

DELIVERING THE SOUL

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Alice Walker understands the oppression of silence that many of her ancestors experienced. Walker had her own barriers that she had to overcome before she began expressing herself through writing. In her novels The Third Life of Grange Copeland and The Color Purple, she focuses on the oppression of black women and the processes they undergo in order to recognize their self worth. Walker deals with black suspended female characters who learn to assert themselves aided by devoted and determined friends. Once Walker's characters acknowledge that they are worthwhile they search for means of expression. Outlets for these characters include taking an active role in a revolution and sewing pants as a way of life. Walker is concerned with the full humanity of her black female characters. In her two novels she stresses that discovering their individuality and inviolate space allows these women to rise above oppressive circumstances.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Alice Walker made a critical statement regarding the oppression of black women and their struggle to retain their individuality while keeping their spirit intact.

Walker expresses:

I believe wholeheartedly in keeping inviolate the one interior space that is given to all. I believe in the soul. Furthermore, I believe it is prompt accountability for one's choices, a willing acceptance of responsibility for one's thoughts, behavior and actions, that makes it powerful. The white man's oppression of me will never excuse my oppression of you, whether you are man, woman, child, animal or tree because the self that I prize refuses to be owned (The Third Life of Grange Copeland 345).

Walker reaffirms the importance of interior space through the way she constructs the black female characters found within her novels and her poetry. Her writings are primarily concerned with the representation of black women. More specifically, she strives to reveal the means that enable these black women to survive and nurture their soul in the midst of oppression. Walker understands that, "Black women are called, in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, 'the mule of the world' because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else---everyone else---refused to carry" (In Search of Our Mother's Gardens 237). In light of these burdens, black

women are further challenged to maintain their personal space. Through her characters, Walker examines the outlets black women use to develop and nurture their soul. She explores the ramifications that occur when these women's souls no longer have a means of expression and how that lack of expression effects their spirit: "If you bring forth what is within you, what is within you will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what is within you will destroy you" (qtd. in Walker, In Search 117). Walker depicts characters who are forced to stifle what is inside them and characters who do bring forth what is inside them and maintain an inviolate space. Those characters who survive with their spirit intact are able to do so because they achieve a balance of creative outlets, and they are able to express their individuality.

In her novels, The Third Life of Grange Copeland and The Color Purple, Walker stresses four key elements in characters who are able to express and nurture their soul. The first element is the recognition of the inviolate space to which everyone is entitled to. The second element involves discovering creative outlets through which to release their energy. In these two novels, the outlets explored by the black female characters are often sexuality and spirituality. The third element involves finding people to support and encourage bringing the soul forth. In The Color Purple this support is found within a nurturing community of black women. The Third Life of Grange Copeland stresses the importance of drawing strength from the legacy left by these women's ancestors. In this manner, women are able to discover a supportive atmosphere. A final element necessary to bring forth that which is within these

women is the awareness of their individuality and their refusal to be owned by anyone. Walker believes that in order for a black woman to survive, she must be aware of her capabilities. She states that a changing world

requires money, and, as Virginia Woolf put it so well, 'a room of one's own,' preferably one with a key and a lock. Which means that women must be prepared to think for themselves, which means, undoubtedly, trouble with boyfriends, lovers, and husbands, which means all kinds of heartache and misery, and times when you will wonder if independence, freedom of thought, or your own work is worth it all. We must believe that it is. For the world is not good enough; we must make it better (In Search 37).

The black female character who survives with her inviolate space intact recognizes her own worth and refuses to compromise her individuality and her soul.

CHAPTER II

THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND

Alice Walker's novel, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, depicts the journey of black women as they strive to bring forth what is inside of them. In this novel, Walker creates this journey using a generational theme. The first woman that Walker introduces is at the very beginning of the journey. Margaret's biggest struggle is physically surviving through each day. She represents the suspended black female character who is denied basic love and kindness from others. Her thoughts and opinions are not considered or even recognized as valid. Women at the beginning of the journey, such as Margaret, are just recognizing that they do possess an inviolate space and have a right to be heard, but are ill equipped to express themselves. As a result, these women are faced with an overabundance of untapped energy and talent.

In the second generation of Copelands, the reader is introduced to Mem, a woman further along than Margaret in her journey towards recognizing and expressing her soul. Mem is aware of her personal and inviolate space and has a variety of outlets she explores in order to express this creative energy. Because of her abusive relationship and her lack of community, she is continually oppressed and loses the strength necessary to bring forth and express her soul. The third character, and more advanced in the journey, is Ruth. Ruth continually expresses herself and her individuality through the creative outlets she discovers. She also gathers strength from

the legacy and the fighting spirit of those women gone before her. Ruth refuses to allow anyone to take away her personal identity and her freedom of expression.

The Beginning of the Journey

The initial step in bringing forth what is inside an individual begins with recognition that every human being has a personal space. Walker introduces Margaret as a woman who is unaware that she has a soul and who lives in extremely oppressive circumstances as she and her husband share a shack on a white man's plantation. Margaret is forced to leave her son, Brownfield, home alone at a very young age in order to work and help sustain her family. From the opening pages, Walker portrays Margaret as the obedient and submissive wife who is always in agreement with her husband, Grange. Margaret's son, Brownfield, is a bit disgusted with his mother's role and observes: "He thought his mother was like their dog in some ways. She didn't have a thing to say that did not in some way show her submission to his father" (Grange Copeland 6). Margaret does not know any differently than succumbing to her husband because she is just beginning to recognize that she has the freedom to her own individuality and a separate identity apart from her mate.

As Margaret continues along this journey to bring forth what is inside of her, the gradual recognition of the creative energy that lies within her is evident. The reader becomes more familiar with her character and begins to recognize glimpses of her soul through small and subtle mannerisms. Brownfield describes one of these moments: "His mother smiled at Brownfield, one of her rare sudden smiles that lit up her smooth, heart-shaped face" (Grange Copeland 6). This light that radiates

for an instant suggests a hopeful and alive spirit that exists within Margaret.

As Margaret begins to assert her creative energy, she struggles to find outlets for the expression of this energy. Another example that depicts this struggle to find expression for her soul occurs in one of Margaret's ritualistic acts. Every Saturday, Grange goes to town to drink, and "while he was away his wife washed and straightened her hair. She dressed up and sat, all shining and pretty, in the open door, hoping anxiously for visitors who never came" (Grange Copeland 15). Margaret's consistency and faithfulness even in small acts suggests a spirit struggling for life.

