You can’t do nothing wrong without them being behind it. You gifts just as weak as water, no feeling of doing nothing yourself. Then you begins to think up evil and begins to destroy everybody around you, and you blames it on the crackers. Shit! Nobody’s as powerful as we make them out to be. We got our own souls, don’t we? (TLGC 207)
Yet the predicament for poor black southerners is not as simple as all that. In every corner of this novel, the reader feels the tight control the white bosses have over the black sharecroppers and how this control, although seemingly focused on a work relationship, fends its way into the relationships between black men, black women, and black children. Through her vivid description of Copeland’ everyday lives, Walker illuminates a basic strategy of racism. Because it is so obvious, one often forget that the most effective way to control anyone is by the confusing his or her sex definition according to the norms of society.

The masculine impetus in this society manifests itself in forms of power and acquisition, phantom qualities to which neither Grange nor Brownfield Copeland have access. The female, according to Southern norms should present itself in image of passivity, chastity, and demure beauty and should receive from men the rewards of security, comfort, and respect, rewards that neither Margaret nor Mem Copeland can exhibit. Although physically grown, the black adults in this novel are never treated by the majority culture as men or women or even as boys or girls. They are seen as sexual beings without the human qualities necessary for sex definition, except in purely physical terms.

In this novel Walker covers three generation of Copeland family, she is capable to show how consistent and deep-rooted this strategy of racism is. By having one figure, the figure of Grange Copeland, persist throughout the generations span, Walker dramatizes the possibilities of changes. Through the eleven economical section of the novel, Walker mainly concentrates on society’s insistent, often solid attempt to control the psychological as well as the material conditions under which African-American struggles. She graphically lays out her patterns by tracing in the first half of
the novel, the degenerate effects of racism on the Copeland men, women and children
and by demonstrating the process of regeneration in the second half. Two elements
need to accept responsibility for one’s life, for self-definition, and the obvious fact that
much of it, at least in this time and place, is beyond one’s control which form the axis
of the novel’s cyclical pattern.

In the grip of physical and psychological oppression, the men of South
want to flee to North. To Southern blacks, the North represents some kind of
Promised Land, “expecting those streets paved with gold… expecting to be
welcomed” (TLGC 191). But the North has got its own sharecropping system as
the death of Brownfield’ northern uncle reveals. Still the land of north is a dream
of hope for the Copeland men, who at least are mobile if nothing else. Grange
deserts his wife and son to go north where he believes he will escape white
people’s control. Ironically, his experience in New York is a depressing repetition
of his existence in the south:

He was, perhaps, no longer regarded merely as a “thing”, what was
even more cruel to him was that to the people he met and passed
daily he was not even in existence! The South had made him
miserable, with nerve endings raw from continual surveillance from
contemptuous eyes, but they knew he was there. Their very disdain
proved it. The North put him into solitary confinement where he
had to manufacture his own hostile stares in order to see himself…
Each day he had to say his name to himself over and over again to
shut out the silence. (TLGC 192)
All aspects of life in both places are rigidly controlled by whites: “He found that whenever he went white were in control; they ruled New York as they did Georgia; Harlem as they did poontang street” (TLGC 140). Although both environments pose severe threats to his humanity, Grange finally chooses the South over the North because he is humanly visible to Southerners, whereas Northern society is completely blind to him. Although Southern whites regard blacks with “contemptuous eyes” which distort their vision, they at least focus upon blacks as human beings; the white Northerners Grange meets would reduce blacks to complete anonymity.

The young Brownfield, whose entire life is a frightening extension of southern values and lives in a condition of nearly paralysis, sharecropping threatens him with “shadow of eternal bondage” (TLGC 49) and his marriage soon becomes “another link the chain that hold him to the land” (50). Even though Brownfield had believed that his life would be different from his fathers, after twenty years he finds himself caught in the same web, like his father he wants to go North. Although he shows some signs as a young man freeing himself by attempting to moves out of the south, “his dreams to go north… died early” (TLGC 55) and he is content to accept his place in Southern society, “he fitted himself to the slot in which he found himself” (TLGC 59). This extreme passivity gradually erodes his spirit until he becomes a pathological figure intent on destroying his wife and children when they display any signs of rejecting the static roles which southern society imposes in them. *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is centered in the Walker’s double vision, her penetrating awareness of a racist society that surrounds black life in the south and her reflexive desire to escape from that world, but they can’t escape from it.
Suffering deprivations foisted upon the black people by white bosses, they are still significantly the victims of cruelties inflicted upon each other, cruelty that emanates from a profound lack of self-respect, fostered by whites and blacks alike, powerfully destructive despair. The worst results of racism in the south have been to subvert the basic human relationships among black men, women, and children and to destroy their individual psyche. Vexed with the sharecropping system, the Copeland men try to escape from it. But Grange and Brownfield know that it would be madness to believe that they could defeat the sharecropping system. Knowing what their society denies, that they are men, the Copeland males try to free themselves first by working hard, when this fails, they hate themselves for their impotence, their inability to fulfill the masculine urge to power. Finally, they use whatever power they feel they have, primarily their power over their women in a destructive way.

Their masculine urge is blocked and therefore turns in on itself. So Grange abandons his family and goes north where he learns the harshness of invisibility and Brownfield marry a sweet, virginal woman who had a girlhood brimming with hope. Margaret and Mem at first believe as do their husbands that love, kindness, fortitude, orderliness, they can create and maintain a good home. The wives are programmed to be demure and pretty, to plant flowers be chaste. They believe in the definition of woman dictated by the society. Neither Margaret nor Mem is emotionally prepared to understand and cope with their reality so when the rewards do not materialize, when in fact, they are abused and blamed by their men for their failures, the wives believe they have not done their part well.
Depressed by their condition, Margaret and Grange fight as if to preserve some part of the feeling of being alive. Crushed by the deadly labor of her days, and the neglect of her husband, the kind submissive Margaret becomes, “a wild woman looking for frivolous things, her heart’s good times in the transient embrace of strangers” (TLGC 20). In spite of her amorous adventures, she believes that she is at fault; she blames herself, without knowing what she can do, for everything, especially for not being able to deliver husband from his lot in life. So when Grange leaves her, Margaret accepts the responsibility for his failure and the pain of her loss, “she was curled up in a lonely sort of way, away from her child, as if she had spent the last moments on her knees” (TLGC 21).

Inevitability of fate of the race casts its shadow on simple joy and hopeful of African- American life. Brownfield chooses a wife much like his memories of his mother before she becomes a wild woman. When he first meets her, Mem is a school teacher, plump and quiet with demure slant eyes. In their beginning of their relationship she tries to teach Brownfield how to read; he feels she can help him to rise above his ignorance. At first she is for him a lady, “the pinnacle of his achievement in extricating himself from evil and the devil and aligning himself with love” (TLGC 49). In the fashion of hopeful young man, Brownfield tells Mem on their wedding day: “we ain’t always going to be stuck down here, honey, don’t you worry” (TLGC 49). She trusts him but unceasing labor with no chance of reward is a cesspool they cannot get out of it:
Over the years they reached, what they would have called when they were married, an impossible and unbelievable decline. Brownfield beat his once lovely wife now regularly, because it made him feel, briefly, good. Every Saturday night he beat her, trying to pin the blame for his failure on her by imprinting it on her face; and she, inevitably, repaid him by becoming a haggard automatous witch, beside whom even Josie looked well-preserved. (TLGC 55)

Mem’s response to her husband’s abuse is not quite the same as Margaret’s. She begins to deteriorate; she loses the school speech and the plump beauty that Brownfield had coveted, “Her mildness became stupor; then her stupor became horror, desolation and at last hatred” (TLGC). Framed by the children she bears, those who live and the many who die, she wants to find a door but cannot. The novel makes its obvious that she cannot act because she does not believe or understand what is happening to her. This is the inevitable fate that white impose upon the African- American men and women.

