

THE ARISTOTELIAN TRADITION IN THE NOVELS OF ALICE WALKER:
A CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION OF THE FIVE CANONS

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ABSTRACT

Aristotle and Alice Walker share more than an initial. Though separated by centuries, the two have contributed heavily to literature: Aristotle in the writing of precepts for effective persuasion and Walker in the application of those precepts in the writing of introspective and realistic fiction. None of the limited research produced on the novels of Alice Walker has focused on the Aristotelleian tradition of persuasion that informs Walker's fiction.

The focus of this paper is the first three novels: The Color Purple, Meridian, and The Third Life of Grange Copeland. By using Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as the "faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion," this paper proves the assertion that Walker makes use of the canons of rhetoric--invention, memory, arrangement, delivery, and style--in presenting a persuasive argument about the realities of the experiences of African-American women in the South (7). Aristotle's

Rhetoric is the primary source against which Walker's three novels are measured.

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CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Alice Walker, born in 1944, began publishing at the age of twenty-two and has made significant contributions to the literary world as a poet, short story writer, essayist, critic, editor, and novelist. Her works of fiction and poetry record the experiences of Africans and African-Americans in a way that transcends cultural and racial barriers. Although primarily concerned with the experiences of African-American women and the realities they have faced, her work transcends lines of gender, producing a literature that is significant for all people of all times in all places.

Her poetic works are contained in Once: Poems (1968), which reflects her experiences in East Africa and in the South in the sixties as a civil rights worker; Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems, (1971) which focuses on revolutionaries and lovers; Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning, (1975) which is dedicated to her father and brothers; and Horses Make the Landscape More Beautiful, (1984) which addresses injustice, racism, and the need to save ourselves from self-immolation. In Love and Trouble (1976) and You Can't Keep a Good Woman

Down (1981) contain short stories and essays which focus on the African-American woman and her attempt at wholeness, the motif which pervades Walker's fiction. In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose by Alice Walker (1983), her first collection of non-fiction, contains the classic essay by the same title and many other essays which identify and define Walker as a creator. Walker is also well known for her efforts to restore Zora Neale Hurston to literary prominence. In so doing she edited a Hurston reader for which she wrote the introduction in 1979. For children, she has written a biography entitled Langston Hughes (1973).

Published in 1988, Walker's second collection of prose pieces, Living by the Word, contains essays written between 1973 and 1987. Spiritual in nature, the essays cover a range of topics including feminist and political and racial issues, human connections to plants and animals, and personal and familial relationships. Walker's most recent work is one of fiction published in 1989. The Temple of My Familiar is described by Walker as a romance which covers the last five hundred thousand years.

Of all her creations, however, Walker is perhaps best known for her first three novels: The Third Life of Grange Copeland (1970), Meridian (1976), and The Color Purple

(1982). In the literature written to this point on the novels, it is interesting that criticism is mainly concerned with the themes and recurring motifs in Walker's own work. The most interesting criticism, though, is found in what Walker says about her role as an artist and what she attempts to do in her work, specifically the novels. This chapter, then, will have as its focus what critics have said regarding Walker's novels and what Walker has said in interviews and essays about her writing process and her perception of her role as an artist.

CRITICISM ON THE WORKS OF ALICE WALKER

The earliest criticism on Walker appeared in 1974 in an article by Mary Helen Washington on "Black Women Image Makers" in which Walker is cited as one of several African-American women writers who were contributing to the more realistic and positive image being formed of African-American women in fiction. No response is made to either novel, but Washington in a brief statement on Walker refers to her as "one of the youngest and best of the new Black women writers" (12). In this early article Washington viewed Walker as "one of those writers whose perceptions are shaped by their own Black womanhood, who can take us into the dark recesses of the soul" (13). The portrait that Walker paints of the African-American woman is that of

a woman strong but not strong in all ways.

The first significant essay appears in 1975 and focuses on the violence in The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Walker's first novel. For the most part Trudier Harris explores the differing reactions of Brownfield and Grange Copeland to their environment: the sharecropping system of the South. She asserts that Walker portrays Grange naturalistically, as a pawn of the system and, therefore, not completely responsible for what happens to him. On the other hand, Brownfield's demise is not attributable to the sharecropping system. He is basically evil and makes no attempt to grow or change his situation. Grange realizes his own shortcomings and attempts to reconcile his earlier wrongs through the maintenance, for a short period, of Mem and later in his very caring and loving concern for the life and future of Ruth. Although Grange, too, commits violent acts, Harris distinguishes his acts from Brownfield's by reason of their justification. If anyone had the right to take the life of Brownfield, then Grange was indeed that person since Grange was the "creator or progenitor of Brownfield, and should destroy the monster of his loins" (244). Brownfield, Harris says, fails to evolve while his father had begun the process of evolution into an individual who no longer

blamed the system for his predicament. Harris concludes that Walker's point is that "where the body is confined, the mind or soul or spirit does not necessarily have to deteriorate along parallel lines. The soul can soar above that which would destroy the body . . ." (247).

Another Trudier Harris essay was the first to appear on the tradition of folklore in Walker's works. In the 1977 rendering, Harris examines Walker's fictional works to that point, In Love and Trouble and The Third Life of Grange Copeland, in which folk material is less prominent. The bulk of the examination, then, focuses on the short stories, which contain large amounts of folk material.

Harris believes that Walker "employs folklore for purposes of defining characters and illustrating relationships between them as well as for plot development" (3). In the novel folk material is used to further define the relationship between Grange and Ruth through the recounting of stories told by Grange as commentaries on change and on the hypocrisy of Christianity. Harris concludes that Walker follows the tradition begun by Chestnutt, Hurston, and Toomer but follows it with more freedom in making social statements through the use of folklore.

A 1979 essay by Peter Erickson has as its focus family-based identity in some of Walker's work up to this

point. Making use of a Walker short story and poems from Revolutionary Petunias to support his thesis that the depiction of the family in Walker's work is based on what has happened to African-Americans in the past, Erickson makes wider use of The Third Life of Grange Copeland and Meridian. Like Harris, he sees the sharecropping environment of the rural South as the fire that more or less shapes the destinies of Brownfield and Grange. The significant difference pointed out by Erickson in his analysis of the responses of the two men to that environment is that Grange had an opportunity to change because of his encounter with Ruth. Brownfield, by contrast, had no such opportunity. There was no Ruth in his life; he is not allowed the second chance that is given to Grange. The murder of Brownfield by Grange at the end of the novel is not viewed by him as an act of justice, as Harris views it, but as the "tragic resolution of an insoluble conflict between Grange and Brownfield" (79). Erickson mainly analyzed how the novel moves from the depiction of destructive family relationships to positive ones. He examined the alternative cycle of hope and despair. As an organizing structure, Walker uses the family members who undergo a change from the first novel to the second. The first novel has as principals a

grandfather against a father and the second a daughter with a "guilt-laden" relationship to her mother.

In examining Meridian, Erickson traces the theme of mourning, which he says began in the first novel. He links mourning to Meridian's sadness which permeates the work. Family identity, the focus of the essay, is brought out in the discussion of Meridian's "losing" of her mother, a "mournable" experience. Their primary conflict results from Meridian's need to love her mother and be different from her simultaneously. Meridian follows her own path in life, a path counter to what her mother wishes, but she suffers severely as a result. Reconciliation, for her, comes through the church, a place she never thought she would find it.