Gradually, Margaret becomes more confident in her capabilities. As her soul gives birth she does not appear to fit the comparison to the dog so accurately any more. Margaret does have limits to the oppression others place on her. Brownfield hears from his cousin that despite Grange's persistence, Margaret will not use her body and sex to assist with financial difficulties. She stands up for herself and recognizes that she does have the ability to maintain her personal integrity. She exercises her freedom to express herself through her refusal of Grange's proposal. She fits Walker's idea that "the self that I prize refuses to be owned by him or by anyone" (Grange Copeland 345). Walker suggests that Margaret's refusal is a step forward towards bringing forth what is inside of her. Similarly, in one of her prose collections, Alice Walker suggests that "this ability to hold on, even in very simple ways is a work black women have done for a very long time" (In Search 242). Black women, such as Margaret, hold fast to their inviolate space by using simple means as they learn more

about their abilities. Margaret appears to resolve to hold on to her dignity and respect even if it is the last thing she has.

Unfortunately, because Margaret is at the very early stages of learning about her own capabilities, she is ill equipped to discover how to express herself. She can hold on in small ways, but as her oppressive situation continues, her soul screams for further expression. Margaret longs for affirmation and affection for her identity and abilities. Grange does not provide her with this affirmation. Instead, he physically abuses her and tries to instill in her a sense of worthlessness; consequently, she tries to bring forth her soul in a different manner. She takes on a new lifestyle with the hope of being recognized and finding affirmation from others. She attempts to find acceptance and love through prostitution and loose morals. As a result, Brownfield has a new half brother and "the baby was a product of his mother's new personality that went with her painted good looks and new fragrance of beds, of store-bought perfume and gin" (Grange Copeland 21). Once Margaret attempts to bring forth her soul in this potentially harmful way, her character undergoes a dramatic change. Hence, even her son notices the change in her character. As Margaret is grasping for ways to direct her energy, her values have changed. In an attempt to bring forth her soul and to find positive creative outlets of self expression,

she had grown restless of her life, a life that was as predictably unexciting as last year's cotton field. Somewhere along the line she had changed. Slowly, imperceptibly, until it was too late for

Brownfield to recall exactly how she had been when he had loved her. It seemed to Brownfield that one day she was as he had always known her, kind, submissive, smelling faintly of milk, and the next day she was a wild woman looking for frivolous things, her heart's good times, in the transient embraces of strangers (26).

Margaret desperately seeks affirmation and acceptance of her character. Walker reveals this search through a passage: "On some Saturday nights Grange and Margaret left home excitedly together, looking for Brownfield knew not what, except that it must be something they had thought lost. For they grew frenzied in pursuit of whatever it was" (27). Margaret is anxiously seeking an outlet for her unrecognized energy and personhood.

As Margaret desperately tries to express herself, Grange leaves her. This act forces her into a dramatic realization that she is not nurturing and developing her soul by seeking affection and attention from other men. She realizes that she is compromising her inviolable space. Although she would not allow her husband to use her sexuality for financial reasons, Margaret, on her own accord, has misused her sexuality. Her lack of knowledge on how to constructively express herself in the midst of oppression leads her to inadequate channels. Walker believes in the necessity of bringing forth the soul in every individual, but she also understands that in the midst of her oppression, women such as her ancestors, and her character Margaret, did not have

the resources to do this by a positive means. In one of her prose collections, Walker deals specifically with this issue. One of her models is author Jean Toomer who Walker describes as "a man who cared how women felt" (In Search 13). She makes direct reference to one of Toomer's books in this prose collection. In this excerpt, a man is talking to a prostitute and recalls: "I described her own nature and temperament. Told how they needed a larger life for their expression. I pointed out that in lieu of proper channels, her emotions had overflowed into paths that had dissipated them" (qtd. in Walker, In Search 231). Walker seems to be saying the same thing to her character, Margaret, who has sought to bring forth her soul through finding affection in the arms of men. She uses ineffective channels as a means of expression. Margaret realizes that she has not been taking responsibility for her actions, and she compromises her values. Shortly after Grange leaves her, Margaret realizes that through the exploitation of her sexuality she allows her personal space to be violated. She poisons herself and the baby, a product of her compromised behavior. The suicide is her effort to keep the personal space she has left. Because the means in which she attempted to bring forth her soul were counterproductive, her soul is not nurtured and developed. She is an example of the notion that: "If you do not bring forth what is within you, what is within you will destroy you" (qtd in Walker, In Search 117). In an effort to retain what is inside of her and because of an inability to discover the proper channels in which to express her creative energy, Margaret takes her life.

The Journey Continues

The next generation in The Third Life of Grange Copeland introduces a woman who is already aware that she possesses a personal and inviolate space. Mem has more of an understanding than Margaret of the proper channels in which to express and nurture her soul. She does not have a greater understanding of her abilities as the result of an easy life. Mem's father, who is a preacher, had an affair with Mem's mother. Her mother then died at an early age leaving Mem in the care of her sister Josie who is a prostitute. Despite her circumstances, Walker introduces her as a character who has a sense of self worth: "Mem put some attention to what she was saying in it, and some warmth from her own self and so much concern for the person she was speaking to that it made Brownfield want to cry" (Grange Copeland 68). Mem is a teacher who is aware that she has had the benefit of an education and she wants to share her abilities with others. Her teaching is one of the ways she feeds and expresses her soul.

Ironically, Margaret's son, Brownfield, falls in love with Mem. They marry, and Brownfield promises her that their current living conditions will only be temporary. Even in the midst of hard circumstances, Mem continues to find outlets in which to develop her soul. She also expresses herself through the hopeful spirit and countenance which she exudes: "For Mem was the kind of woman who sang while she cooked breakfast in the morning and sang when getting ready for bed at night and sang when she nursed her babies, and sang to him when he crawled in weariness and

dejection into the warm life-giving circle of her breast" (72). Mem's vibrant spirit keeps her countenance bright and hopeful. Even after three years of hard work and Brownfield's defeated attitude and unfulfilled promises, Mem is still able to bring forth her soul and find peace.