Walker shows how racism is capable of distorting the individual’s relationship to his own kin and kith because he is encouraged to blame everything on the white folks not accept responsibility for his own actions. Mem becomes so desperate in her struggle for survival and stability, in her engulfing desire to have a house for her children that she is willing to confront her man and if necessary move her out of the way. In one bold stroke, she is forced to redefine her definition of herself as woman. Brownfield receives an offer from his white boss, Captain
Davis, to go to work for his son, Mr. J.L., who of course would provide the sharecroppers with a shack. Brownfield does not want to work for Mr. J.L., but he cannot refuse captain Davis: “Yassur” he said finally, hypnotized by the old man standing in the sun. This is reminded him his first childhood experiencing of the white boss as the man who turned his father into stone.

Brownfield must tell his family that he has committed them to work for Mr. J.L., and he forces his weakness on them. This scene focuses the image of Brownfield as an animal. In being unable to refuse Captain Davis’s offer, his wife and her children perceive him as less than human. When Brownfield was eating Ornatte could not think of him as anything but a hog. In fact, Brownfield himself acts as if he too has come to believe this:

When her father was eating Ornatte could not think of him as anything but a hog.

A shiver of revulsion ran through his wife. “He’s just like a old dog…” (TLGC 109)

“I ain’t never going to marry nobody like him,” Daphne swore to herself, watching the big ugly hands that smell always of cows and sour milk”. (TLGC 110)

Mem is determined to make the move, not so much for herself, but for her children, who, she believes, must now be her primary concern. Brownfield may also want to believe this but he is internal conflict between his wife’s determination and the wishes of his white boss. Davis informs Brownfield that the deal has been made. As usual, the white man treats Brownfield like a chattel; as
usual, Brownfield, although angry, responds obsequiously. Mem informs Brownfield that not only she got a house in town but she has got a job there too. In the space of one day, Brownfield’s manhood has been insulted by his white boss and his wife, as result he has murdered his wife.

Deformation of African-American masculine identity under racism, it also renders the dehumanizing effects of African-American women’s victimization: Mem is likened to a cow, a pig, a gorilla. Mem’s story most clearly demonstrates how sexual oppression reduces the African-American women to a condition of silence, absence, and grotesque sub humanity. In Brownfield’s presence, Mem is usually, “so silent it was as if she were not breathing or thinking or even being” (TLGC 130). After she dies Brownfield cannot call her image to mind because “there had never been a self to her” (TLGC 228). Mem’s absence directly stems from her husbands’ violent and abusive treatment of her; it is Brownfield’s frequent beating of her that “reduce(s) her to nothing” (TLGC 133). Mem’s ugliness as signified by her falling hair and skeletal frame, are also ultimately, traced back to Brownfield. As Mem tells him in a rare moment of self-possession, “You beat the ugly into me” (TLGC 136).

Brownfield is too afraid of his boss to challenge him in any way. So he takes out his feeling of anger on Mem. But Mem recites the long year of hardship and abuse that she has endured because of their insistence on holding onto the south’s definition of women and man. But Brownfield does not hear her words; he only sees himself as trapped between crazy wife and his all powerful boss. In attempts to get Mem to put down the gun to get her to accept her state, he threatens
her with his ultimate authority, the big boss, Captain Davis. Mem’s insistence that Captain Davis does not see him or any other black man as a man, and her refusal to accept Brownfield’s abnegation of responsibility for his acts, assaults Brownfield’s definition of himself. In order to help him regain his manhood, she forcefully shows him his lack of manliness. But Mem has no choice, been murdered by his husband. African-American women’s oppression under their own men is the cumulative oppression of the racial discrimination.

The novel leaves no doubt that Brownfield’s sexual victimization of Mem is a displaced effect of his own racial victimization. As a sharecropper for white landowners who treats him and his family like workhorses, Brownfield suffers from senses of economic importance that motivates his violent treatment of African-American women. Like Cholly in the Bluest Eye, Brownfield beats his wife in order to certify his manhood, to prove that he is “still the man that wears pants in this outfit” (TLGC 87). Like Cholly, who holds the African American woman responsible for his disempowerment, Brownfield displaces his rage into Mem: “his rage could and did blame everything, everything on her” (TLGC 79).

While pinpointing racism as the root cause of African American women’s predicament, The Third Life of Grange Copeland does not quite absolve African American men’s criminality and exploitation of their women. In the novel, Walker argues that one form of oppression cannot condone another: “The white man’s oppression of me will never excuse my oppression of you, whether you are man, woman, child animal or tree” (TLGC 345). Like Toni Morrison’s Sula, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, refuses to see the image of African American men as
victims who cannot help but transfer to African American women, the effects of their own brutalization. Just as Sula demystifies Jude’s narrative of himself as a helpless victim of racism, so Mem rejects Brownfield saying, “how hard it is to be a black man down here” (TLGC 136). If Brownfield and Grange, in his first life, fail to attain a sense of manhood, it is not so much because they are complicit in their own oppression as well as in the oppression of African American women.

Walker’s first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is deep in its penetrating concentration on the Copeland family in the south, her second novel *Meridian* expands the theme of a procession of generation to the history of black people in the South up to a peak period in the 1960s. Both Walker novels examine the impact of social conditions have on personal growth difference between the two is as instructive as the similarities. In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is on the necessity to accept responsibility for one’s life, despite overwhelming social restrictions. *Meridian* explores the relationship between a movement for social change and the personal growth of its participants.

Alice’s second novel, *Meridian*, a novel of idea, for Walker attempts to let its constructive elements develop out of her analysis of the history and philosophy of Southern blacks, who were the foundation of civil rights movements. It begins with a point of time in seventies when the strategy of non-violent resistance is no longer widespread, and the dramatic demonstrations of the Civil Rights Movement have captured attention. In this novel, the characteristics of an individual human personality relate to the political, racial, and sexual composition of a peculiar society. As a novelist, Walker cannot give the entire history of this country, in relation to the issues of sexism and racism.
In this novel, she analyses the how political movements affect personal lives and how personal lives are the marrow of political movements. Meridian, the protagonists of this novel, struggles for personal transformation as an alternative to the political movements of the 1960s particularly those that merely reproduced existing power structures. As Karen Stein:

The novel points out that the Civil Rights Movements often reflected the oppressiveness of patriarchal capitalism. Activists merely turned political rhetoric to their own ends while continuing to repress spontaneous individuality. To overcome this destructiveness, Walker reaches for a new definition of revolution. Her hope for a just society inheres not merely in political change, but in personal transformation. (130)

Even the revolutionary cadre that Meridian tries to join insists that she performs an authorized speech, declaring that she would both die and kill for the revolution. When she silently considers whether she could kill another human being, Truman, Civil Rights Activist and other African American students become hostile towards her and concerned with a question, “Will you kill for the Revolution?” (M 23). A positive answers to this question meant entry into or exclusion from many circles. Something occurred among African American students and intellectual after the major protest demonstrations have left so many of them to wonder if allowing oneself to be hit on the head accomplished very much, and if volunteering to suffer is not weak posture.
Meridian’s essential characteristic is her resistance to accepting the easy solution, her refusal to speak the word without living its meaning. She warns those people who succumb to group pressure, not to accept what they do not believe; for the simple reason that many who simply would not believe, could not say ‘yes’ without fussing, fighting, and questioning.

Meridian’s life shaped by her past: the children of the South; the face of her mother in church as she insists on Meridian saying the word ‘yes’ and be saved; her father’s perennial question about the plight of the Indian; the collective soul of African American that she hears in music. Captured by these memories, she cannot say ‘yes’. Instead, she goes back to the South to remain close to the people until she can make such a decision and mean it. She resolves to stay within the action of the sixties until she can formulate effective action for the seventies. By using time as a circular movement rather than a chronological pattern, the author is able to connect the parts of Meridian’s life that are related to her cultural milieu, as well as to the nature of the Civil Rights Movement in which she is part.

Walker’s analysis of Meridian’s lapse into an early marriage is as much history as the Saxon students’ reaction to President Kennedy’s funeral on television, an event that involved millions of viewers. Throughout the novel, the patterns of events that show how personal and public history interlock to make up the collective process of the sixties.