Mary Helen Washington's 1979 essay on Alice Walker was written when Walker had published two volumes of poetry, two novels, and one book of short stories (133-49). Washington, an authority on Walker, has a personal association with the writer and easy access to special materials on the writer. Washington strongly reaffirms what she stated in her 1974 article, that Walker was one of the best new African-American women writers. The salient characteristic of her writing, she says, "is her concern for the lives of Black women" (133). In her writings up to

1979, Walker had presented more than twenty-five characters, from the slave woman to Meridian, a revolutionary woman of the sixties. She examines the external world shaping these women as well as the internal world of each woman. Washington refers to Walker as an apologist, "one who speaks or writes in defense of a cause or position" (149) and as a chronicler for African-American women. Washington draws on Walker's own comments about her writing in reaching her conclusion. She talks about the cyclical process involved in the lives of Walker's women, Ruth in The Third Life of Grange Copeland and Meridian in Meridian. Ruth can be seen becoming aware of herself and her environment as she is emerging as a young woman at the same time of the Civil Rights Movement. She represents the third generation in her family and a transition from death to life. Meridian, too, evolves but in a more clearly defined way. Freed herself from sexual and racial oppression to a revolutionary figure, she finds meaning in her life by freeing others.

Perhaps the most extensive treatment of Walker's novels was done by Barbara Christian in a 1980 essay on The Third Life of Grange Copeland and Meridian. Christian does an excellent job of examining the novels by making use of Walker's quilt metaphor in her analysis:

Alice Walker's words are quilts-- bits and pieces of used material rescued from oblivion for everyday use. She takes seemingly ragged edges and arranges them into works of functional though terrifying beauty. . . .

The bits and pieces are not random fabric. Like their quilter, they originate in the South. . . .

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. . . . 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. (180-181)

Lengthily, the essay examines Walker's two novels as "the exploration of a process of personal and social growth out of horror and waste" (181). Christian examines the novel as a saga that takes the family from degeneration, in the murderous acts of Brownfield, to regeneration in the redeeming qualities found in Grange through his love for Ruth. In her examination, Christian departs from other critics by focusing on the part of children in the novel and where they fit in the degenerative to regenerative process. She agrees with other critics that the murder/suicide at the end of the novel for the "surviving whole" that Grange wished for Ruth is justified. But she questions Walker at the end about the necessity of the death-giving-life-idea. Does it, in effect, work?

In her examination of Meridian, Christian focuses on Meridian's quest for wholeness. Christian views Meridian as the embodiment of the major concept of the novel, the relationship between personal and social change. Christian examines the major elements of Meridian: plot arrangement, the author's style, the use of the concept of animism which Walker says is the one thing African-Americans retain from their African heritage, the African-American woman's struggle for social and personal change, and the relationships between the characters and the Civil Rights Movement as essential ingredients in supporting the theme of the novel that the personal and societal quests for health and freedom are interrelated; it is an ongoing process rather than an "adventure that ends in a neat resolution" (234).

Christian ends the essay with a synthesis of both novels as patterns for change. In each, Walker shows a backward and a forward progression involved in the process of personal and societal change in the structural development of each novel. In The Third Life of Grange Copeland, the key is rebirth; in Meridian, the key is wholeness. Wholeness cannot be obtained without a struggle. Both novels emphasize that point.

Karen Gaston (1981) in "Women in the Lives of Grange

Copeland" espouses the theory that Walker's female characters in this novel are more than foils. They play a significant role in Grange's transformation and are, therefore, responsible for Ruth's movement toward racial and sexual liberation. She examines the motivations and actions of Margaret, Mem and Josie in their relationship with Grange and Brownfield as both "counterpoise" (balance) and impetus to the two men, thus affecting the new life awaiting Ruth as a result of their suffering. Gaston concludes that neither Grange's development into a man nor Ruth's possibility for a life different from that of her mother's and grandmother's could have taken place without the other women in the novel. Ruth is not only born but made by the actions of others (286).

Deborah McDowell's insightful exploration of Meridian as Bildungsroman offers a wonderful tracing of the experiences Meridian undergoes in her attempt to develop completeness. McDowell's examination follows, step by step, Meridian's death-rebirth experiences and how each contributes to her development toward wholeness. She also discusses briefly the Emersonian idealism in the novel in that Meridian finds the divinity in herself despite the social conventions placed upon her to adhere to established female role patterns. In her challenge to Southern

traditions, the escapist religion of her mother, the basic ideals purported by her college, Meridian becomes an outsider. She sheds all to return to her Africanism and Southern black roots to reach a kind of transcendental realization about her own identity. McDowell's examination probably represents one of the best of its kind.

Two further essays by Mary Helen Washington, "Her Mother's Gifts" (1982) and "I Sign My Mother's Name" (1984), offer insight into the creative instincts of Alice Walker. The second essay appears to be an expansion of the first. The latter article not only discusses the gifts that Walker received from her mother but also those received by Dorothy West and Paule Marshall from their mothers. All three women name their mothers as their literary precursors, though their mother's gifts were through oral stories. Walker's mother, her daughter wrote, gave her three tangible gifts that perhaps influenced her more than any thing else. Each represented self sufficiency and independence: a sewing machine meant she could make her own clothes; a suitcase gave her the freedom to travel; and a typewriter gave her permission to write. Walker, as well as West and Marshall, drew material for her poetry and fiction from her mother's stories and from actual incidents in her mother's life.

Another examination of Alice Walker's women is undertaken by Bettye J. Parke-Smith in a 1984 essay. She looks at Walker's women generally in all three novels as searching for some peace of mind. In her examination, Parker-Smith looks at the male-female relationships in the novels and the impact those relationships have on the female characters. She concludes that in the first novel the women find peace of mind in death after a life of suffering under the pressures of the dominant society and pressures inflicted on them by African-American men. They find sweet repose in death after a life of victimization. She emphasized the element of guilt in the lives of all Walker's characters. Meridian suffers to resolve an unidentifiable guilt and finds her peace of mind through the church and her heritage. Walker's new women in The Color Purple find their peace of mind in God because they discover that God is within. Unlike her early women in the first novel, Walker's new women do not give up or give in; they seek to change their condition with the help of each other. As Walker progresses from one novel to the next, her women find peace of mind while living.

In the same book in which Parker-Smith's article appeared, Barbara Christian offers an essay entitled "Alice Walker: The Black Woman Artist as Wayward." In

this essay Christian examines the works of Walker up to 1984 as being black women centered. She repeats some of the points made in her 1980 article about both novels but adds to this commentary insights on The Color Purple, and the books of short stories and poems. She adds Walker's ideas on creativity in "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" and applies those ideas to some of her work. Christian concludes that Walker is wayward in the issues she confronts in her poetry and fiction, issues that are unpopular, such as lesbianism. In her works, Walker evolves a womanist process. The Color Purple represents the strongest move toward waywardness in content, form, and subject matter. She concludes that Walker's "prose and her poetry probe the continuum between the inner self and the outer world" (470-471).

Another thematic approach to Walker is taken by Frank Shelton in his 1985 article entitled "Alienation and Integration in Alice Walker's The Color Purple." Shelton traces what he calls the "momentous transformation" in the novel from abject despair to intense joy by examining the relationships between men and women, among women themselves, between people and nature, and between people and God. He says that at the beginning alienation is evident in all of these relationships but by novel's end

all are integrated.

Diane Sadoff's 1985 essay on "Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston" takes a rather different view of Walker's work, examining it from the perspective of what Walker indicates has been the influence of Hurston on Walker's work. Sadoff argues that Walker misreads Hurston because she so desperately seeks a female precursor that she "virtually invents Hurston before she defines herself as indebted to Hurston's example" (7). She indicates that Walker restates and revises "subterranean themes" from Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God in Meridian and The Color Purple, thereby covertly exposing her own nonfictional misreading and idealization of matriliney (24). Sadoff does not overly criticize Walker for her misreading; however, she concludes that black feminist critics misread narrative signs because of their commitment to reading, feminism, and affirmation of black community (25).