Mem's hopeful and satisfied spirit prove very discouraging to Brownfield. He is jealous of the peace that encompasses her. He is distracted because his wife is an individual and refuses to be owned, especially by her husband. Brownfield is jealous that he cannot break Mem's spirit and determines to do something about it. He feels like a failure because he has not been able to keep his promise and take Mem out of their indescribable living situation. After their first daughter is born, they are so strapped for money that five-year-old Daphne is forced to work out in the fields at. Mem remains hopeful and positive while Brownfield feels as if his life is falling apart. He resolves to bring his wife down to his level. After making this resolve:

that same year he accused Mem of being unfaithful to him, of being used by the white men, his oppressors; a charge she tearfully and truthfully denied. And when he took her in his drunkenness and in the midst of his own foul accusations she wilted and accepted him in total passivity and blankness, like a church. She was too pure to know how sanctified was his soul by her silence. He determined at such times to treat her like a nigger and a whore, which he knew she was not, and if she made no complaint, to find her guilty (78-79).

The only way Brownfield knows how to deal with this situation is to physically abuse his wife.

He also took her away from teaching as he searched to find external means in which to break his wife's spirit. However, Brownfield can take away all the physical circumstances that he wants in an attempt to break her. She patiently does not resist Brownfield when he abuses her. She withstands this abuse, "and she accepted all his burdens along with her own and dealt with them for her own greater heart and greater knowledge" (79). He has always been jealous of the fact that she is educated because he does not know how to read and write. He curses her for being so proper and, eventually, as a result of his harassment, Mem begins to speak just as if she does not have an education. After Brownfield also continues to force her to live in a variety of shacks, her heart becomes bitter. She knows anger and hatred she has never experienced. Even though all of her physical circumstances have been altered, she knows that as long as she continues to seek out different outlets of self-expression and continues to bring forth that which is inside of her and hold the key to her inviolate space, Brownfield cannot break her.

With her outlet of teaching gone, Mem discovers a new means in which to express herself. Mem and Brownfield have three daughters: Daphne, Ornette and Ruth. Mem's outlet for her soul now manifests itself in the form of providing her children with a better life than she has known. In this, Brownfield cannot take away her determination. She has resolved to find a means in which she can find work and

buy a house for her daughters. Her will to live now revolves around a struggle to show her children a better life and instill in them the hope that kept her for so long. Walker appears to have modeled Mem after real women she knows who exist in her mother's generation. In one of her poems, she describes women such as Mem who nurture their own souls by providing for their children. In her poem entitled "Women", she expresses:

They were women then
My mama's generation
Husky of voice-Stout of
Step
With fists as well as
Hands
How they battered down
Doors
And ironed
Starched white
Shirts
How they lead
Armies
Headragged Generals
Across mined

Fields

Booby-trapped

Ditches

To discover books

Desks

A place for us

How they knew what we

Must know

Without knowing a page

Of it

Themselves (Revolutionary Petunias 5).

Mem understands the importance of instilling in her children a belief that their circumstances will get better if they are determined for them to be so. She allows her children to pour over magazines of home furnishings and imagine what a new house will be like. She resolves physically to stand up to Brownfield once again, her strength is no longer for herself but for her children. When Brownfield insists that they move to another plantation shack, Mem retorts:

'I already told you,' she said, 'You ain't dragging me and these children through no more pig pens. We have put up with mud long enough. I want Daphne to be a young lady where there is other decent folks around, not out here in the sticks on some white man's property like in

slavery times. I want Ornette to have a chance at a decent school and little baby Ruth,' she said wistfully, 'I don't even want her to know their's such a thing as outdoor toilets (118).

Mem will not be owned or controlled by her husband.

Moreover, she has found an outlet through instilling in her children who they are and what they can accomplish. She is so determined that she is willing to go to extremes. Brownfield proves to be an obstacle who stands in the way of her family, their new house, and life, but Mem is determined to remove all obstacles and refuses to be controlled by anyone. In a very powerful scene, Brownfield stumbles home drunk and when he wakes up the next morning, it is to his wife holding a gun to him. Mem is now in control and informs him: "If you intend to come along I done made out me some rules for you, for make no mistake it's going to be my house and in my house what the white man expects us to act like ain't going to get no consideration Now first off you going to call me Mem, Mrs. Copeland, or Mrs. Mem R. Copeland. Take your pick" (138). Mem is determined to present her children with a life she is unaccustomed to.

Once again, Brownfield tries to use a physical solution to bring Mem down. Even after Brownfield gets her pregnant and weakens her physically, her spirit cannot be broken. No matter what physical obstacles Brownfield throws in her way, these obstacles do not break her spirit. If anything, exterior barriers make her even more determined to bring forth what is inside of her. After her pregnancy, "she

recovered from the illness that had caused her to lose [her house] and with grim determination attended to the roof leaks and rat holes" (159). Everyday she still sends her children to school hoping that with at least an education there is the prospect of a better life for them. Brownfield is disheartened when he realizes he cannot break Mem's spirit.

Even until the end, she remains courageous. One night, when Brownfield is considerably drunk and jealous of his wife's unwavering spirit, he waits on the front porch for her to return from work. He is ready with a loaded gun. As he sees her approach the porch, he kills her. Ruth realized that Mem could see the weapon in her husband's hand, "But Mem had not even slowed her steps as she approached her husband" (173). Mem's spirit could not be stopped even by a gun. She could only hope that the feelings of worth she has tried to instill in her children will be carried on even after her death. Mem walked toward her husband and the gun with confidence and unwavering steps because she had been able to keep her soul inviolate, and she still held the key. She had been true to herself and brought forth that what is inside of her to the best of her ability. She knew that even a gun cannot take away her soul.

A Spirit Recognized

Mem's refusal to be owned and her ability to maintain an inviolate space has a tremendous affect on her youngest daughter, Ruth. She recognizes the

legacy her mother left to her and draws strength from it. After the death of her mother, Ruth draws encouragement from the spirit that Mem has left in her wake. Immediately after Grange shoots his wife, Ruth comes to the realization that her mother had acted as Santa Claus and had worked hard to buy her daughter Christmas presents and keep their dreams alive. Ruth also begins to realize the other sacrifices that Mem has made for her children. Mem's determination and expression of her spirit had all been directed towards her children. Ruth looks upon her dead mother lying there, "and she noticed for the first time, that even though it was the middle of winter, there were large frayed holes in the bottom of her mother's shoes. On Mem's right foot the shoe lay almost off and a flat packet of newspaper stuck half way out" (172). Ruth begins to realize that all these sacrifices Mem had made were out of love and concern for her daughters and for their provision. After this recognition, she often draws strength from the seed of self-worth that her mother has worked so hard to plant inside of her.