Walker uses the subjects that elucidate the concepts of wholeness and fragmentation both are not only related to Meridian’s past and present but also to the Civil Rights Movement. Meridian insists that to be whole, there must be unity of body and mind. The central action of the Civil Rights Movement is related to
the body’s subjugation to the protest of the mind. The Movement attempts to demonstrate this oneness. The process of putting one’s body on the line and of resisting oppression without inflicting violence are crucial to the Movement’s spirit—the desire to change without destroying, to maintain the integration of body and spirit, to resist separation and alienation.

Meridian’s quest reaches its peak when she understands that “it is the song of the people, transformed by the experience of each generation that holds them together, and if any part of it is lost the people suffer and are without soul” (M 76). It is significant that the realization of Meridian’s takes place within the context of social change, as the people come together to honor and remember one of their sons who had struggled for their collective freedom. According to Walker:

There was a reason for the ceremony she had witnessed in the church. And, as she pursued this reason in her thoughts, it came to her. The people in this church were saying to the red-eyed man that his son had not died for nothing, and that if his son should come again they would protect his life with their own. S“Look”, they were saying, “we are slow to awaken to the notion that we are only as other women and men, and even slow to move in anger, but we are gathering ourselves to fight for and protect what your son fought for on behalf of us. If you will let us weave your story and your son’s life and death into what we already know—into the songs, the sermons, the “brother and sister” —we will soon be so angry we cannot help but move. Understand this, they were saying, “the church (and Meridian knew they did not mean simply “church” as
in Baptist, Methodist or what not, but rather communal spirit, togetherness, righteous convergence), “the music, the form of worship that has always sustained us, the kind of ritual you share with us, there are the ways to transformation that we know. We want to take this with us as far as we can.” (M 268-69)

In this small country church, Meridian sees the totality of experiences that the Civil Rights Movement has been for black people. As they have always done, the African Americans have incorporated into their ritual the history of the movement, outward signs that indicate the depth of their experience, the measure of their transformation. So the words of the old songs have changed: the minister speaks in a voice like Martin Luther King about the politics of the nation rather than the omnipotence of the God; the traditional painting of Jesus is replaced by a painting of African American called B.B. The music rises, incorporating all, articulating that which cannot be articulated and manifesting the continuing constancy of the entire African American tradition.

It is through the African American ritual of constancy and change that Meridian comes to know that “she would kill, before she allowed anyone to murder the man’s son again” (M 182), for she realizes that in this hallowed setting, the contemplation of murder would receive the incredible spiritual work necessary to transform it into righteousness. Her realization not only frees her, it gives her health. Her body and spirit are fused in this moment of vision, a moment in which she is no longer apart, no longer alone, but part of a whole that fuses the personal, the political, the spiritual. Such a vision, rooted in ritual, is given only to those who
would pass through the terror of conflict to see that the life of all is their life and that their life is the life of all. She believes that her black folk identity is shaped out of the entire African American consciousness.

Early in Meridian, Walker links the contrasting strategies of silence to the politics of racism and patriarchy. Walker crystallizes the oppression inherent in Southern segregation practices, as grown white men rush to prevent a group of black children from seeing what everyone acknowledge to be a worthless freak show, a ludicrous carnival attraction. She also examines patriarchy’s ability to “kill” women, using the Marilene O’Shey exhibit as a visual reminder, as well as a parody of society’s idolization of dead women as the perfect women. Chicokema is a town so segregated that even events as trivial as a carnival exhibit require separate days for white and black attendance. Chicokemans avoid labeling their customs as racially biased by basing their segregation on occupation. People who work in the guano plant must be sectioned off from the rest of the town. But the distinction is clearly racial, since the plant employs most of the black population and the segregation extends their families: “… the folks who don’t work in the guano plant don’t draw the line at the mamas and papas,” “explains a Chicokema resident, “they throw in the children too. Claims the smell of guano don’t wash off” (M 20).

Walker uses the image of music throughout the novel which connects the subjects of wholeness, so the concept of guilt encompasses the motifs of fragmentation. Because the mind and the body, the land and its people, are separated from each other; natural basic human relationships are poisoned by the thorns of guilt. Throughout the novel, the relationship between mother and child, man and woman, are distorted by the inability of society to see all life as sacred.
In this novel the fragility of life is compressed into the faces of the many African American children, who like mist appear and reappear through the novel. Their melodic faces connect the bits and pieces of the South’s complexity and all of these children have in common is the precariousness of their existence. They may be aborted before they even have a chance to live; they may be given away; they may be assaulted or killed. Like the Wile Chile, they may be motherless children or like the child-mother in ending, they may be children who kill their own children. Alongside their tentative child bodies stand the seemingly substantial figures of black mothers buttressed by the monumental myth of black motherhood, a myth that is based on the true stories of sacrifice black mothers had to commit for their children. Walker chronicled the history of the mothers, and their history in turn organizes her analysis of the southern milieu. The history of black southerners is an essential piece of fabric in this quilt but not as dates of battles or even accomplishment of singular important black figures but as the natural process of generation and regeneration inherent on all forms of life.

As a hated people living in a land opposed to their regeneration, blacks by their very existence elicited monumental suffering and sacrifice from each other. At the peak of this sacrificial hierarchy stands the relationship between the parents and child, the paradox of life-giving guilt. In giving life to children, who are both unwanted and unappreciated by the society. Walker’s mothers also have to give up much of their own lives to sustain their children’s. The children know they survive only because their parents committed acts of extraordinary suffering. In the novel, the relationship among Meridian, her mother, and her maternal ancestors is the major, although not only, extension through which motif of guilt is explored. Along with life, the children receive from their ancestors a heritage of sacrifice and suffering, a heritage that they feel they cannot always maintain.
The thorns of guilt are woven not only in the fabric of Meridian’s life but into the heritage of African American as well. That heritage contains within it the quality of powerlessness as well as strength. Thus many would erase aspects of their history from their memory even before they would understand them. In the novel, Walker uses the story of the large magnolia tree known as The Sojourner, located in the center of Meridian’s college campus, is also central to many subversive tales. This tree has planted on the ripped-out tongue of the slave storyteller Louvenia:

Louvenia’s tongue was clipped out at the root. Choking on blood, she saw her tongue grounded under the heel of Master Saxon. Mutely, she pleaded for it, because she knew the curse of her native land. Without one’s tongue in one’s mouth or in a special spot of one’s own choosing, the singer in one’s soul was lost forever, to grunt and snort through eternity like a pig.

Louvenia’s was kicked toward her in a hail of sand. It was like a thick pink rose petal, bloody at the root. In her own cabin she smoked it until it was as soft and pliable as leather. On a certain day, when the sun turned briefly black, she buried it under a scrawny magnolia tree on the Saxon plantation.

Even before her death, forty years later the tree had outgrown all the others around it. Other slaves believed it possessed magic. They claimed the tree could talk, make music, was sacred to birds and possessed the power to obscure vision. Once in its branches, a hiding slave could not be seen. (M 85)
Louvenia’s tragedy is transformed through the process of nature, into beauty, for although the Sojourner stands as a reminder of brutal slavery, it stands nevertheless resplendent in its flowering.

The pervasive feelings of guilt as well as its cause, the philosophical perception of the universe as fragmented, are countered by the attempts of the person Meridian. Meridian is able to pursue her quest, to understands the necessity for it because she has been intensely affected by the Movement, and paradoxically, that thrust for social change existed precisely because persons like Meridian, who made it up, come from a tradition that saw creation as one, as inhabited with spirit. The truth that Meridian learns through her quest, the massage that she passes into Truman, at the end of the novel, fuses the motifs of guilt. Walker comments on this aspect of life in her own style:

there is water in the world for us
bought by our friends
through the rock of mother and god
vanishes into sand
and we, cast out alone
to heal
and re-create
ourselves.
i want to put an end to guilt
i want to put an end to shame

whatever you have done my sister

(my brother)

know I wish to forgive you

love you it is not the crystal stone

of our innocence

that circles us

not the tooth of our purity

that bites bloody our hearts. (M 290)

At the end of the novel, the characters learn to put an end to the guilt and shame, which the whites have created upon them. Throughout the novel, they struggle for equality and freedom, and when once they realize that they have got immense power in themselves, they fight back the white rulers and get relieved from the shame and guilt of being submissiveness and subordinate to the white race.