Keith Byerman's essay entitled "Woman's Blues: The Fiction of Toni Cade Bambara and Alice Walker," also written in 1985, offers yet a different kind of examination of Walker's work. He discusses the fictional works of Bambara and Walker in terms of their female characters' ability to endure in a world filled with personal suffering

at the hands of society or African-American men who make their lives almost unbearable. He contends that the principal source of strength for their characters is "the knowledge, gained through folk wisdom, that suffering seems the destiny of women and that survival is a valid revenge for the pain" (104). He points out the folk elements in each of Walker's works of fiction. In The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Walker uses folk material to give her characters vitality. In her characterization of Grange and Brownfield, Walker draws on the folk figures of the bad man and the moral hard man (129). The remainder of the discussion on this novel focuses on the two male characters and their roots in self-hatred and its impact on female characters. In so doing, Walker demystifies a legend closely akin to Stagolee and others. He concludes that the ending of the novel reflects the folk value of improvisation in that Ruth is left alone with a life full of improvisational possibilities.

To Byerman, Meridian represents Walker's best effort at incorporating history, folk forms, and the conditions of women into fiction. Meridian's connection is with the folk in achieving her individual voice. Gender, sexual politics, and race are the major conflicts and themes in the novel. Meridian resolves these conflicts by going back

to the beginning, among the people. Only the folk world makes possible the healing required to grow into one's self.

Byerman's analysis of The Color Purple is perhaps, the most fascinating. He calls it a "womanist fairy tale" (161) complete with the happy ending and the working out of the plot using fairy tale devices. As for folk elements, the fairy tale is a folk form. The novel is replete with folk arts and practices (quilting, mothering, conjuring), the oral tradition, and folk figures such as Shug. Byerman acknowledges finally the genuine contradiction which exists in the smooth resolution Walker gives her narrative. Walker resolves the dialectic by making all the characters androgynous. Her characters transcend the folk world. "To live 'happily ever after,' as the folk characters do in The Color Purple, is, ironically, to live outside the folk world" (169). In the first two novels, Walker emphasizes suffering and the role that folk values play in the struggle, but in the third novel she "neutralized the historical conditions of the very folk life she values" (170).

Examining the narrative strategy employed in Walker's The Color Purple, Elizabeth Fifer departs from the thematic approach to Walker's novels taken by other critics and

looks at the narrative voice utilized in the novel. She contends that through the development of two distinct narrative voices Celie's plight can be understood within a larger cultural context. Carefully plotted, the letters of both (Celie and Nettie) show that "self expression is an act that generates its own imperatives" (165). Fifer discusses the broad sweep of the letters, the dialect of Celie and the educated diction of Nettie, and the juxtaposition of the content of the letters as tools used by Walker in developing the plot. This essay offers insight into Walker's arrangement not previously discussed by critics.

Tammie McKenzie's 1986 essay focuses on Celie's journey to selfhood and offers no new insights into this theme. She traces Celie's development in the novel through the influences of other women especially Shug, and the real source of strength, herself.

In a 1987 article, Kimberly Chambers takes a different approach to Walker's The Color Purple. She discusses Walker as a writer who determines present reality by looking to the past and future as aspects of time in which the human condition can be bettered. The Color Purple "testifies to the validity and integrity of modern art's commitment to a balanced and humane concept of time" (45).

Walker develops a dual-reflexive approach to time in the novel by looking backward at what has been and looking forward to what will be. The thesis for Chambers' essay is taken from the words of an old spiritual about the timeliness of God's intervention in one's life. She also discusses the folk voice that informs much of the novel. Chambers takes much in her argument from Walker's classic essay "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens." She concludes that in the novel, Walker shows society's indebtedness to the past and society's bequest to the future through the sequence of events in the novel and the timelessness with which they occur.

Another 1987 essay on Walker examines the coping strategies employed by three women (Mem, Margaret, and Celie) in two of Walker's novels. Robbie Walker chose these three for investigation because they are "the vulnerable ones, victims of environmental deprivations and extreme insensitivity--even brutality--on the part of their husbands . . ." (405). Walker examines how each character assesses her situation and attempts to alter her circumstances systematically. She shows a progression of coping skills from Margaret to Mem to Celie: Margaret possessing the fewest coping skills; Mem with a few more but not enough to sustain herself; and Celie with the most

because she has a support group and finally herself to lean on. Walker gives strong examples in support of her conclusions.

Marie Buncombe addresses "Androgyny as Metaphor in Alice Walker's Novels." She contends that Walker uses androgyny as metaphor for the wholeness of the African-American experience as Walker sees it. In Walker, lines of gender are removed even from the deity; it is gender-less and within. Her examination probes each novel to find characters to whom, either temporarily or permanently, gender is of no consequence in regard to their actions. She discusses in some detail Mem, Harpo, Sofia, Meridian, and Shug. She concludes that Walker "uses androgyny as a metaphor for the totality of the black experience, male and female, sharing and caring in the struggle for freedom, harmony and unity" (429).

Calvin Hernton takes an altogether different view of Walker's The Color Purple in his 1987 book on African-American women writers. He examines it convincingly as a slave narrative in form and content. After giving a definition of the slave narrative, Hernton defines the novel as such with the following exception, black on black oppression rather than white on black:

The inescapable irony of the situation is its relentless analogy to the system of slavery

itself, and later on jim crow. . . . Now, in an all black situation, we witness a chillingly similar type of oppression, we see sundry acts of inhumanity leveled against black females. We are forced to realize that the centuries of slavery and racism, and the struggle to overcome them, have not informed the humanity of black men when it comes to black women. Similar to other people who have been colonized and oppressed at one time or another, the oppressive experiences of black men have not deterred them from being oppressors themselves. (7-8)

He stretches the analogy to the limits. Men own everything. Albert owns the land. Females are owned by men, Celie a case in point, first owned by her stepfather, then Albert. The patriarchal system operates fully.

Hernton deprecates men who ridicule the novel and the movie by saying that both are the best sociological dramatic representations of sexual oppression within the race. They not only show the negative sides but also the means of survival through growth and liberation. He also gives a brief analysis of the female characters, their growth and dependence on each other. He finds two flaws, one in both the film and the novel and the other in the movie only: Nettie's letters are incongruous and a departure from the slave narrative genre which forms the novel; the total mutilation of the character of Shug in the movie by making her feel the need to acquiesce to the wishes of her father by proving that she is married, a total conflict to the woman actually seen in the novel.

REVIEW OF WALKER'S ESSAYS

As shown in the literature reviewed to this point, Walker is one of many writers whose personal feelings and experiences inform her writing. She has written much and said much in interviews and her own essays in that regard. Therefore, inclusion of her thoughts and feelings in a review of literature related to her is imperative.

Walker's earliest essay appeared in the American Scholar as the first place winner of their essay contest in 1967. In this essay, written at age 23, Walker boldly articulated the "good" of the Civil Rights Movement. The reader can see a young woman whose life was changed as a result of having participated in such an event. She points out the gains made as a result of the Movement despite the fact that others say no gains were made. For her, the Movement resulted in only positive gains for the race. Of course, nine years later in Meridian, she would take a closer, more thorough look at the Movement from the inside.

"But Yet and Still the Cotton Gin Kept on Working. . ." chronicles Walker's brief tenure as trainer for Headstart teachers in Mississippi. Her frustration with the teachers over their lack of knowledge about their own history or even interest in it can be strongly felt in the essay. She tried desperately to give the teachers a sense of

history but to no avail, apparently. Her attempt at teaching them their history resulted in her being relieved of the job. This 1970 article echoes some of the concerns later expressed in her fiction and prose.