With the role model afforded to her by her mother, Ruth is determined to bring forth what is inside of her as well. She is very young when her mother dies, but she is not too young to understand the powerful soul that her mother possessed. She is taken away from her father, Brownfield, and given into the care of her grandfather, Grange. Grange has become deeply remorseful since the death of his wife, Margaret and welcomes the chance to right his wrong through raising his granddaughter. Ruth's awareness of her mother's love for her becomes even more apparent after Mem is gone. She acknowledges that sometimes, "When she could not fall asleep Mem came

back to confront her. Mem whose hands were callused and warm, whose lips were chapped and soft, and whose eyes were restored to their look of tough, gentle sadness and pain" (180). Ruth determines to be encouraged by Mem's legacy and live a life with the same dignity and determination that her mother did.

Furthermore, Mem's life has not only taught Ruth the necessary means of survival, but also the paths to avoid. Mem made the best of her situation in poverty and an abusive relationship, but Ruth wants to avoid these predicaments altogether. Mem has left Ruth with a foundation from which to build her character.

Walker develops Ruth as a young woman with a very strong personality. She already is aware of the inviolate space within her that she deems very precious. Mem's determination and confidence in her daughter taught Ruth that she was a worthwhile individual who must demand respect and hold fast to her soul. Because of this awareness, Ruth is already one step ahead of her grandmother, Margaret, and feels the freedom and the necessity to bring forth that which is inside of her. She refuses to be intimidated and seeks out a number of outlets for her creative energy and nurturing her soul. There are no pretenses about this young lady. Her mother has taught her not to make excuses for the person she is.

She is becoming aware of her assertive nature. As her assertiveness seeks channels to develop, one of the outlets that she discovers is her spirituality. She discovers her spirituality within her own capabilities. As a matter of fact, Ruth rejects the spirituality that other members of the community attest to. On Sundays, the young

girl recognizes that the people who attend church are hypocrites: "But it was funny what they witnessed every Sunday- the placid, Christ deferential self-righteousness of men who tortured their children and on Saturday nights beat their wives" (188). Ruth refuses to succumb to this superficial spirituality, recognizing that her mother's spirituality was encompassed in the development of her own spirit to be strong and courageous. Ruth wants to be aware of her own spirituality. She longs to model her hopeful spirit after Mem but also to have the freedom to express her spirituality.

Ruth expresses her faith in herself through the active role she desires to take in a revolution she believes is on the rise. She tells her grandfather Grange, "I'd be bored stiff waiting for black folks to rise up so I could join them. Since I'm already ready to rise up and they ain't, it seems to me I should rise up first and let them follow me" (276). She directs her creative energy towards her belief that she can make a difference. The youngest Copeland derives comfort and a sense of spirituality from the legacy Mem left behind. She keeps the hope that one day things will be better for the black race, and she encompasses a fighting spirit that will play a part in seeing this change become a reality.

Ruth also nurtures and develops her spirit through a healthy understanding of her own sexuality. She gains an understanding of this from the times she and Grange would dance together and becomes aware of her body: "Through her grandfather's old and beautifully supple limbs she learned how marvelous was the grace with which she moved" (190). Later she is attracted to a man for the first time and starts to experience

more of her sexuality and the attraction that exists between man and women. Ruth never abuses her sexuality or uses it in a manner to gain attention.

As she gains an understanding of her sexuality, she also becomes more conscious of her position as a woman. She recognizes that as she is getting older, she will have to begin to make some decisions about her future so as to avoid becoming trapped like Mem. Ruth begins to think seriously about her future when she begins menstruating and realizes that if she is not careful she will end up as many of the women who have gone before her. She recognizes that:

What scared her was that she felt her woman's body made her defenseless. She felt it could now be had and made to conceive something she didn't want, against her will, and her mind could do nothing to stop it. She was deathly afraid of being, as she put it, "had", as young girls every day, and trapped in a condition that could only worsen, she was not yet at a stage where the prospect of a man and marriage could be contemplated with equanimity (272).

Ruth resolves to avoid this path. She refuses to give up the fight that Mem has started, and she continues to search for other means of expression as her character develops.

Although Walker never takes Ruth beyond her teenage years, the reader senses that she is much further along on the journey towards bringing forth her soul and nurturing it than both her grandmother and her mother. The youngest Copeland already has an awareness of the inviolate space that she possess, and she refuses to

allow anyone to take this space from her. She also has more freedom to express herself and more outlets in which to do so than her ancestors. Another important element of Ruth's development involves her grandfather Grange. Neither Margaret nor Mem were in an atmosphere where anyone was affirming their character development and encouraging their expression. Ruth is in a much different situation.

She has the benefit of being in an environment where she is loved and encouraged by her grandfather. He affirms her worth and importance. He regrets the way he has lived his life and treated his family. He is devoted to providing an atmosphere where Ruth can recognize her capabilities and become an independent and self-reliant woman. Accordingly, he affirms Ruth and who she is: "He listened to her complaints of her father's indifference, Grange's total infatuation with the idea of preserving innocence his blind acceptance of Ruth as something of a miracle, something of immense value to him, to his pride, to his will to live, to his soul" (236). Grange encourages his granddaughter to bring forth the soul within her. As she brings her individuality forward, her grandfather nurtures and encourages her the best he can. She grows up in oppressive circumstances but refuses to be controlled by them. She is very uninhibited when it comes to standing up for herself. When she is sitting in school one day, she reads a comment made in one of the second hand history books that her school received from the white school. In the book there is a picture of a white missionary talking to a black man who is wearing a grass skirt and he has a bone sticking out of his nose. The girl who had the book before Ruth had written "A

nigger" underneath the picture of this man. Ruth is so offended by the drawing and the book itself, she storms out of the classroom in disgust (261). She will not allow her soul to be stifled and her individuality to be oppressed.