In this novel, the description of Meridian Hill is an exploration of the ways in which sexism and racism have affected the people in America. In addition, Walker’s analysis of their personal lives indicates why African American women, their men, and white women are major actors in the Civil Rights Movement. All the characters of this novel, both major and minor, interact with each other, revealing their common and particular interest. In union, they all light up Meridian’s search for wholeness, for their particular actions are alternatives to her
distinctly difficult quest for freedom, and racial and gender equality. Eventually all their paths lead back to her, as well as to the ideas that lie unanswered at the core of the movement for equal justice.

In order to survive in the white dominated world, the African American practices contradictions. The fluid contradiction that Truman and many other black intellectuals like him face is that the people they sought to save are too narrow, too ordinary, and too provincial for them to live with. As an African American, he is also seen by the American society as a deviant, in contrast with the prevailing definition that a man is worldly, powerful, and clever. Truman, however, is a thinker, an activist, and an artist, who not only rejects society’s definition of him but also the life that it assigns him. One way in which he can transform the world’s definition of him is by being as unlike an African American man as he can be, while being the epitome of the group.

Hence his continuous mouthing of the French language and his playing on the thrill that his blackness, his difference evoke in liberal whites. It is as if Truman falls in love with his deviancy in society because it makes him exceptional when that uniqueness can be cast in a positive or at least a glamorous glow rather than in the stark light of racism. He does not want to be the white, nor does he like be an ordinary African American. Hence he rejects all aspects of black culture like religion, and black women. Truman gets totally corrupted by the white’s life style and acquires an assumption that only through his contradiction (falsehood), he can overcome the oppression and survive the white dominated world.
Meridian is Walker’s most explicit political novel. It encompasses the history of oppression of the black people in America, as well as the possibility of change on a societal level. The analysis of societal forces and their philosophical underpinnings are implicitly explored. Thus Meridian, the character, is a synthesis of the many aspects of black southern heritage. The change that she undergoes is not only personal but also political. It is set within the tradition of resistance that is as much a part of that heritage as is oppression. In bringing together individuals like Meridian, Lynne, and Truman, the Civil Rights Movement is the impetus for personal change, and therefore for deep and lasting social change. Though the novel Meridian coils upon the Civil Rights Movement, it never gives any solution at the end, as it is a continuing process rather than an adventure that can end in a neat resolution.

The Color Purple problematizes nationalism, in both its Anglo- and African American incarnations. Most strikingly, the Anglo-American brand of national pride is lampooned. Like Meridian, Celie and Nettie first encounter the concept and the myth of American national identity as a fundamental element of basic literacy disseminated national by public schools. But unlike Meridian, Celie is never fooled or impressed by the nation’s self-mystification. She reports:

The way you know who discover America, Nettie say, is think bout cucumbers. That what Columbus sound like. I learned all about Columbus in first grade, but look like he the first thing I forgot. She say Columbus come here in boats call the Neater, the Peter, the Santomareater. Indians so nice to him he force a bunch of’ em back home with him to wait on the queen. (TCP 19)
The Color Purple opens its discourse on the problems of African American national-historical identity by revealing the irrelevancy of the classic American origin to a matter of garden-variety which not only indicates the vital importance of oral and folk transmission to less literate communities like the one in which Celie lives, but also suggests the crucial role oral transmission plays in the reproduction of the nation itself, from generation to generation. Elsewhere, for instance, Shug and Celie’s rambling discussion of the world during World War II, ranges among subjects such as the war, U.S. Government’s theft of land from an “Indian tribe”, Hollywood, national, and local scandals.

It is perhaps to show with clarity the erasing or negating effects of American racism on a contested subculture that The Color Purple contains number of brief narratives about the fate of Native Americans. These tales exhibit the American ability to absorb symbolically a set of cultural differences it claims to honor; they also provide a stunning warning about what happens to cultures that neglect to witness their history. The Color Purple, not only reveal the family’s private or internal structures but its social and historical placement. Behind “Pa’s” story, as Celie discovers, is the story of her biological father’s lynching and murder.

Her third novel The Color Purple telegraphs traumatic transformation of Celie’s family history by emphasizing Nettie’s generic departure from standard epistolary form to the fairy tale. Nettie writes her, “once upon a time, there was well-to-do farmers who owned his own property near town. Our town, Celie” (TCP 157). Celie’s biological father, (who like her mother is never named in the book)
has been lynched. “And so, one night, the man’s store was burned down, his smithy destroyed, and the man and his brothers dragged out of their homes in the middle of the night and hanged” (TCP 157). Unlike celie after her rape, the lynched father cannot speak, act desire for himself. Moreover, as “pa” tells celie, “Lynched people don’t git no marker” (TCP 165). This lynching, and its resistance to representation, transform the cultural politics of the novel.

The surprising emergence of racial violence, the murder of three black men by an indeterminate group Nettie calls, “the white merchants” (TCP 157) induces Celie’s second semiotic collapse. The first collapse, which opens the novel, emerges from Celie’s confusion about what is “happening” to her in the present tense. Celie’s second collapse under the weight of painful knowledge is unconnected to the facts of her contemporary situation; rather its effects reach back to her origin, and in so doing completely destabilize her identity. This crisis is evident in Celie’s almost catatonic announcement in which, uncharacteristically all her verbs are disrupted, “My daddy lynch. My mama crazy. All her little half-brothers and sisters no kin to me. My children not my sisters and brothers. Pa not pa” (TCP 160).

In this revised autobiographical tale, racism succeeds sexism as the cause of social violence in the narrative. The switch from a sexual to a racial code, each provides a distinct language and a distinct logic of social relations, releases into the text different kinds of question about celie’s identity. The new information challenges what Celie mistakenly thinks about the horrific and systematic sexual violence. It is actually the racial violence, which leads to the sexual harassment.
For Celie and her biological father, race functions much as gender does for the sisters, not as a site of positive identification for the victim but as an excuse for the oppressor’s intricate style of culture persecution. Lynching, in Walker’s narrative, has a structural equivalence to Celie’s rape, in its violent reduction of the victim to biological sign, an example of sub-humanity. This mode of vigilante white justice was a common treat to Southern blacks through the 1930s.

In *The Color Purple*, logic of equivalence is installed in the narrative that in effect makes race a synonym for scandalous, transgressive African American sexuality. Both in the conventional link between racial and sexual violence, and in the novel, gender difference take on the pressure of justifying and representing racial oppression. The act of lynching affects a transfer at the moment of brutal contact from one, the racial system of oppression to another, the sexual.

One effect of the origin tale is to revise Celie’s comprehension of the paternal conditions of her production and another simultaneous effect to repress the scene of history insofar as the extra-familial elements of social relations are concerned. Her father’s tale reveals a factor of driving the transformation of social life and of signification. It reveals the white men’s economic aim to liquidate the father and his two brothers:

> And as (the father) did so well farming and everything he turned his hand to prospered, he decided to open a store, and try his sluck selling dry goods as well, well, his store did so well that he run talked his two brothers into helping him run it… Then the white merchants began to get together and complain that this store was taking all the black business away from them… This would not do.  

(TCP 157)
The store the black men owned took business away from the white men, who then interfered with the free market by lynching their black competitors. Thus class relations are shown to motivate lynching. Lynching is the act of violence white men performed to racialize to invoke the context of black inferiority and subhumanity of the victim; the aura of sexual transgression is also always produced around the lynched by the lynchers, white men guarding the turf of their racial and sexual hegemony. The story of Celie’s original parentage marks the first time in her represented life that specifically racist practices come close to hurting her. In *The Color Purple* the burden of operating within a racist social context, which include working through the oppressive collaboration of racism and sexism, is generally deflected from Celie’s tale onto events in the economic and cultural marketplace.