"The Black Writer and the Southern Experience" is another 1970 essay in which Walker relates a personal experience, but she uses the experience as a springboard for the richness of facts and events available to the black Southern writer, who, by natural right, inherits a sense of community (24). The black Southern writer has double vision: that of his own world and the larger world which suppresses his own. These writers have a clarity of vision not possessed by white writers like Faulkner whose mind is drenched in provinciality. Her conclusion follows:

No one could wish for a more advantageous heritage than that bequeathed to the black writer in the South: a compassion for the earth, a trust in humanity beyond our knowledge of evil, and an abiding love of justice. We inherit a great responsibility as well, for we must give voice to centuries not only of silent bitterness and hate but also of neighborly kindness and sustaining love. (26)

These three earlier essays, especially the latter, show the direction Walker's ideas about her role as a writer were to take. In theory and in practice, she builds on the ideas presented in these essays.

An interview with Alice Walker in 1973 by John O'Brien

was written after the publication of Once: Poems, Revolutionary Petunias, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, and In Love and Trouble. Conducted by mail, the interview was shaped by Walker herself, in writing brief telling essays about her personal life and the way it informs her poetry and fiction. Walker's painful honesty reveals itself in the story of the abortion which led to the writing of all the poems in Once: Poems, her first book of poetry. She shares the writers and works that have influenced her writing, the genesis of The Third Life of Grange Copeland, the reasons she thinks the black woman writer is not taken seriously, the importance of petunias to her, and her views on God (which appear in all her works in one form or another). Most importantly, though, she states here for the first time the passage since quoted most often by critics in what she sees as her preoccupation as a writer.

"In Search of our Mothers' Gardens" is perhaps Walker's most critically acclaimed essay. Written in 1974, the essay discusses African-American women's creativity. Walker asserts that the African-American woman's creativity shined forth in her time of greatest oppression, before she could read and write, in the works created by the hands of African-American women. The making of quilts, the growing

of flower gardens, and the telling of stories are creative gifts that she inherited from her own mother. In her search for the creativity in the African-American woman who did not become an artist, a writer, or a singer, Walker found the answer by reviewing the life of her own oppressed mother, a mother who was happiest when she was radiant as creator.

An essay on childbirth and creativity appeared in Ms in 1979. Walker begins with a rather humorous twist in giving the exchange between her and her mother on the subject of having more than one child, Walker's responses mostly unverbalized. Her personal reminiscences about her first few years as a young mother evolve into a discussion of feminism and the opposite positions African-American and white feminists take. Walker feels that feminism should be pluralistic. "The enemy within is the patriarchal system that has kept women virtual slaves throughout memory" (74). Therefore, women of all colors should band together to fight a common oppressor.

In an interview with Claudia Tate in 1983, Walker gives important insight into the structure and invention strategies that she used in writing The Third Life of Grange Copeland and Meridian. She explains the crazy quilt idea in the organizational pattern of Meridian. She even

discusses people's reactions to Brownfield, the character in The Third Life of Grange Copeland and critical response to Meridian. Her ideas on the audience for which she writes, African-American readership, and the sources for some of her short stories are also shared here.

In a delightful, brief article which appeared in 1984 Alice Walker lucidly explains how she wrote The Color Purple. It is a fascinating story indeed. In the essay, the reader meets the characters in their beginning stages, for Walker sees herself as a medium through whom the characters speak. Her characters, Walker writes, refused to visit her in the city; they insisted that she move to a quiet place; she did. And the story unfolded through their visits with her. She completed in one year what she had planned to do in five.

In the twenty-one years that Walker has been a published author, much has been written evaluatively by and about her as a writer. None of the criticism, as varied as it is, examines directly Walker's novels as persuasion. Much of the criticism, however, can be used to support the idea that Walker is quite rhetorical in presenting her stories.

FOCUS OF THE PROJECT

This research project will be an attempt to examine

closely the creativity of Walker who has put much thought into the creativity of African-American women. Walker has indicated that her preoccupation as a writer is the whole survival of blacks, "exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of black women" (O'Brien 192). Further, in discussing the function of art she says that "we are given art to heal ourselves, and by extension, to help other people heal themselves. Otherwise, what is it for?" (Wilson 41) Here, her thoughts coincide with those of Winterowd on the function of rhetoric and the function of the arts:

The purposes of rhetoric are in accord with the purposes of art. The focus of art is most often on the tranquil moment of the work for its own sake and the sake of the audience's sympathetic response, but art also enters the arena and attempts to be an overt force for good and truth, perhaps more frequently than we generally realize. (26)

Walker most certainly is in accord with this idea in her writing; she wants change to occur as a result of what she communicates through the written word. Her intent in artistic work is persuasive with the specific motivation of explaining to the reader and bringing about a change in him. With such an intent, the use of Aristotle in the study is natural. Thus, to give structure to the examination, Aristotle's canons of rhetoric will be used as the gauge against which Walker's achievement of her goal as

a writer is measured in her novels, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Meridian, and The Color Purple.

Although Aristotle's Rhetoric was written for oral discourse, its use here is doubly appropriate because of the oral base found in Walker's novels. No attempt will be made to make Walker's fiction fit perfectly into Aristotle's schema, but Aristotle's schema will be shown as relevant to Walker's novels. No attempt will be made to show that Walker consciously made use of Aristotle's rhetoric; the Rhetoric will simply be used as a basis for analysis.

Aristotle's canons of study for communicating are invention, means of effecting persuasion; style, language and diction; and arrangement, the proper ordering of the material. These areas will then receive greater scrutiny here while delivery and memory will be examined as ancillary to the three major canons. Delivery will be analyzed in relation to narrative voice and the organizational format of each novel. Memory will be combined with invention in the creation of ideas.

The canon of invention will receive the most attention since Walker uses several different inventive strategies in her novels. Of course, Aristotle's artistic proofs, following tradition, will be used as sources of persuasion.

The arrangement of Walker's novels will be examined in terms of the organization of content. Walker's use of language and diction will be used in analyzing her style.

The novels will be examined in reverse chronological order with the analysis of The Color Purple, followed by Meridian and then The Third Life of Grange Copeland. Walker achieves the wholeness of her literary artistic vision in The Color Purple. Examining it first makes it easier for the reader to see the parts of the vision represented in the first two novels. Walker's most recent novel, The Temple of My Familiar, will not be examined in the study, for it represents clearly a departure in her thinking and style from her previous novels.

CHAPTER II

INVENTION AND MEMORY IN THE COLOR PURPLE

In Aristotle's time and later, many rhetorical treatises were produced that serve today as the basis for the study of language and literature. Even though those treatises were written to guide speakers, the precepts contained in those documents apply to writers as well. Many writers, consciously or unconsciously, have a persuasive intent and, knowingly or unknowingly, make use of those same precepts, set forth by Aristotle in his Rhetoric to achieve their purpose for writing.

Alice Walker is one such writer. She has recorded what she sees as the function of art in society.

. . . we live in change. It's absolutely necessary, and art is supposed to do that. I think we were given art to heal ourselves, and by extension, to help other people heal themselves. Otherwise, what is it for? If it's just to hang on the wall or to be a decoration, it's useless. It's an object that has no function. (Wilson 43)

In a 1973 interview, Walker rendered a statement which seems to be the guiding principle in all her works:

I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of black women. (O'Brien 192)

Walker obviously wants change to occur as a result of her

efforts as a writer. She, in early years, was concerned about the whole survival of her people, especially African-American women. Seeking to explore and reveal the various experiences of the African-American woman, Walker has uttered her persuasive intent. The question then is how she achieves her purpose.