Ruth undergoes much of the same oppression that Margaret and Mem experienced. She is ostracized because of her family background and because of her inhibition to speak out. Despite this oppression, her soul will not break or discontinue expressing itself. She continues to receive affirmation from Grange as she develops. For Grange, "His one duty in the world was to prepare Ruth for some great and herculean task, some magnificent and deadly struggle, some harsh and foreboding reality. Nothing moved him to repent of his independent method of raising her" (279). The task that Grange seems to be preparing her for is how to continue to develop her soul and hold that place inside of her inviolate, even when he is no longer around. Brownfield is jealous that his father is redeeming himself by raising his daughter, and he resolves to get her back. His will to have Ruth in his custody is not out of a strong love for his daughter, but out of revenge of his father. Grange is worried that Brownfield will regain custody of Ruth. Grange tells Ruth the story of the Hebrew children who fled from Egypt. He says that the best part of the story is that they "Got out while they still had some sense and cared about what happened to their spirit" (292). He encourages Ruth to stand up to Brownfield and refuse to ever be owned by anyone. He warns his granddaughter, "you don't know how tired you be after years of strugglin'. I want you to fight 'em every step of the way when they tries

to abuse you" (294). Grange wants to encourage Ruth to nurture and bring forth her soul even when no one is around to affirm her in this. He is apprehensive because he realizes, "survival was not everything. He had survived. But to survive whole was what he wanted for Ruth" (298). Despite his fear, his granddaughter will not let anyone inhibit her freedom of expression. When she has a confrontation with her father, she does not hesitate to express to him how she feels. Brownfield pleads with Ruth to give him another chance; she does not even flinch. She stands up to her father and tells him, "you don't even know me. If you did you'd know I'm not just a pitcher to be filled by someone else. I have a mind, I have a memory" (305). Because of the outlets she has found to develop her individuality and build her character, she is not afraid to stand up for herself.

As Grange had suspected, there does come a day when he and Ruth are physically separated. Brownfield takes Grange and Ruth to court to regain the custody of his daughter. When the judge awards Brownfield custody, Grange kills his own son in order to protect her. The same fate is in store for Grange at the hands of justice. Although Walker ends The Third Life of Grange Copeland with this separation, Ruth has proved that her soul is too strong and uninhibited to allow anything or anyone from stifling her growth and development. Ruth has found in her that same inviolate space that Margaret and Mem knew. The youngest Copeland also has the strength of her dead mother and grandmother to draw on for support and encouragement. Throughout her novels and her poetry, Walker stresses the importance of recognizing the legacy

that the women gone before have left:

To acknowledge our ancestors means we are aware that we did not make ourselves, that the line stretches all the way back, perhaps, to God; or to Gods. We remember them because it is an easy thing to forget that we are not the first to suffer, rebel, fight, love and die. The grace with which we embrace life, in spite of the pain, the sorrows, is always a measure of what has gone before (In Search 235).

Ruth knows she is not the first woman to live and she draws from the legacy. Above all, she possesses the ability to direct her creative energy towards positive outlets, such as her spirituality and her desire for change and becoming part of the revolution. These outlets enable Ruth to express her soul. Most importantly, she has another individual who encourages her growth and her individuality. Margaret and Mem did not have this key ingredient. Even though Grange is gone, Ruth will continue to bring forth her soul and hold both the key and lock to that inviolate space inside of her.

CHAPTER III

THE COLOR PURPLE

In The Color Purple, Walker's main focus is again to bring forth the black women's soul. As Walker writes, "I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people" (In Search 256). In The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Walker focuses on the bringing forth and nurturing of the soul by using a generational journey. The same journey is depicted in The Color Purple through the development of one woman's character. The main character, Celie, initially reminds the reader of Margaret from The Third Life of Grange Copeland. In order for Celie to bring forth her soul she first has to recognize that she has an identity. With the assistance of supportive friends, Celie gains confidence and begins the journey towards developing and nurturing her soul.

The Black Suspended Female Character

Celie is the epitome of a black suspended female character. She is the victim of sexual, psychological and physical abuse. Her stepfather rapes her repeatedly and she bears two children by him. He threatens Celie and warns her: "You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (The Color Purple 1). Thus, Celie spends many years keeping this horrible secret and believing that this abuse was something she may have brought upon herself.

Not only does Celie have the burden of keeping her stepfather's secret confidential, but also, her mother dies at an early age and she takes on a maternal role in the care of her sister, Nettie. Celie is so determined to carry out this role to the best of her ability, that she will go to extremes for her sister. In one instance, she fears that her stepfather will sexually abuse Nettie. In order to prevent this, Celie diverts his attention. In her journal she writes: "I duck into my room and come out wearing horse hair, feathers and a pair of our new mammy's high heel shoes. He beat me for dressing trampy but he do it to me anyway" (8). Although she will make great sacrifices for others, she will not make any for herself. The novel is a series of journal entries written by Celie primarily to God. From these entries Walker constructs much of Celie's outward life and emotions are never expressed. She does not allow herself expression. She does not even believe she has a right to feel emotions. Celie explains to Shug:

I can't remember the last time I felt mad, I say. I used to git mad at my

mammy cause she put a lot of work on me. Then I see how sick she is. Couldn't stay mad at my daddy cause he my daddy. Bible say, Honor father and mother no matter what. Then after while every time I got mad, or start to feel mad, I got sick. Felt like throwing up. Terrible feeling. Then I start to feel nothing at all (The Color Purple 43-44).

Celie is not yet aware that she even has a soul, much less a space inside of her to call her own.

Consequently, Celie believes everything that others say. Her stepfather describes Celie to a prospective husband. He relays that, "She ugly. He say. But she ain't no stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she ain't gonna make you feed it or clothe it" (9). Even though these are her stepfather's words, she lives out this description. She is given in marriage to Mister, and she goes obediently and submissively about her role as wife and mother to his five children.

Accordingly, Celie has an eagerness to learn to read and write, but this eagerness appears to be rooted and fuelled by Nettie's belief in her sister. Celie recognizes that: "I know I'm not as pretty or as smart as Nettie, but she say I ain't dumb" (10). She tries her best to fulfill her menial duties; she does not seem concerned with her own development. Nettie tries to encourage her sister to run from the abusive relationship with Mister: "But she keep on. You got to fight. You got to

fight. But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive" (18).

Celie's central concern is surviving the abuse and burdens of her past. She appears to be content with merely surviving because she does not know any differently. Celie realizes, "I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (2). In light of her past and her present circumstances, being alive is quite an accomplishment.