*The Color Purple*’s strategy of inversion, represented in its elevation of female experience over great patriarchal events, had indeed aimed to critique the unjust practices of racism and sexism that violate the subject’s complexity, reducing her to a generic biological sign. But the model of personal and national identity with which the novel leaves the uses of fairy tale explanations of social relations to represents itself; this fairy tale embraces America for providing the African American nation with the right and the opportunity to own land, to participate in the free market, and to profit from it. In the novels’ own terms, American capitalism has contradictory effects. On one hand, capitalism veils its operations by employing racism, using the pseudo natural discourse of race to reduce the economic competitor to a subhuman object. In Celie’s parental history, *The Color Purple* portrays the system of representation characteristic of capital relations that creates the situation of nationlessness for African American.
The racial problem in *The Color Purple* falls mainly on the Sofia Butler, who joins the major’s household as a maid under conditions more overtly racist. The voice of sexual and racial resentment, she expresses her desire to kill her sexual and racial oppressors. She is the first woman Celie knows who refuses to accept to both the patriarchal and the racist demand that the black woman demonstrates her objections to her oppressors. But the mythic test of her strength takes place in her refusal to enter the servitude of double discourse demanded of blacks by white culture.

She says, “Hell no” (TCP 81) to the mayor’s wife’s “complimentary” (TCP 81) suggestion that Sofia could come to work as her maid and then Sofia answers the mayor’s scolding slap on her face with her own powerful punch. The mayor’s wife treats African American like they are merely animals to buy and fuss over. For instance, “all those children, says mayors wife...say, and such strong white teef...Miss Millie finger the children some more...” (TCP 81-82). She is examining their teeth the way one would a horse. But for Sofia effort to stay honest in the face of the white demand for black hypocrisy, Sofia gains incarceration in a set of penal institutions that work by a logic similar to that of lynching to racialize the scene of class struggle in the public sphere, and to deploy prejudice against “women” once behind the walls of the prison and the household.

The social oppression of African Americans to participate in a discourse that proclaims their unworthiness is resisted by Sofia, and then performed on Sofia’s behalf by Squeak. She knows well how to be properly submissive. But faced with Sofia’s crisis Squeak subversively uses her expertise in proper feminine
self-negating hypocrisy in her supplication for special treatment to the warden of Sofia’s prison. The warden is conventionally knows as her cousin, since he is the illegitimate father of three of Squeak’s siblings. This sloppy familial euphemism leads to a comedy of double and quadruple talk that includes Squeak asking for the opposite of what the warden mistakenly thinks she wants. She wants Sofia released from the prison to serve the rest of her sentence as the mayor’s maid. She tells the warden that Sofia is not suffering enough in prison, and that to the most exquisite torture would be being a white woman’s maid; he fornicates with Squeak, and releases Sofia to the mayor’s household.

The warden’s liberties with Squeak, so different in representational mode than the young Celie’s rapes, also serve as the diacritical mark that organizes Squeak’s insertion into the “womanist” order having exposed herself to sexual, racial, and political abuse in the name, Mary Agnes. She also earns the right to sing. She wins these privileges by learning to lie, and to produce wordplay while seeming to be an unconscious speaker of the enslaved tongue. Lauren Berlant rightly says:

Squeak attains the social mastery in learning to ironize the already doubled double talk that marks the discursive situation of the female African American subject in the white patriarchal public sphere. (220)

Most of the characters in the novel do not seem bothered by racist insults they endure, but on the other hand, Nettie is bothered by the Jim Crow train she took to New York:
Early on, Nettie writes of her work as a contribution to “the uplift of black people everywhere” (TCP 115). In subsequent letters, she not only expresses concern about racism and sexism but reveals that she has communicated these concerns to the children. When she explains to Olivia that the Olinka people “don’t believe in education girls”, the child concludes that they are “like white people at home who don’t want colored people to learn” (TCP 133).

Although she has taught the children about racism in America, Nettie worries that they will be shocked at “the hatred if black people” and will not be able to manage the hostility towards them” (TCP 218). Like Claudia in *The Bluest Eye*, Nettie acknowledges the harm that comes from color prejudice within the black community and she worries about Adam’s wife, Tashi, who has very dark skin. Having read American magazines and noticed that blacks do not “truly admire black skinned people like herself…especially…black skinned black woman”, Tashi fears that, since she is very black and has “scarification marks on her cheeks”, Adam will be attracted by light-skinned women and desert her (TCP 235).
Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* complicates the classic model of colonized double consciousness by characterizing the body that houses the different modes of self-alienation. He feels blackness as yet another unsaturated site of identity. Rather than reading his fragmentation as the fragmentation of a whole, Fanon observes that inscription of the white parody of black culture, “I was battered down by tom-tom cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: ‘Sho’ good eating” (112) on the colonized black body creates a metonymic paradox. On his body the parts do not stand in for whole: nor do they add up to a whole. Further he adds:

What else could it be for me but an amputation and excision, a hemorrhage, that spattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. (112)

Body parts erupting blood, not red human blood but the black blood of a race and indelible ink of cultural sexuality, constitute him a priori as a mass of part, and objects with no relation to a whole.

Fanon speaks within the racist discursive context reproducing the white parody of black culture, which is surely the spirit in which Walker represents Harpo, the black parody of a white man (Harpo Marx) who compensates for his voicelessness with music, whose character is expressed in his feminine pathos as well as his pathetic aping of masculine pretensions. The tragic aphonic of Celie’s mother and the witty ironic repartee about uncle Tomming by Shug, Squeak, and Sofia reveal the even more complex negotiation required of women who aspire to legitimacy in the face of both sexism and racism.
Celie’s youthful masquerade as Shug in order to deflect her father’s sexual greed can also be read as a complex and contradictory message growing out of this kind of negating context. Blackness does not signify except from inside the negative space prepared for it by the history of white culture’s relation to black. The same general idea operates in gender relation as well for the African American woman making her way in the context of a double erasure.

The implicit context of a priori negation for African Americans that obtains in American culture undergoes a dramatic shift when Nettie’s African letters are read into the record. Nettie’s from Africa at first seem to provide an indigenous alternative history for black consciousness that reverses its traditional invisibility or debasement in the racist American context. To the missionaries, the mission to convert the Africans to Christianity seems specially authorized by a providential and historical allegiance of all Africans. Aware of the potential problem arising from cultural differences between missionaries and the objects of their attention, Samuel articulates the special privilege he, Corinne, and Nettie will enjoy in Africa:

Samuel… reminded us that there is one big advantage we have. We are not Europeans. We are black like Africans themselves. And that we and the Africans will be working for a common goal: the uplift of black people everywhere. (TCP 122)

Nettie records with awe how different the world looks to her from the point of view of African racial dominance: “Something struck in me, in my soul, Celie, like a large bell, and I just vibrated” (TCP 132). With amazement she witnesses
Americans in Harlem who worship Africa, not America. She reports with pride about an African American church in which God is black. At the same time, her letters describe the exploitation of the indigenous African people, (when English engineers casually eradicate the Olinka village in the process of turning the jungle into a rubber plantation, destroying the trees and substituting the traditional hut coverings of roof leaf with corrugated tin) and the ravages of European colonialism that destroys the art and culture of a whole community:

From Africa they have thousands of vases, jars, masks, bowls, baskets, statues--- and they are all so beautiful it is hard to imagine that the people who made them don’t still exist….Although Africans once had a better civilization than the European… for several centuries they have fallen on hard times…. And it is easy to forget that Africa’s ‘hard times’ were made harder by them. Millions and millions of Africans were captured and sold into slavery-you and me, Celie! And whole cities destroyed by slave catching wars. Today the people of Africa---having murdered or sold into slavery their strongest folks---are riddled by disease and sunk in spiritual and physical confusion. (TCP 145)

Yet Africa has been the source of their identity as Black people, as Nettie points to Africa folklore as the origin of many African American folktales, but she pinpoints the international slave trade as the means of this exchange.

The primary site of cultural contact between the missionaries and the Africans is pedagogical. This novel is reiterated in the missionaries’ retraining if the tribal peoples in the superior and Christian practices and materials of Western
cultures. The event that clarifies how politically useful the missions are to the European imperialists, standing as agents or prophets of spiritual progress, is the coming of the big road. Generous in their estimation of human nature, the Olinka refuse to understand that the theory of property and propriety under which they live is irrelevant to the Western juridical code. Most natives assume that the superpower force that cuts through the jungle builds a road to the tribe; they admire Western technology, viewing it as they view roofleaf, something nature makes in abundance for the well-being of its devoted people.