In the Rhetoric, Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty [power] of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion" (7). Invention, therefore, is the process by which the speaker/writer finds or discovers those means. He says further that the means of discovering or inventing the means of persuasion can be found in inartistic and artistic proofs. The inartistic proofs fall outside of the art of rhetoric, for they are not supplied by the efforts of the speaker/writer but are external and already known. The artistic proofs, however, have to be found by the speaker/writer, created by his own genius. These artistic proofs--ethos, pathos, and logos--when used effectively in a speech or written document, produce change or arousal in the listener/reader.

First under scrutiny in rhetorically examining the novels of Alice Walker is invention, the devising of matter, true or plausible, that would make the case convincing (Rhetorica ad Herennium 1.2.3). Aristotle

insists that the speaker/writer rely heavily on the rhetorical proofs when attempting to persuade. Ethos depends on establishing the character of the speaker; pathos, putting the audience in the right frame of mind; and logos, the proof provided in the argument itself. Invention includes determining a purpose as well as an audience, determining what language to use to express a coherent message, searching the memory, determining contents, and making decisions as to what should be used. The basic sources of information on any topic are the self, others, and the world. The writer obviously draws from many sources in composing.

In The Color Purple, Walker definitely makes use of the artistic proofs in developing the strength of her argument. Of the three kinds of proof, Aristotle considered ethos to be the most important:

The character [ethos] is a cause of persuasion when the speech is so uttered as to make him worthy of belief; for as a rule, we trust men of probity more, and more quickly, about things in general, while on points outside the realm of exact knowledge, where opinion is divided, we trust them absolutely. . . . It is not true, as some writers on the art maintain, that the probity of the speaker contributes nothing to his persuasiveness; on the contrary, we might almost affirm that **his** character is the most potent of all means of persuasion. (8-9)

Walker is a successful user of ethos by Aristotle's standards. Because she is writing fiction, she has to

establish a persona with which the audience can identify.

In each novel she sets up a character who is her voice.

Always, she wants to make change occur in the reader. She cannot, as a twentieth-century novelist, come out on stage and set up a voice. In The Color Purple, Celie and Nettie are her voice. They are the women of "probity" who are respected, trusted, and believed. They are the characters with whom the audience can sympathize and through whom Walker espouses her beliefs.

Walker predisposes her readers to accept Celie's credibility at the outset. The following excerpt is from the opening epistle of the novel (11).

Dear God,

I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what's happening to me.

Last spring after little Lucious come I heard them fussing. He was pulling on her arm. She say It too soon, Fonso, I ain't well.

Finally, he leave her alone. A week go by, he pulling her arm again. She says Naw, I ain't gonna. Can't you see I'm already half dead, and all of these children.

She went to visit her sister doctor over Macon. Left me to see after the others. He never had a kind word to say to me. Just say you gonna do what your mammy wouldn't. First he put his thing up against my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold of my titties. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying you better shut up and git used to it.

But I don't never git used to it. And now I feels sick everytime I be the one to cook. My mama fuss at me and look at me. She happy, cause he good to her now. But too sick to last long.

In this dramatic opening Walker establishes Celie's ethos: she underscores the innocence and naivete' of a first person narrator by addressing her concern to God, to whom she is turning for help with a situation she does not understand. She appeals to the reader by giving her young age of fourteen and by simply saying that she has been a good girl. She has obviously been taught that if one is a "good girl" then only good things can result. Clearly, Celie is a victim of some man's wrath. The terse and innocent manner in which she expresses her experience contributes to her credibility. Her language is simple black folk English, unadorned and direct.

The letter that immediately follows the opening one further establishes Celie's credibility by showing her intelligence, common sense, good character, and goodwill. Celie's intelligence is demonstrated in her ability to accurately communicate her feelings and in her ability to learn and understand from experiences. She has very good common sense in that she gives practical suggestions to her sister as to what she should do, and she also exercises good sense in insuring her own survival. Despite the maltreatment Celie receives, it is clear that she possesses good character and has not or would not intentionally wrong another. She does what she is told and regardless of the

way others treat her, she exercises goodwill in return, especially in the case of Mr. _____ and his children.

Although the reader is thrust into the action in medias res, by the time he reads the first epistle and especially the first four, he is convinced of Celie's credibility. She has come forth as a reliable narrator, for it is she on whom the reader depends for information. Her innocence, naivete, and mode of presentation mainly contribute to her positive ethos.

As the story progresses the reader's confidence in Celie deepens. Total involvement in her life occurs because her first person narration places no barriers between the reader and the writer; the reader is in the thick of the action and able to relate directly to the experiences of the writer. It is as though the writer is talking directly to the reader. Not only is Celie's character made more credible by her treatment of people as the novel progresses, but she is also made credible by what she says others say about her. When Katie and Carrie, her husband's sisters, come to visit they comment on Celie's fine abilities as a mother and housekeeper, and they indicate that she deserves more than she gets.

Celie's sister, Nettie, writes twenty-two of the eighty-nine letters in the novel. Walker does an excellent

job of establishing Nettie's ethos also. Nettie's letters validate Celie's and vice versa. Nettie's prose is much more eloquent than Celie's and extremely easy to read. However, her prose lacks the vitality of Celie's. But they are what the reader expects because of what Celie has said regarding Nettie. Nettie's ethos is also positive. Like Celie, she possesses intelligence, common sense, good character and goodwill. Her first epistle substantiates Celie's comments about Albert and their stepfather as ruthless men. Her intelligence is obvious in her clarity of expression, her common sense, and in her conclusion that her letters are not being given to Celie. Her lofty character and goodwill are apparent in her tone and the genuine concern shown for her sister, the family for whom she works, and Celie's children. The letters immediately following the first one answer questions to which Celie and the reader have wanted answers. Nettie continues to write to Celie although she knows that Celie does not receive the letters. The letters are cathartic for her also because they provide a means for her sharing her innermost thoughts--thoughts that she can share with no one else. This kind of deliberation increases the validity of the characters because they are not writing for an audience but writing honestly for themselves. Nettie's

letters also function as a travelogue or educational brochure on the experiences of missionaries in Africa.

Further, both letter writers are completely trusted by the readers because they establish the ethos of all the other characters in the novel, for it is through their eyes that these characters are revealed. The reportorial style of Nettie's letters gives a vivid picture of Samuel, a good man who is sincere about his work; Corrine, the devoted and insecure childless wife; Olivia and Adam, Celie's most intelligent children; Tashi, an Olinka girl in conflict with her culture. The folk English of Celie's letters also gives a vivid picture and leaves a strong impression upon the reader of all the characters met through her: Albert and Pa, men who are consumed with their own desires; Shug Avery, a woman who does whatever she likes; Sofia, a very strong woman in conflict with men; Harpo, a man in search of power over women; Squeak, a mulatto girl in search of identity. Walker, through Celie and Nettie, depicts these characters in a most convincing manner, giving a clear picture through words and sentences of the character of each. In doing so, realistic representations are established of types known to all, making them credible for the reader.

Also important in building persuasion is pathos.

Aristotle indicates that not only can persuasion come through the speaker/writer, but it can also come through the hearers/readers:

Secondly, persuasion is effected through the audience, when they are brought by the speech into a state of emotion; for we give very different decisions under the sway of pain or joy and liking or hatred. (9)

In Book 2 of the Rhetoric, Aristotle discusses pathos and the following emotions in particular: anger, placability or mildness, love or friendship, hatred, fear, confidence, shame, benevolence, pity, indignation, envy, and emulation. His treatment of the emotions increases the options of writers in means of persuasion. Appealing to the emotions allows for arguments that would supplement the ethical ones. Appealing to the hopes, values, fears, and desires of the audience while anticipating their doubts and questions validates the rhetorical process by appealing simultaneously to the ethical and emotional sides of the reader in the attempt at persuasion.