Everybody's Life But Her Own

The next progression in Celie's journey towards recognizing that she possesses an interior space is her awareness of other black women and her desire to vicariously live through them. The first glimpse of emotion that she shows concerns entertainer, Shug Avery. Shug is known to many as a wild woman with loose morals. Celie's husband, Mister, has an ongoing relationship with Shug. When Celie first lays eyes on a picture of Shug, she cannot stop looking at her. She asks to keep the picture and it becomes her most prized possession. When Shug is performing in a nearby town, Celie can hardly restrain herself because she wants to attend the show. She exclaims, "Lord, I wants to go so bad. Not to dance. Not to drink. Not to play card. Not even to hear Shug Avery sing. I just be thankful to lay eyes on her" (26). Celie recognizes characteristics in Shug that she has never seen in herself or been able to express. Celie admires Shug's individuality and ability to express herself, but she does not make the connection that she has those same capabilities that would enable her to bring forth her own soul.

Hence, Celie carries this vicarious living to an extreme. When she is buying a dress, she wants to select one according to the colors Shug might wear. Her obsession to be someone other than herself is not merely directed towards Shug. She is also jealous of her stepson Harpo's wife, Sofia. Sofia is a loud and boisterous woman who is not afraid to express her thoughts and opinions. Harpo solicits Celie's advice on how to make Sofia mind him. Her immediate suggestion is to physically abuse Sofia. Celie later confesses to her friend that, "I say it cause I'm a fool. I say. I say it cause I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't. What that she say. Fight, I say" (42). Even her recognition of admirable traits in others is a step above the feelings of nothingness she used to have. She attempts to live through both Shug and Sofia as her spirit struggles to emerge.

Because of Celie's past and her feelings of worthlessness, the mere recognition that she is entitled to personal freedom takes a great deal of work. In The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Ruth was already aware of her spirit and individuality because her mother was nurturing and encouraging her from the beginning. Celie, on the other hand, lived for twenty years merely trying to survive. She was continually given messages about her own worthlessness. Consequently, finding her spirit and bringing forth her soul is a tremendous undertaking. She is only able to move forward in this journey by the help and encouragement of devoted friends. Originally she is drawn toward Sofia and Shug because they have the attributes that Celie longs for. In return, Sofia and Shug pity Celie because of her oppression. Sofia confides to her: "To tell

the truth, you remind me of my mama. She under my daddy thumb. Now she under my daddy foot. Anything he say, goes. She never say nothing back. She never stand up for herself" (43). Despite the unusual circumstances of their friendships, the more time these women spend together, the deeper their friendship grows. Walker uses the image of quilting to depict these friendships. On a number of occasions these women work on a quilt together. The quilt image paints a picture of these women's lives coming together. Celie explains that on one occasion, "Me and Sofia work on the quilt. Got it frame up on the porch. Shug Avery donate her old yellow dress for scrap, and I work in a piece every chance I get" (61). The friendships deepens between these women and begin to take on a significant meaning in all of their lives.

The Community

In order to understand the influence and impact Shug and Sofia have on Celie it is necessary to note the characteristics that these women possess. Shug is self-confident and does not hesitate in bringing forth her soul. Her passions are dancing and entertaining; criticism is not going to stop her from pursuing her love. Shug is not intimidated by men. If anything, men are intimidated by Shug. Mister didn't marry Shug because others do not approve. When Mister tries to show Shug some affection she retorts, "I don't need no weak little boy can't say no to his daddy hanging on me. I need a man" (49). She lives her life and does not allow any individual to stifle her being. In unwavering fashion, she stands up for herself. In an address to students at

Sarah Lawrence College, Walker encourages the young people to have individuality like Shug. She concludes with her poem "Be Nobody's Darling" that appears to reflect the soul that everyone should strive for and that Shug possesses. She writes:

Be nobody's darling;
Be an outcast.
Take the contradictions
Of your life
And wrap around
You like a shawl,
To parry stones
To keep you warm.
Watch the people succumb
To madness
With ample cheer;
Let them look askance at you
And you askance reply.
Be an outcast;
Be pleased to walk alone
(Uncool)
Or line the crowded
River beds

With other impetuous
 Fools.
 Make a merry gathering
 On the bank
 Where thousands perished
 For brave hurt words
 They said.
 Be nobody's darling;
 Be an outcast.
 Qualified to live
 Among your dead (In Search 40).

Like the women Walker urges the students to be, Shug refuses to be anybody's darling but her own.

Similarly, Sofia has a very strong and independent character. Sofia is forced to spend time in jail after she punches the mayor. The mayor's wife asks Sofia to be her maid. When Sofia adamantly refuses, the mayor slaps her. As Celie so accurately describes the scene she relates, "You know what happens if somebody slap Sofia" (90). Sofia beats the mayor up. Even though she is seriously reprimanded for her actions, because of her strong willed nature, if she were in this situation again, she would most likely react the same way. Sofia and Shug will not loosen the grip they have on the key to their inviolate space. Celie admires their individuality. She admits, "I think

bout Sofia. She tickle me" (66). Because Celie stands in great awe and admiration of these two women, Shug and Sofia help her recognize and bring forth her soul.

These two women develop a very honest and loving relationship with Celie. She feels safe with her friends. They support their friend even when she will not stand up for herself. In one instance, Shug is going to give a performance at the local nightclub, and Mister says that his wife cannot attend. Shug firmly replies, "Yeah, but Celie going, say Shug, while I press her hair. Spose I git sick while I'm singing, she say, spose my dress come undone?" (76). Shug and Sofia affirm Celie's worth and value. Shug writes a song and names it after Celie. She admits that this is the "first time somebody made something and name it after me" (77). Her friend's affirmation gives Celie power. For the first time, she considers that she might be valuable and worthwhile. She is one step closer towards acknowledging her own individuality and "bringing forth" her spirit.