But Samuel, Corinne, and Nettie are no more sophisticated in their understanding of the ways of civilized culture than the natives, which is one instance where the pan-national racial identification between American and African blacks proves sadly accurate. Too late, the missionaries realize that the road threatens their mission; desperately, they exhaust their resources trying to protect the tribe. The only survivors are the tribal citizens who can read well enough to see their death sentence in Western culture and join the mbeles, the underground group of radicalized Olinkans.

Samuel could have foreseen the failure of his mission. Through his life story, he reveals the shallowness with which he understood his own cultural privilege. He tells Nettie of the time in his youth that he encountered W.E.B.Du Bois, whose impatience with the pretensions of missionary culture could have taught Samuel that Pan-Africanism requires material transformation of the techniques of power before a new spirit would have any place to grasp:
Madame, he said, when Aunt Theodosia finished her story and flashed her famous medal around the room, do you realize King Leopold cut the hands off workers who, in the opinion of his plantation overseers, did not fulfill their rubber quota? Rather than cherish that medal, Madame, you should regard it as a symbol of your unwitting complicity with this despot who worked to death and brutalized and eventually exterminated thousands and thousands of African peoples. (TCP 214)

Like the lynched body, the black hands here not only serves as a figure of racial justice for white, but also becomes a kind of rebus for the metonymic hand of capitalism, in which the worker is and economic appendage reduced to the disembodiment of his or her alienation. This kind of symbolism was on Du Bois’s mind in the period after World war, I when “lying treaties, rivers of rum, murder, assassination, mutilation, rape, and torture have marked the progress of English man, German, Frenchman, and Belgian on the Dark Continent” (363). The Pan-African movement, organized by Du Bois to counter the European exploitation of Africa’s plentiful resources, took up the question of Belgium in 1919 and 1921 much as these hands take up the question of slavery. Du Bois saw in the capitalist infiltration of Africa the origins of world racism against blacks: color became in the world though synonymous with inferiority, ‘Negro’ lost its capitalization, and Africa was another name for bestiality and barbarism.

The link between the theory and practices of capitalism and of religion or spirit is the key to the novel’s reformulation African American nationalist politics and consciousness. Walker tracing the pernicious effects of the national-
patriarchal and capitalist domination of personal and natural resources in this novel. The ramifications of the peculiar kind of racism produced by capitalism led Du Bois to try to organize all of the African nations of the world to create a people that would fight for its right to national self-determination, for the inevitable democratization of capital, and for the eradication of racist representations that have masked the capitalist pilfering of Pan-African resources.

The missionaries’ disillusioned removal to the United States signals a transformation of their relation to both African and American nationalism. Samuel does not go as far as Du Bois did in attacking the origin of contemporary racism in Western relations of capital, even though Nettie’s letters register the information that local traditions of land and cultural ownership are completely subsumed to the absentee ownership of the non-African nations feeding off the continent’s wealth. Instead, Samuel sees his failure to understand his unwitting complicity with colonialist practices as a flaw in his theory of spirit. The mission’s total powerlessness to prevent the destruction of the culture they had come to save provokes Samuel and Nettie to redefine what it means to serve God:

God is different to us now, after all these years in Africa. More spirit than ever before, and more internal. Most people think he has to look like something or someone—a roof leaf or Christ—but we don’t. And not being tied to what God looks like, frees us. (TCP 233)

_The Color Purple_ accurately depicts the historical origin of many African tribes or nation in the reorganization of older societies decimated by colonization. At the conclusion of the novel suggests the feeling of racial identity can transcend national boundaries, but this novel does not give any assurance that the boundaries between races can be successfully negotiated.
History is certainly written by people in positions of power, and therefore principally by men. The history of the world including Africa is by and large story made up by white males. Nevertheless, history is not just a storytelling, there are certain brute realities woven together, which cannot be willfully ignored. Africa has a past that neither the white male historian nor Ms Walker can simply invent. *The Temple of My Familiar* is an ambitious novel recording 500,000 years of human history, eschewing a conventional linear plot structure and three-dimensional characterizations in favor of multiple settings and narrative voices, and abrupt shifts between past and present.

The novel’s central character, Miss Lissie, is the goddess from primeval Africa who has been incarnated hundreds of times throughout the history. She befriends Suwelo, a narcissistic university professor whose marriage is threatened by his need to dominate and sexually exploit his wife. Through a series of conversations with Miss Lissie and her friend, Hal, Suwelo learns of Miss Lissie’s innumerable lives and, experience from the prehistoric world in which humans and animals lived in harmony under a matriarchal society, to slavery in the United States and regains his capability to love, nurture, and respect himself and others.

The plot of *The Temple Of My Familiar* is interrupted almost immediately by accounts of nearly forgotten South African American slavery of the recent past, and by stories of female power from the lost “dream memory” (TMF 83) of “the very ancient past” (TMF 53). Walker’s montage of historical and mythic images from various speakers interspersed with narrative action create plot discontinuity but the tale of ancient matriarchies in the jungle of Africa and South America, both
usurped by patriarchal, religious, and the violent wrenching of natives from their homelands which offers a thematic continuity. Her retelling of the past exposes the dark underbelly of white colonial history, the privileged and privileged narratives, that scapegoats of others. Through horrific recollection of slavery in Zede’s tale of her youth in South Africa and through Miss Lissie’s stories of the African slave trade and the diasporas, *The Temple of My Familiar* offers eyewitness accounts of the deliberate and relentless enslavement and extermination of people of color.

In this novel, Walker presents the horrible pictures of slave trade. Lissie describes one such incident:

There were four huge men squatting at the edge of the okra patch, and they just looked and smelled evil, so I turned to run back home. Well, they caught me and tied me up, and one of’em tossed me over his shoulder like a sack of grain. They then went on to the hut and grabbed my two sisters, my brother and my mother. (TMF 62)

Even the very smell of whites threatens slaves. They run away to save their lives until they prove to be helpless. Lissie says, “My mother was just begging and pleading and calling for mercy, because she knew about slavers, but these brutes had no ears” (TMF 62). The whites drag them like cattle: children in front of their mother and mother in front of her own children but showed no pity for them. On the slave ships, the slave’s area thoroughly checked. Lissie says, “Two white men eventually to inspect us. They looked at our ears, our genitals – you would not believe the thoroughness, on the pitiful protestation of the women – our teeth and our eyes” (TMF 63).
Through the journey, they get very little food and many die out of dysentery. The slaves never bother about the dead, since they capture more slaves than they likely need. Miss Lissie’s mother feels sick with vomiting and dysentery, those sicknesses that are least possible to hide. Her deeper sickness is over her shame at being filthy and exposed to strangers, in the embarrassed and helpless presence of her children. Unable to bear the filthiness, she dies on the seventh day of their journey. Lissie explains the condition of blacks as:

The white men sent in a couple of brutes to drag her out by her heels ones of them held a rag to his nose as they dragged her and placed her body on a cart and carry it away. I pitied myself I did not know how to ask the strangers and even my sisters and brother to kill me. (TMF 65)

Even the little boys and girls wish to die on the slave ship itself. For them, it is better to die instead of becoming slaves to the white masters. Babies were not permitted on the slave ship, nor mother too who are far advanced in pregnancy. Some of the babies are simply smashed on the trial that did not believe in or participated in the slave trade – that is, they refused to sell or buy anyone and to whom small children, so recently inseparable from the source of all life, were especially sacred.