Walker made the following statement in regard to audience in 1983 after these three novels had been written:

I'm always happy to have an audience. It's very nice because otherwise it would be very lonely and futile if I had no audience. But on the other hand, although I'm willing to think about the audience before I write, usually I don't, I try, first of all, to know what I feel and what I think and then to write that. And if there's an audience, well, fine, but if not, I don't worry

about it (Tate 184).

Walker's novels, especially The Color Purple, have received rave reviews from readers. She has universal appeal, primarily because what she feels, thinks, and writes touches many people. Despite the fact that she says she doesn't think about the audience before she writes, it seems that there is no need for her to do so. She is in touch with what touches people. She feels that art should change people, and she obviously has the innate ability to produce works that will generate change and create the desired result in the reader. She is probably more conscious of audience than she realizes. Without deliberately doing so, she utilizes the strategies suggested by Aristotle in appealing to the emotions as a means of persuasion.

Aristotle defines emotions as "those states which are attended by pain and pleasure, and which as they change, make a difference in our judgements [of the same things]; for example: anger, pity, fear, and all the like, and also their opposites" (92). First, he discusses anger. In general Aristotle holds that the speaker/writer must bring the judges (readers) into an irascible state, and must show the adversary to be the worst kind of villain by using things that make men angry and by showing the adversary as

one who arouses anger. Walker does exactly that in her representation of the major antagonists, Celie's step-father and Albert. Their obnoxiousness centers around their cruel and inhumane treatment of Celie, a defenseless woman. Anyone reading about a man who repeatedly rapes his fourteen-year-old stepdaughter and fathers two children by her would be angered immensely. He knows that he is not her father, but never tells her. She thinks for most of her life that she mothered children by her own father.

Further, he separated Celie from her children and led her to believe that the children were dead. Incestuous rape and child abuse are subjects that quickly raise the ire of the reader. Equally appalling is Albert's behavior. As Celie's husband, he physically, emotionally, and, further, psychologically abuses her. He beats her, uses her as a tool for his sexual desire, and berates her. This kind of treatment of women is prevalent in today's society and serves as a source of anger for citizens everywhere. Walker skillfully arouses the emotion of anger in the reader through Celie's utterances of pain and her lack of understanding of what is happening found throughout the beginning of the novel. Celie's precise descriptions of her encounters intensify the pathos. In describing her stepfather's and Albert's treatment of her, she writes the

following respectively:

He act like he can't stand me no more. Say I'm evil and always up to no good. He took my other little baby, a boy this time. But I don't think he kilt it. I think he sold it to a man an his wife over Monticello. I got breasts full of milk running down myself. He say Why don't you look decent? Put on something. But what I'm sposed to put on? I don't have nothing. (13)
He beat me like he beat the children. 'Cept he don't hardly beat them. He say, Celie, git the belt. The children be outside peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. (30)

These entries arouse strong anger in the reader. Men who treat women in such a demeaning manner would arouse anger in anyone.

The preceding illustrations not only arouse anger alone; but they also arouse pity, another emotion that Aristotle recommends be aroused in the reader. Pity he defines as "whatever brings pain and anguish, and is in its nature destructive" (121). He adds that "the speaker will be more successful in arousing pity if he heightens the effect of his description with fitting descriptions, tones, and dress--in a word, with dramatic action; for he thus makes the evil seem close at hand--puts it before our eyes as a thing that is on the point of occurring or has just occurred" (122). Walker does exactly what Aristotle recommends here. What is more pitiable a sight than a teenager in a helpless state, the victim of rape by her stepfather, initially shown a few days after giving birth,

stripped of the child! Even more, the image of a husband beating a wife in the presence of children arouses pity for the victim and anger at the perpetrator of such a heinous act, especially when the victim attempts to maintain a level of dignity in the process. Celie's broken English renders these scenes even more pitiful.

Walker utilizes placability or mildness, "a settling down or quieting of anger," effectively also (99). Readers are placid/mild when they are in a pleasurable state and free from pain. Aristotle also subscribes to the idea that time can cause anger to wane or cease. He recommends several ways in which the speaker/writer can calm his listeners/readers: the inducement of pity for the person affected, the possible death of the person, by representing him/her as formidable, awe inspiring, as an involuntary offender, or as extremely repentant for what has been done. The reader becomes so angry with Alphonso and Albert that initially it seems impossible that the reader can be brought into a placable state in regard to them. Walker, however, achieves placability by using Aristotle's suggestions.

Alphonso, whose wrath was inflicted on Celie, prospered from Celie's actual father's efforts but died, leaving Celie and Nettie with a house and a store. Serving

merely as a custodian with but a life estate interest, he maintained property until Celie, soon to be reunited with Nettie, could assume her interest. His death, which ironically occurred while he was engaged in the sex act with his teenage wife and while still in his economic prime, served as satisfactory placation for the reader, in that Celie, his victim, would receive the benefit of his hard work.

Albert, on the other hand, did not die. However, he was placed in a pitiable state and finally confessed his distress over his treatment of Celie for so many years. A change occurs in Albert, a change by which the author intends to assuage the reader's anger. Albert realizes Celie's worth after she leaves him. Without her he was unable to function: the house as well as he sank to an unkempt state; he refused to eat; he could not sleep. He did not begin to improve until he sent Celie the remainder of her letters. Then, he began to treat Celie civilly. Celie's acceptance or forgiveness of both of these men makes placation of the reader possible by Walker and makes the two antagonists' ultimate fate acceptable, through the death of one and rebirth of the other.

In response to criticisms of Albert and the negative image portrayed of African-American men in the novel,

Walker makes the following comment:

. . . many black men missed an opportunity to study the character of Mister, a character that I deeply love--not, obviously, for his meanness, oppression of women, or general early boorishness, but because he went deeply enough into himself to find the courage to change. To grow. (Living by the Word 80)

The reader, like Walker, accepts Albert. In creating characters who begin by infuriating the audience and end by being accepted by them, Walker definitely utilizes Aristotle's device of placability/mildness.

The Rhetoric also addresses the emotions of loving, liking, and friendship. Loving/liking is defined as "wishing for a person those things which you consider to be good--wishing for them for his sake, not your own--and tending so far as you can to effect them" (102-03).

Aristotle lists several kinds of people who would be likeable, including the following: those who work hard, are temperate, just, mind their own business, are morally good, are neat and clean, possess a good sense of humor, and so on. Walker imbues her likeable characters with some or all of these characteristics. Not only does the reader like the characters for these reasons, the characters like and gravitate towards each other for the same reasons. Although the reader feels pity towards Celie, he likes her because of her even temperament until she is seriously

provoked, her assiduousness, her basic goodness, and her sense of humor.

Many passages in the novel endear Celie to the reader. A case in point occurs when Celie goes through her period of sleeplessness because of her guilt at having told Harpo to beat Sofia in order to make her mind. She begins to worry about the reason for her insomnia:

A little voice say, Something you done wrong.
Somebody spirit you done sin against. Maybe.
Way late one night it come to me. Sofia.
I sin against Sofia spirit.
I pray she don't find out, but she do. (45)

This passage reveals that Celie has a conscience and the ability to search herself without fear. Although Celie at first denies her guilt when directly confronted by Sofia, the reader understands because the response shows her humanness and concern for self preservation. Sofia, a formidable opponent and one to be feared, poses yet another physical threat to Celie. Despite the initial denial, Celie confesses and explains why she betrayed Sofia. The reader appreciates and feels even closer to Celie when she honestly tells Sofia why she told Harpo to beat her: "I say it cause I'm a fool, I say. I say it cause I'm jealous of you. I say it cause I'm jealous of you cause you do what I can't" (46). After the confrontation is settled, Celie evidences that she is

elated, and they have a better understanding of one another. The reader admires Celie here because she does show a conscience, and her enduring honesty shines forth.