A Soul Drawn Out

Like Mem in The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Celie is aware of a personal space and a spirit struggling to be free. It reveals itself through small and subtle changes in her mannerisms. For the first time, she encourages another woman to stand up for herself. While Sofia is separated from Harpo, he finds himself a new girlfriend whose name is Squeak because of her shrill voice. Squeak allows herself to be walked on and lacks self confidence. Celie recognizes Squeak's traits as her own,

and she encourages Squeak to take a stand. Celie says, "What your real name, I ast her. She say, Mary Agnes. Make Harpo call you by your real name, I say. Then maybe he see you even when he trouble" (89). She has the capacity to encourage others because she is gaining an awareness of her own rights. In one of her prose collections, Alice Walker makes a statement about the civil rights movement. This statement appears to also describe Celie's new awareness of her own spirit and her new struggle to bring forth this spirit. In the collection, Walker writes that, "Before, there had seemed to be no real reason for struggling beyond the effort of daily bread. Now there was a chance at the other that Jesus meant when He said we could not live by bread alone" (In Search 125). Now that Celie is aware of a unique spirit and is beginning to sense her importance, there is a chance that she might be able to bring her spirit forth into a means of expression.

Walker's personal struggles seem to parallel some of the struggles Celie undergoes. With regard to her own life, she comments, "I have fought and kicked and fasted and prayed and cursed and cried myself to the point of existing" (In Search 125). Similarly, before Celie reaches the point of recognizing she has a soul and the right to an inviolate space, she suffers through an abusive childhood and is in the midst of an abusive marriage. It takes two supportive and devoted friends to bring Celie to the point of even recognizing that she has a soul.

Expressing the Soul

Alice Walker writes, "To know is to exist: to exist is to be involved, to move about, to see the world with my own eyes" (In Search 126). Celie now knows about her soul. She recognizes that she exists, and she is ready to make the step toward becoming more involved in life. She allows herself to feel and express emotion for the first time. Finally she opens up and tells Shug about the sexual abuse of her stepfather. Shug responds, "Oh, Miss Celie, she say. And put her arms round me. They black and smooth and kind of glowing from the lamplight. I start to cry too. I cry and cry and cry. Seem like it all come back to me, laying there in Shug arms" (The Color Purple 117). This is the first time she has opened up about her abusive past. Celie recognizes that she has been wronged. Her body and soul have been abused. Once she allows herself the freedom of expression, her soul pours forth. After this release, she expresses her emotions very freely. In a later scene Celie and Shug discover that Mister has been hiding letters that Celie's sister Nettie sent to her over the years. She allows herself to feel anger towards Mister because she knows she deserves better treatment. Celie asks Shug very honestly, "How I'm gon keep from killing him, I say" (150). She no longer allows her feelings to go unrecognized as she begins to draw her soul forth.

Now that Celie's emotions are more apparent, she feels much easier about speaking her mind on other issues. For the first time, her journal is marked by her

sentiments and feelings. Instead of simply addressing her journal entries to God, Celie tells Shug what she thinks about her creator. Celie admits, "Anyhow, I say, the God I been praying and writing to is a man and act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown" (199). Once she verbalizes her feelings toward God she is receptive to other interpretations. Her views remain constant over the years because she never questions or expresses them. Once Celie expresses her feelings toward spirituality, she opens the door to other views. Shug reveals to her own understanding of spirituality. Shug believes, "God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find inside it" (262). Celie ponders new ideas because she has brought forth her own views into the light where they are now exposed and can be altered. Now she has the ability to think for herself and she begins developing that inviolate personal space to which she holds the key. She becomes actively involved in life. Celie realizes that never before has she recognized the beauty in life. She says that she she has been too consumed thinking about God the person that, "I never truly notice nothing God make. Not a blade of corn (how it do that?) not the color purple (where it come from?). Not the little wildflowers. Nothing. Now that my eyes opening, I feels like a fool" (204). A whole new world opens up to Celie because she acknowledges and brings forth her soul.

The Refusal to be Owned

With all of the inward developments that Celie is experiencing, her outward mannerisms undergo some dramatic changes. In a confrontational scene, Celie tells Mister what she honestly thinks about him. She tells him: "You are a lowdown dog is whats wrong. I say. It's time to leave you and enter into the creation, and your dead body just the welcome mat I need" (207). After the recognition and bringing forth of her soul, she takes another step forward in her journey to wholeness, she refuses to be owned by anyone, especially Mister. Celie decides to leave Mister and head to Tennessee with Shug and her new husband, Grady. She no longer needs so much affirmation from her own community because she begins to believe in herself now that she has seen her soul. Her husband's degradation no longer carries any weight. When Mister makes a nasty comment, Celie merely curses him and goes about her business.

One of Celie's new outlets that she develops as a means of expression is sewing. Shug first suggests the idea of making pants for women and Celie takes the idea and develops it into a business. The time, love, and effort she puts into making pants nurtures and affirms her spirit. She designs a pair of pants for Sofia's brother-in-law Jack. Celie explains, "I dream and dream and dream over Jack's pants" (200). Celie creates pants for her friends according to their personality. This allows her spirit to be creative and to express itself. Her spirit is alive, awake and becoming involved in life. The difference in her attitude is phenomenal. She writes in her journal: "I am so

happy. I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time" (222). Not only does Celie allow herself to feel emotions, but she is also nurturing and developing her soul through creative expression. She feels she is finally somebody.

The real test to Celie's new attitude comes when the newness of meeting her soul wears off a bit. Shug falls in love with a young man and leaves Celie completely on her own. Celie is devastated but not destroyed. Now that her soul has been introduced to the world, despite circumstances, she will not stifle it again. She is able to put her friends new life into perspective. She realizes that "Shug got a right to live too. She got a right to look over the world in whatever company she choose. Just cause I love her don't take away none of her rights" (276). Celie develops a mature understanding of her own development and realizes how her spirit is independent of everyone else.

Reconciliation

Becoming assertive, recognizing her worth and bringing forth her soul saves Celie. She finds ways to express herself and has friends to affirm and encourage her. She is free to continue to grow and develop. Walker demonstrates that through this individual discovery miracles can happen in other relationships. For example, Celie's relationships with Shug and Sofia are now altered because they can talk to and share with Celie as equals now. More importantly, her relationship with Mister undergoes dramatic alterations now that she is an independent, self-assured woman who holds the

key to her inviolate space. Her independence and accusations directed toward her husband have forced Mister into some dramatic realizations of his own. Sofia explains to Celie the change that Mister has undergone. She relays that, "At night he thought he heard bats outside the door. Other things rattling in the chimney. But the worse part was having to listen to his own heart" (231). Listening to his own heart and facing up to his past actions causes Mister to change his ways. Celie's stepfather dies and she inherits his old house. She lives close to Mister and they spend quite a few nights sitting on his porch talking. Healing begins in their relationship because Celie is aware of the respect she deserves, and Mister is aware of his harmful actions and has repented. One night as they are sitting on the porch Mister confesses, "I'm satisfied this is the first time I ever lived on Earth as a natural man. It felt like a new experience" (267). Mister recognizes her independent spirit and appreciates that she is a human and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. For the first time in his life, Mister is expressing his soul in a positive manner. They have long conversations out on the porch and talk about how they both are really starting their lives over. In one powerful scene of reconciliation, they are out on his porch talking about life, "Then the old devil put his arms around me and just stood there on the porch with me real quiet. Way after while I bent my stiff neck onto his shoulder. Here us is, I thought, two old fools left over from love, keeping each other company under the stars" (278). Because they are both confident individuals, they can now respect each other and treat one another as equals.