The first time Lissie was raped at her “thumb-sucking stage” (TMF 68). The white slavers use the women slaves in the way they feel like. They always used them for their sexual pleasures forcefully. They rape not only the women folk but also the little ones. The pity is, they rape the little girls who never knew what it is, who are in the position not to understand the injustice done to them. Lissie says:
The first time I was raped by members of the crew on board the ship, I was in chains and sucking on my thumb. The second time I was violated, they chained me so that my arms and legs were spread out and my thumb was beyond my reach. There was nothing to solace me. But in the hold of the ship. Somewhere in the awful darkness, I knew the mother who had sucked me also lay, and sometimes I imagined their moan of despair were song of comfort for me and for their own lost child. (TMF 68)

After reaching the coast, the slaves are forced to kneel in the sand outside the fort to shave their head. The master of the slave brands them with hot irons the letters of their names on their cheeks and crops a piece of ear to indicate ownership. Not only this, to add insult to injury in the words of Katz, “Some masters branded the letters of this names on the inside of both of their legs” (87) as if to indicate that the African American women and their private parts belongs to him only. The slaves are treated only as property, and not as a human being with blood and flesh. Miss Lissie says:

When they pressed the metal to the skin of a buttock or upper arm there was much pain. The swelling and burning continued for days afterward. Though the slaves dotted our wounds with a bit of vinegar and palm oil, nothing soothed like the milk from a nursing mother’s breasts, a remedy with which all Africans were familiar. (TMF 67)
After shaving their heads, in small groups of three, they drag them through the salt water to cleanse their skin. Finally, they remove even their last remaining garment, the strip of cotton around their hips, and they are forced onto the ship “bald, branded, and naked as we came into the world” (TMF 69). As Lissie says:

We were packed as if we were sardines, for this two-month-long journey … our heads were in each other’s laps, a long chain connecting us by the feet along one row, riveting us to the wall of the ship, and there was no movement uncontested by one’s neighbors, of which one had four. (TMF 69)

As a result of this suffocating condition, many die, especially the children as soon as they leave their African continent. Lack of sufficient food, lack of air, exercise, and more over their own anger kill many. After a month and a half whites supply the slaves with some clothes, which Lissie explains:

A tall broad-chested man wearing nothing but a much too small frilly pirate’s shirt or a cloth hat held by a sting, over his privates. Or you might see a young girl wearing a handkerchief. I was given a faded piece of rag that looked as though it had been used for sailcloth. (TMF 70)

Even for these bit of clothes the African Americans are very thankful to the white slavers. On the shore they sell all the slaves without showing any concern for the pregnant women who really carry their own son and daughters. The slavers do not care: “Color made their own seed disappear to them; the color of gold was all they saw. But not if gold was the color of a child” (TMF 70). Lissie herself is sold
to one planter, under whose employment she loses one leg while trying to escape from him and her two years old child is sent to another woman. All these weaken her body and in other words, she says, “I died” (TMF 71).

The slaves never have any rights to love each other. If the slavers find any such affair, the punishment enforced upon them is undreamable. This fact is obvious from the story of Zede’ and the terrible punishment she gets. The very moment the slavers come to know about Zede’’s love for Jesus, the white guards rape her one by one and at the same time they kill Jesus. Zede’ says:

That night the other men, the guards, one after the other came to the little hut in the forest in which they placed me. While this was happening to me, they killed Jesus. At dawn, as I lay bleeding, they brought his and threw it in with me. Then they nailed shut the door, which was the only opening. Jesus’ throat had been cut. They had also removed his genitals. There was not even a scrap of cloth to cover him. I was naked. (TMF 75)

Day after day, hundreds of flies haunt his body, and its smell makes it impossible for her to touch the man whom she loved. Such is the terrible punishment, which no one would ever have undergone in the world except the African American slaves.

In this novel The Temple of My Familiar, while presenting the picture of the freed Africa that is Africa after its freedom, Walker says, only the president, his wives, his mistresses, his ministers, his relatives, and the army have enough to eat. Only Government to uplift the race, thus:
You know, pave a road now and then. Build a hospital. And by the way, why it is that after curfew every night the only people one sees are in army uniform? Among other things, you would think we are an all-male country. And you know what the rest of the world would think of that? One thing, at least, that Africans always owned before was the night. With ‘freedom’ they seem to have lost even that. (TMF 181)

Even after the abandonment of slave trade, the European continued to take away the natural wealth of Africa. Corrine, Celie’s daughter says:

The Europeans had come and destroyed the village that had been our home. We had been moved to a barren stretch of rock that lay surrounded by a vast rubber plantation owned and run by Englishmen, whose field labor consisted entirely of our friends…; it also effectively destroyed the native wild rubber trees, which had once grown abundantly, everywhere. Where there had once been leafy forest, there was now widespread erosion. (TMF 150)

The Europeans never stopped with what the natural wealth they take away from Africa. They also steal the precious time of African men. The whites, by engaging them always with their works, shun them away from their role in their family, which brings no improvement in their family. Nzingha says:

The men can always run on and on land the white man’s destructions and yet they cannot look into their own families their own children’s livers and see that this is just the destruction the white man has planned. Meanwhile the women are starting to crack from the white man’s blatant success and the lack of their men’s support. (TMF 253)
The Europeans not only steal the African’s wealth and their physical power but also they steal the serenity and peace of the African American men and women. In many ways this novel presents the most serious element. When Suwelo talks about the Power of Racism, which has changed Fanny’s life and her crisis is the crisis of an oppressed woman, but also the crisis of a black person living in the gunsights of white racism. He says:

She was one of those victims of racism whose is extremely sensitive and who grows too conscious of it. It had become like a scale or web over her eyes. Everywhere she looked, she saw it. Racism turned her thoughts to violence. Violence made her sick. She was working on it. (TMF 294)

Whether as victim or horrified participant, Fanny cannot escape racism. According to Fanny, “It is racism and greed that has to go. Not white people” but she doubts whether it is possible to “separate them from their racism” (TMF 307).

The white man always think that he has born “to rule”, on the other hand, the blacks were put on earth to be his slave” (TMF 307). He always keeps them terrorized and desperately poor, in order to feel powerful. Revulsion against the death feast of the West and equal revulsion against a countervailing black violence is the agony at the root of The Temple of My Familiar. It is an agony experienced by all too many black people across the world. Fanny agrees with Suwelo that African Americans irrespective of their class, education, status, and gender are victimized for having been born as black:
The way things are going in the United States there will soon be more black men in prison than on the streets. In South Africa the entire black population is incarcerated in ghettos and ‘homelands’ they despite. (TMF 308)

Fanny experiences personal distress while confronting the way the world is going and her own anger at the white people who are at fault. She recalls being traumatized by the violence during the civil rights movement:

In high school I watched the integration of the University of Georgia on television…the night the whole campus seemed to go up in flames, and white people raged….I saw the Freedom Riders, black and white, beaten up on Mississippi….I saw a lot of black people and their white allies humiliated, brutally beaten, or murdered. (TMF 298)

Fanny is terrified of the future or the thought that there may not be a future and like Velma in The Salt Eaters, she is exhausted by her life as an activist. “I’ve marched so much by now and been arrested so many times, I’m really quite weary” (TMF 302).

Most debilitating of all is her hatred of whites and the violent impulses she feels. Freedom from the bondage of her feelings comes when, with the help of her therapist, Fanny confronts the origins of her hatred and fear of whites. Her now middle aged and only white childhood friend, Tanya, whose story might have been included in Meridian, explains that she, too, was changed by the movement, in that she married a black man, “political shortcut” that allowed her to feel that she was doing something about racism without changing society. When Fanny asks how she changed from the way she was raised, Tanya explains:
The Civil Rights Movement happened. Selma happened. The University of Georgia happened. Dr. King happened. It just hit me one night, watching television coverage of one of the Civil Rights marches, that the order of the world as I’d always known it, and imagined it would be forevermore, was wrong. (TMF 326)

Through Tanya’s stories, Fanny reclaims long-repressed memories of growing up black in a racist world. Travelling to Africa and discovering her father, Ola, the most political of the characters contributes to her recovery. In Ola’s country, as in the Post Civil Rights Movement in United States, oppression is widespread. More than once Ola expresses his conviction that “the present you are constructing… should be the future you want” (TMF 236), and he does not hesitate to give his daughter specific advice: “To the extent that it is possible…you must live in the world today as you wish everyone to live in the world to come. That can be your contribution” (TMF 336). Explaining to her how Mary Jane Briden and her staff created a school that made a difference for the children and their country’s future, Ola observes that they had a vision of the future that “looked an awful lot like what they already had together every day” (TMF 345). In times like these, lulls perhaps, Ola’s observations suggest that the very least those committed to social change can do is to design their personal lives as models for the world they hope to create for others. The model life, however, is not necessarily an idyllic one, and it may include violence.