Her sense of humor is also apparent throughout the novel and augments likeableness. Because of Celie's meekness, her initial acquiescence and subsequent acquisition of strength, the reader wants the best for her. More than anything in life, Celie wants to be rejoined with her sister. Ethos and pathos work together in arousing the same desire in the reader. When the two sisters are reunited after thirty years, the reader is in a happy state with Celie because of the combination of methods employed in making her likeable. The reader wishes for Celie what Aristotle indicates: if the speaker/writer endears the listener/reader to the character, there will occur in the listener/reader a desire for good things for the person/character.

As already noted, of major importance to Walker as a writer is that change occur in her reader. Parallel to this idea in Aristotle is the emotion of emulation. In order for change to occur the listener/reader must identify with the character, thereby causing a change or emulation to take place. According to Aristotle, emulation is a good emotion: "Through emulation a man prepares himself to win

what is good" (129). Aristotle views all positive traits such as courage, wisdom, public office, and the like, as worthy of emulation. Walker's characters who experience change exhibit courage and wisdom and are, therefore, worthy of emulation. Celie and Albert experience the most growth. Five years after the publication of the novel Walker wrote the following about the two characters:

It is a mistake to assume that Celie's "meekness" makes her a saint and Mister's brutality makes him a devil. The point is, neither of these people is healthy. They are, in fact, dreadfully ill, and they manifest their dis-ease according to their culturally derived sex roles and the bad experiences early impressed on their personalities. They proceed to grow, to change to become whole, i.e., well, by becoming more like each other, but stopping short of taking on each other's illness. Celie becomes more self-interested and aggressive; Albert becomes more thoughtful and considerate of others. (Living by the Word 80)

In the work, Walker made the changes in Celie and Albert believable and attainable. As was her objective, she showed the oppression experienced by women and children by men in the home; however, her vivification antagonized some African-American men who felt that she presented a negative picture. In the 1987 essay she defends her position by saying that rather than attempting to rid themselves of the oppressive desire or tendency as a result of reading the novel or viewing the movie, black men opted to view themselves as oppressed (79).

To insure that traits of pathos such as placability and emulation culminated with the inspiration for change in the reader, Walker used deliberative rhetoric in conjunction with the enthymeme to achieve a sound logos. Aristotle indicates the following about the concern of the deliberative speaker/writer:

The deliberative speaker/writer is concerned with those things upon which advice is feasible; and these are all such as can be referred to ourselves as agents--all that we ourselves can originate and set in motion; for in deliberating we always carry back our inquiries to the point where we find that we have, or have not the power to achieve our objects. (20)

Walker uses deliberative rhetoric because it lends itself to her purpose of persuading (changing) the reader and using his shared values to convince. The enthymeme is the perfect vehicle, for it is based in probability (conjecture), the basis of fiction. In discussing the enthymeme, Aristotle says that the speaker must start not from just any premise that may be regarded as true but from opinions of the audience or from someone whose opinion they trust. The premise must be one commonly accepted by most of the audience. The argument must be made from probable truths as well as necessary ones, an essential inclusion for fiction. In addition, he states that regardless of the subject, the speaker/writer must have considerable knowledge from which to draw in supporting the premise

(156). Walker does exactly what Aristotle advises: she chooses a premise that may be regarded as true, and she has a wealth of information on the subject.

Walker's overall premise is that a person can change. According to Aristotle, "persuasion is effected by the arguments, when we demonstrate the truth, real or apparent, by such means as inhere in particular cases." (9). Walker's persuasive intent, then, is supported very strongly in her presentation because she makes change achievable and realistic. Though she creates anger and even hatred against Albert, his and Celie's transformations over time are achievable and their weaknesses are presented in such an emotional way that readers can see themselves in these characters and, perhaps, attempt or desire to change. Or they can become angered by what they see and deny the truth as many men did in their initial reaction to the novel. The novel did bring to the attention of the public the injustices suffered by women at the hands of men; a heightened awareness of women's problems resulted.

Walker's underlying premise is that women are oppressed by men, but the situation is one that can be changed. Art offers one means of changing it. The incidents and experiences she relates in the novel represent true-to-life situations with which the reader can identify. The

work has universal appeal because of the many themes with which all peoples can relate: sexuality, sensuality, child and wife abuse, vulnerability, marital infidelity, violence, the struggle for freedom, friendships, the position of women in society, and the possibility for change to occur. Walker incorporates a worldview of problems in the novel in an artistic manner.

Walker's deliberative sequence is illustrated in Celie's acquisition of strength in overcoming her meekness and standing up to Albert. Initially, she has no will to fight. When she is told by Nettie that she must defend herself against Albert's children, she says "But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive" (26). Even after Albert's sisters admonish her to defend herself, Celie's response indicates her desire to maintain an acquiescent position: "I don't say nothing. I think bout Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (29). This kind of quiet resolve fits a woman who has been a victim all her life. Later, when she talks to Sofia about her inability to get "mad," the reader senses the reasons for such an attitude:

I think I can't even 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 her.

Couldn't be 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. (47)

At this point in her existence, Celie has been raped and beaten by her stepfather, sexually and physically abused by her husband, and disrespected by her stepchildren. She has practiced a kind of denial of self. The person closest to her, the one she cares most sincerely about, is Nettie. Celie had steeled herself to physical injury. She had grown accustomed to it. Because of Walker's entymemic structure, it is logical then that the one thing in life that would cause a violent reaction in her would have to involve Nettie. Walker uses such an incident. The following is a portion of Celie's entry after she discovers that Albert has been hiding the letters that Nettie has written to her for more than twenty years:

I watch him so close, I begin to feel a
lightening in the head. For I know anything I'm
standing hind his chin with his razor open. . . .
All day long I act just like Sofia. I stutter.
I mutter to myself. I stumble bout the house
crazy for Mr. _____ blood.

In my mind, he falling dead every which way.
By time night come, I can't speak. Every time I
open my mouth nothing come out but a little burp.
(115)

The preceding excerpt indicates Celie's physical and emotional response. She wants to kill Albert because he

has kept from her the one thing that would make her happy. The verbal response directly to Albert comes later and catches him completely unprepared. Shug announces that Celie is moving to Memphis with her. Mr. _____ wants to know why, so he asks what is wrong. Celie renders the following response:

You a lowdown dog is what's wrong, I say. Its time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need.

Say what? he ask. Shock.

All around the table folkses mouths be dropping open.

You took my sister Nettie away from me, I say. And she was the only person to love me in the world.

Mr. _____ started to sputter. But But But But. Sound like some kind of motor.

But Nettie and my children coming home soon, I say. And when she do, all us together gon whup your ass.

Nettie and your children! say Mr. _____. You talking crazy.

I got children, I say. Being brought up in Africa. Good schools, lots of fresh air and exercise. Turning out a heap better than the fools you tried to raise (181).

The progression of Celie's growth as indicated by the preceding passages illustrates the cohesion with which the story is told. Celie grows from meekness to strength in her relationship with Albert in a believable way. Other logical progressions include Albert's growth from a self-serving individual to one who is considerate of others; Celie's growth as a writer; and Celie's awareness of her

own self worth and enhanced sexual image.