Celie is now in a position where she can encourage Mister in his new beginnings. She is stable enough in her own development to support another. She affirms Mister that, "If you know your heart sorry, I say, that mean it not quite as spoilt as you think" (289). With the support and help of Celie, Mister is able to bring forth his character a positive means of expression. Mister tells her, "I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. To ast. And that in wondering bout the big things and asking bout the big things, you learn about the little ones, almost by accident. But you never know nothing more about the big things than you start out with. The more I wonder, he say, the more I love" (290). The reconciliation that takes place between Mister and Celie is only possible because both have recognized their spirits and brought them forth by positive means. Walker makes a statement in one of her books of poetry that depicts the journey that Mister and Celie are both on. Walker states: "For it is change in the self, along with the ability to forgive the self and others, that frees us for the next encounter" (Her Blue Body 239). She is able to move on in the development of herself because she has forgiven her abusers. More importantly, both Celie and Mister hold the key to their inviolate space and refuse to allow anyone to take away or stifle their individuality.

Celie's journey from a submissive black female suspended character to an independent and self-assured woman is extremely powerful because of the barriers that she is forced to overcome. The reader rejoices with her because she is her own woman holding the key to her soul. Her room in her new house is purple, red and

bright yellow. No one can stifle her individuality. She understands beauty and the importance of her soul. All the pieces of her life fit smoothly; Celie rejoices to be that her life is her own. In her last journal entry she writes: "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear everything. Dear God" (292). Celie is whole.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Throughout the two novels, Walker adamantly affirms her belief that the bringing forth of the soul is a necessary journey. In both novels the black female characters go through this process by different means but the ultimate result is the recognition and expression of the soul. The ability to deliver the soul underneath the oppression many of these characters undergo impacts the journey to an even greater extent. Celie has to overcome a sense of worthlessness that has developed from many years of verbal and physical abuse. Margaret, Mem and Ruth also must overcome verbal and some physical oppression in order to bring forth their soul.

In light of these burdens, Walker's black female characters develop creative means of expression in order to nurture and free their soul. For Celie, these outlets evolve into encouraging others, owning a business, and her new friendship with Mister. Margaret expresses her soul through her sexuality. Even though this negative outlet leads to her physical destruction Margaret learns through the abuse of her sexuality that she is stifling her spirit, and she kills herself to maintain the inviolate space she has remaining. Mem and Ruth nurture their spirits through their determined and fighting spirits. For Mem this manifests itself in her fight for her children. Ruth nurtures her soul by her belief in herself and her participation in the black revolution. Walker supports her claim, "I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of

my people" (In Search 256). Her black female characters in The Third Life of Grange Copeland and The Color Purple do survive whole, with their spirits intact because of the steps they go through in order to develop and nurture their soul. Walker enables her characters to survive whole by enabling them to recognize they have a right to a private space. They also have a right to holding the key to their inviolate space.

On a personal level, Walker has been able to survive whole by nurturing her own soul through her release of writing fiction and poetry. She firmly believed that she would not be alive past the age of thirty. Walker felt her depression would ultimately result in suicide. She admits: "My life has been saved more times than I can count by this bright, unbeckoned stranger, from my deepest ocean and farthest shore" (Her Blue Body xv). Walker wants her characters to save themselves by discovering and delivering their own souls. Her characters are saved by the recognition that they have an individual spirit and then learning ways to express themselves. In her poem "The Nature of This Flower Is to Bloom", Walker describes this journey that her black female characters undergo. She writes:

Rebellious. Living.

Against the Elemental Crush.

A Song of Color

Blooming

For Deserving Eyes

Blooming Gloriously

For its Self. (Her Blue Body 235).

The nature of these women is to express themselves, to bloom. In spite of the oppression these women faces, Walker allows her characters to bring forth their souls and when they express themselves and hold fast to their inviolate space, they bloom.

APPENDIX

Criticism of Alice Walker

Thadius M. Davis

Critic Thadius M. Davis gave Alice Walker a positive review of her novels The Color Purple and The Third Life of Grange Copeland. Unlike many critics, Davis sees the reasoning behind how Walker portrays black men in her novels. Davis understands: "The nameless husband in The Color Purple becomes "Albert" in his later years, because, like Grange Copeland in Walker's first novel, he discovers reflection which makes him a defined person who can accept responsibility for his mistakes and the suffering he has caused, especially his abusive treatment of his wife whom he had denigrated..."(405). Davis isn't offended by the depiction of the male. He sees the inward progressions that these men undergo and how valuable this process is. He also believes that in The Third Life of Grange Copeland, all the generations of women contributed to Ruth's identity. He believes that Ruth was open to change and consequently she developed into a strong willed woman. Davis also comments on Walker's construction of characters "inside outward." Her characters develop an identity and then can take an active part in the world. (Davis, Thadius M. "Alice Walker." Contemporary Literary Criticism. 58 vol. Ed. Roger Mautz. Detroit: Gale Research Inc. 1990. 405.

George Stade

Critic George Stade did not find the same appreciation for the treatment of black men that Davis found. Stade is bothered that all the male characters in The Color Purple are depicted as awful and brutal. He writes: "But the novel is not feminist-it does not argue the equality of the sexes; it dramatizes, rather, the virtues of women and the vices of men" (429). He does not see a justifiable explanation as to why her male characters are all treated in this manner. He believes that instead of making progress for the black race, Walker is regressing with her depiction of black men. He does not find the same redeeming quality in these characters that Davis found. (Stade, George. "Alice Walker." Contemporary Literary Criticism. 46 vol. Ed. Roger Mautz and Daniel G. Marouski. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1988. 428-9.

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