As Black women have come into a new awareness of their powers and struggled to liberate themselves, they have enriched and expanded the corpus of Black literature. A “revolution within revolution” occurred as early as in 1966 with the publication of Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*. It surfaced dramatically in the 1970s with the emergence of writers like Ntozake Shange and Gayl Jones, though it was anticipated by those who emerged during the 1960s. Black women have brought into literature a special knowledge of their lives and experiences that is different from the portrayal of women by men, as black and white. In the process, Black women have braved the criticism levelled at them by Black male writers and scholars who felt that men were presented unfairly or in too superficial a manner. They challenged the ideological structures of the sixties and freed themselves from the roles assigned to them in the writings of their male counterparts.

Alice Walker has produced a significant body of work since 1968, when *Once*, her first volume of poetry, was published. Her body of writing is substantial and varied and is characterised by specific recurrent motifs. Most obvious is her attention to the black woman as creator and to the wholeness and health of her community. Black woman-centred, Alice Walker's work insistently probes the relationship between struggle and change, a probing which
encompasses the pain of the black people's lives. A paradoxical feature of her portrayal of this pain is that sometimes it results in growth. Presented primarily through three generations of one family in the first novel, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, the struggle to change takes on overt social dimensions in Meridian. This theme is presented in fiction, poetry, and essays as a spiritual legacy of the black people in the South. A pattern of stripping off of layers associated with the self, and a concentration and distillation of language which ironically allows Alice Walker to expand rather than constrict, is a noticeable feature of her work. Few contemporary American writers have examined so many facets of sex and race, love and societal changes as Walker has done. Her focus is on the struggle of black people, especially black women to claim their own lives. She contends that this struggle emanates from a deepening of self-knowledge and love. These characteristics might be said to apply to a number of contemporary black women writers like Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, and June Jordan. But Walker re-examines this idea in the light of her own experiences and of dearly won principles which she has previously challenged and absorbed. The structure of The Third Life of Grange Copeland is based on the dramatic tension between the pervasive racism of society and the need for women characters, if they are to hold on to self-love, to accept responsibility for their own lives. Further, Walker's major insight in In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens is her illumination of the creative legacy of the black woman of the South. This is a focus which complements as well as transcends literary history. There is an insistent examination of the roots of her own creativity in Walker's work. Her description of the impact of the quilt
on her brings together essential elements of her more recent work: The theme of the Black woman's creativity and her transformation into a work of functional beauty. Like Walker in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Meridian seeks her identity through the legacy passed on to her by the Southern Black women. Not only does Walker challenge the monument of black motherhood in *Meridian*, she also enters the fray about the efficacy of motherhood in which American feminists were then, as they are now, engaged.

Because of her analysis of sexism in *Meridian* as well as in *Love and Trouble*, Walker is often labelled as a feminist writer. But in refusing to elevate sex above race and in insisting on the black woman's responsibility to herself and to other women of colour, Walker aligns herself neither with prevailing white feminist groups nor with the Blacks who refuse to acknowledge male dominance in the world. She continues to resist the trends of the times without discarding the truths upon which they are based. The form of *The Color Purple* is a development in the womanist process Walker has gradually evolved. In using the epistolary style in this novel, Walker is able to have her major character Celie express the impact of oppression on her spirit as well as her growing internal strength and final victory. The novel interweaves the personal with the flow of history. The image of quilting is central to its concept and form. The emphases are the oppression black women experience in their relationship with black men and the sisterhood they must share with each other in order to liberate themselves. To confront the body is to confront not only an individual's abuse but also the abuse of women's bodies throughout. To make
a desire for selfhood possible, Celie must take a new perspective on her own body. She learns to take control on her aggressive desires by two means of sublimation: assertive speech and the substitution of one writing instrument, the razor, for another, a needle. Celie does develop her identity and finds a network of friends matrifocal in outlook but open to men who can put aside their desire to dominate. Matrifocality dissolves the hierarchies that perpetuate dominance and oppression. Walker's sustained analysis of race through the development of family relations as an extended textual trope for race relations makes The Color Purple an absorbing study in womanist writing. Yet another feature of Alice Walker's work is the search for the self which involves an examination and reconstruction of the whole African-American cultural and literary traditions. In The Temple of My Familiar, Walker gives us a chronicle not only of the life of a black woman but of the life of the women of different races. An oral history written in the tradition of the African griot, The Temple of My Familiar drives home the idea that the growth of her characters is to be visualised in terms of an extensive and inalienable link with their past. Possessing the Secret of Joy deals with an unspeakable atrocity on women, female circumcision. The novel depicts a search for healing, both physical and psychological, and unfurls as it were the idea that resistance is the secret of joy. A womanist committed to exploring the oppression, trials, and tribulations of black women, Alice Walker unravels in her narratives the indigenous African cultural element that is part of the Blacks' cultural unconscious. In the process, she unfolds her women characters as they fight
against the fragmentation of their selves caused by the double jeopardy of race and sex and as they search for their survival whole in their reconstruction of their black womanhood.

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