Walker analyses bit and pieces of racism in all her novels. In her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, she discusses the both mental and physical oppression of African American workers undergo at the hands of their
white masters in the sharecropping system. They are treated merely as cattle and to show their manliness they transmit the ill-treatment to their women, and then they spoiled their own life.

In this novel, she recounts three different experiences of racial and economic oppression in the south. In detailing the stories of Brownfield and Grange, Walker not only illustrates her own theories of the importance of maintaining the individual soul in the context of community, but also elucidates the methods of surviving suffering. Brownfield, Grange, and Ruth, begin their stories as uniquely oppressed in the sharecropping system and in the corresponding environment of domestic violence and consequent self hatred of mid twentieth century Georgia. Each is faced with making meaning of his suffering and thereby transcending that suffering and its vicious cycle of brutality. Each character is therefore in some ways larger than life, too legendary for true realism. Kate Cochran rightly says, “They are figures of oppression, manifestation of suffering, and symbols of survival methods adopted by the subjugated” (80).

Walker’s characters are alienated in their individual subjugation. Initiation represents the sufferer’s move toward rebellion. He wonders at his role in his suffering, determines his blamelessness, and rebels against the notion that he has brought misery upon himself. Each sufferer in rebellion yearns not for mercy, but for confrontation. Rage powers the self-realization necessary for rebellion against misery. In misery, the sufferers bemoan his state and wishes only for the suffering end. Rage presents the sufferer’s need to control his own condition, in misery he is helpless, in rage he learns strength and in compassion he can grasp his minuteness before God as well as his power in community.
In misery, Grange and Brownfield are silent and brooding, in violence they are brutal. Both observe a weekly ritual during which the depression of the beginning of the week slowly escalates, propelling them to a zenith of brutality on Saturday night when they regularly get drunk and beat their families. Walker intimates that both Grange and Brownfield abuse their wives in order to feel less subjugated. Not only do they achieve a kind of relief from inflicting violence, they also may use it to be able to feel something besides misery: “Depression always gave way to fighting, as if fighting preserved some part of the feeling of being alive” (TLGC 24). The impetus behind such violence is not only to make the men feel superior, but to make them feel at all.

Grange’s first is his life of fear and misery; during his second life in New York he learns hatred for whites. During his third life, he begins to learn, through teaching Ruth, about compassion, but never adopts it himself. In New York, he enters the second stage of rage and rebellion. He later reflects on the incident that propels him away from misery and fear towards hate when he watches a young pregnant white woman drown in a pond in the park. He watches the woman rebuffed by her soldier lover and feels sympathy for her. Witnessing her leave the soldier’s money and ring on the ground, he decides to help her by restoring the ring and part of the money, made bold by her pitiable state. But when the woman rejects him, he learns the power of rage. As she curses him and insults him as ‘nigger’, he realizes the profundity of his own hatred:
He hatred her entire race while she stood before him, pregnant, having learned nothing from her own pain, helpless except before someone more weak than herself, enjoying a revenge that severed all possible bonds of sympathy between them (TLGC 215).

His hatred inspires a sense of rage, which in turn reanimates Grange.

Grange’s rage is focused on his hatred of whites. After leaving the park, he runs through the streets of New York, yelling, “Teach them to hate, if you wants them to survive” (TLGC 219). He tries to physically fight each white man he meets and to continue to encourage other African Americans to fight back as well. But his inspiration is short lived; he soon realized that on man alone cannot swerve a community of oppressed people. So he decides to move back to Baker country and lives as far away from white influence as he can:

Each man would have to free himself, he thought, and the best way he could. For the time being, he could withdraw completely from them, find a sanctuary, make a life that need not to acknowledge them and be always’ inviolate. (TLGC 205)

Rebellion of Walker’s character represents a necessary but dangerous bridge between the misery of suffering and the compassion of spiritual community. After Mem is murdered, literally by Brownfield and symbolically by the Southern society, he comes to love and represents, Ruth is taken by Grange. Grange dedicates himself to protecting Ruth from foulness of the Southern environment into which she was born.
By connecting Ruth to the life-giving tradition of the black folk art of the South, Grange provides her with the time-tested values which will help her to survive whole and even triumph over the racist world which destroys so many black people in the South. His recounting episodes from black history reinforces in her mind the crucial idea that black people established a strong and viable culture in the South, despite the efforts of the dominant society to destroy that culture. In helping her to grow, Grange gives Ruth a feeling for her peoples’ lore, history, and culture and also he teaches her to dance, for in the dance is the essence of black folk.

There is an undercurrent of questioning in Walker’s stories. In this novel, this undercurrent is the difficult questions that children ask themselves about their ancestors and the world, the answers to which are often complicated and terrifying, just as the ten-year-old Brownfield wondered about his parents’ action, his father’s silence, and his mother’s submission. Ruth wonders about her father and mother, about her grandfather’s relationship with her father and about her grandfather’s life before she came to live with him. Grange gives Ruth not so much answers but the knowledge he has learned in his three stages.

Grange wants Ruth to understand the nature of her world, how white folk have caused the misery of black folk how she must learn to hate them, better still, to avoid them, “They beat you every day in slavery and didn’t feet you nothing but weeds…” (TLGC 183), and also he said:
They are evil
They are blue-eyed devils.
They are your natural enemy.
Stay away from them hypocrites or they will destroy you.
They killed your father and mother. (TLGC 185)

Grange wants his granddaughter to understand the world’s cruelty so she might survive and at her young age, wants to know love so she can be whole.

Even as Grange instructs his granddaughter in the ways of the cruel world and in understanding how racism affects her life, Ruth’s love and her questions lead him into self-examination and reflection. Through the clarity of the third life she gives him, his first and second lives begin to make some sense:

The white folks hated me and I hated myself until I started hating them in return and loving myself. Then I tired just loving me, and then you, and ignoring them much as I could. You’re special to me because you’re a part of me; a part of me I did’t even used to want. I want you to go on a long time, have a heap of children. Let them know what you made me see, that it ain’t no use in seeing at all, if you don’t see straight. (TLGC 183)

Old patterns may be torn apart, but they leave old scraps, untied ends. Grange kills his son- the old pattern of kin killing; but he spills the blood of his son to save his granddaughter, the new pattern. He does this not only to thwart the power of the white folks that Brownfield has enlisted but also in the very presence of the white
judge, the symbol of racist disorder in the South. Grange knows that in sacrificing his unregenerative son to his granddaughter in the presence of white law, he has killed himself. Grange is killing son reverted to the old pattern so Ruth, the new pattern, might not just survive but live. His act is based on his vision of what life could be for her.

_The Third Life of Grange Copeland_ focuses on the major characters’ perception of their past as crucial to their personal transformation in the present and the possibility of change in the future. By reflecting on his past, he is able to understand the nature of his own existence in relation to the world in which he lives. In sorting out the repetition of tragedy in his family as it extends through a period sixty years, Grange is able to affect his own personal change, which in turn may change the future of his descendants.

Violence, sex, and racism are probably still part of everyday life of African Americans. Walker’s third novel, _The Color Purple_ tells the injustice of an older America while at the same time spinning the story of individual people who endured them. It is as though they area on a ship at sea, having steer through the many storms to enjoy a few moments of warm sunshine. Then it converses the difficulty of African American man who stand high in the white dominated world. White men lynch Celie’s father who was industrious and enterprising. They kill him unable to bear his success. So Celie’s family scattered here and there and it takes a very long time to reconstruct it again. This novel shows the racial oppression and tale of struggle to overcome it.
Walker’s fourth novel, *The Temple of My Familiar* is the moving account of the outside forces imposed upon a tribal people and it mainly focuses upon the slave trade, and also it gives detailed description of the slaves who undergo from the beginning of their slavery to the end. Racism is the survival issue, leading the cause of stress amongst black people. The black people don’t down play or ignore it but they have to meet it and struggle to survival whole.