Probable, only in the novel, is the happy-ever-after ending. However, it becomes a must in order for Walker to achieve her solution to the problem set forth in the novel: the cure for the insanities, oppressions, etc. inflicted upon the African-American female. Celie must be united with Nettie; Albert must change and become more feminine to balance the male superiority through violence he thought necessary to being a man; Celie's children must be united with her after years of separation; Nettie must have been the surrogate mother for Celie's children, regardless of the coincidence of the situation, for she is so akin to Celie in spirit that it would be tantamount to Celie rearing her own children; Celie and Nettie must inherit a house, land, a store, and money through the death of the man who had inflicted the most pain and hurt upon them.

According to Byerman (169), all of the characters are reunited in a feminized space with female and male traits and free of the hostility, oppression, guilt, and cruelty of the male and white worlds. If only the end of the novel is viewed, it seems that Walker offers the feminization of men as the solution to the black female's problem. However, upon close examination of individual characters, Walker seems to offer a reconciliation of both male and

female characteristics in both sexes in order for individual wholeness to take place. Sexual polarization with clearly defined roles for males and females will not provide the solution to the problem. Her thinking coincides with that of Virginia Woolf and of others who view androgyny as the answer.

In the novel, Shug Avery represents the balance that can exist when the merging of characteristics takes place. Making her a businesswoman, an entertainer, one who does whatever she desires, and the sexual liberator of Celie, Shug's male side is established. She exhibits traits traditionally assigned to men. As satisfying lover to several men, mother of three and friend and companion to other women, her feminine side is established. Sofia, too, possesses male characteristics exhibited in her massive strength and size and her skill in outdoor work. The following conversation between Celie and Albert after they have become civil with each other stresses the idea of androgyny:

Mr. _____ ast me the other day what is I love so much about Shug. He say he love her style. He say to tell the truth, Shug act more manly than most men. I mean she upright, honest. Speak her mind and the devil take the hindmost, he say. You know Shug will fight, he say. Just like Sofia. She bound to live her life and be herself no matter what.

Mr. _____ think all this stuff men do. But Harpo not like this, I tell him. You not like

this. What Shug got is womanly it seem like to me. Specially since she and Sofia the ones got it.

Shug and Sofia not like men, he say, but they not like women either.

You mean they not like you or me.

They hold they own, he say. And it's different. (236)

The androgynous traits possessed by Shug and Sofia are presented as admirable and desirable. Before Harpo and Albert are acceptable human beings, they take on feminine traits to balance their male aggression. Even in the discussion of God, the idea of androgyny springs forth. Shug indicates that God is neither he nor she but an "It" (177).

Buncombe draws the following conclusion in regard to Walker's conclusion:

Consistent with the crossover sexual themes in contemporary fashions, films, literature, and lifestyles, Alice Walker uses androgyny as a metaphor for the totality of the black experience, male and female, sharing and caring in the struggle for freedom, harmony and unity (427).

The question then is whether Walker's solution is probable. In regard to the neatly resolved conflicts in the novel and Walker's solution to the conflict between the sexes, both are probable. The neat resolution satisfies the reader and ties in well with Walker's optimistic attitude. In the Kalliope interview, Walker indicated that she used to be a pessimist but is now an optimist. In

order to grow together and feel that we can endure, survive and overcome, we must be optimistic. She feels that she has a right to present her view of reality, and she is right (41). Her view as given in The Color Purple is an idealistic one. Conflicts are just not resolved that easily. How does one feminize a man? The negative reaction of men to the novel indicates that feminization is not the answer. However, Walker's argument does work in the context of the novel, and Walker is not obligated to provide an answer. The novel well illustrates that the only way for the race to "survive whole" is by the removal of gender and class distinctions within the race and the working together of all in the struggle. Walker, nonetheless, offers only the idea and not a method of achieving this genderless and classless race.

In The Color Purple, Walker makes effective use of the artistic proofs as suggested by Aristotle in discovering the means of persuasion. The three--ethos, pathos, and logos--are used simultaneously in appealing to the reader. Walker does so naturally because she innately knows how to tell a story in a convincing manner. Any similarities to Aristotle's inventive strategies in Walker's work are strictly coincidental, for Walker knows exactly how she wrote The Color Purple.

Walker's inventive technique includes all of the traditional considerations one makes in the invention stage: determining a purpose and audience, determining what language to use, searching the memory, determining contents, and making decisions as to what should be used. However, Walker did not make these determinations in the traditional manner. In her 1984 essay, Walker convincingly describes how she wrote the novel. The germ of the idea came when she was hiking through the woods with her sister discussing a lover's triangle. Her sister told her that the wife asked the mistress for a pair of her drawers. That reference provided the missing link for Walker. The characters later began to form in her head, and she became their voice, their medium, their entrusted spokesman. Through a series of communications with the characters, Walker soon realized that her characters were country people who wanted their story written in the country, so Walker moved to a rural area in California. Once in the desired environment, the characters began to tell Walker their story, and she told it as they related it to her in black folk English.

Despite what Walker says about the evolution of the novel, she obviously owes a debt to memory. In Aristotle's Rhetoric, the canon of memory is only briefly discussed

and emphasizes the importance of memorizing the speech. For the writer, especially for Walker, memory is vital in the creation of ideas. In her essay on creativity written in 1974, Walker indicates that memory serves an important function for her in the invention stage:

Yet so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are our mothers' stories. Only recently did I fully realize this: that through years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories--like her life--must be recorded.

. . . She had handed down respect for possibilities--and the will to grasp them. . . . Guided by my heritage of love and beauty and a respect for strength--in search of my mother's garden, I found my own. (70)

Walker reiterates this point in a 1983 interview (N5) with Juana Duty after the publication of The Color Purple.

Walker admits that parts of some of her characters in the book come from relatives and old family legends. She even used some of their names for the purpose of memorializing them. She drew on the life of her great grandmother, a grandmother and others. These were poor uneducated women who lived in the South when their humanity was denied by whites and black men as well. Walker indicates that part of Shug is modeled after some of her aunts who used to visit from up North when she was a child. They worked as domestics but had the magical aura so much a part of Shug

(Wilson 38).

Walker is herself a product of the South and sees the responsibility of the African-American southern writer as giving "voice to centuries not only of silent bitterness and hate but also of neighborly kindness and sustaining love" ("The Black Writer and the Southern Experience" 26). In The Color Purple, Walker does exactly what she espoused in this 1970 article.

Walker's further use of memory can be seen in her choice of the epistolary form as the structural format for the novel. This form allows the writer to distance herself from the narrative by merely reporting the feelings and reactions of others. This form is an appropriate medium for one who views herself as a medium. In choosing this form and even the subject (to a degree), Walker is indebted to Samuel Richardson, the eighteenth-century novelist who first made use of the epistolary form as a means of storytelling. Striking resemblances in the two works include the use of a blank following "Mr." for the name of the antagonist in Walker's novel and the use of the initial "B" following "Mr." in Richardson's; the creation of a "new woman" with an independent spirit; the treatment of both women as property by both main characters; presentation of the feminine point of view; and closeness in age of the

letter writers--Celie 14 and Pamela 15.

Not only is a debt owed to Richardson but also to Zora Neale Hurston, Walker's avowed literary precursor and mentor. Walker admits that there is a little bit of Hurston in Shug (Wilson 37). Similarities between Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Walker's novel include the heroic woman as doer in Janie and Shug throughout The Color Purple and Celie at the end of the novel and the use of black folk English in telling both stories.

In conclusion, it appears that the invention strategies employed in The Color Purple are a composite of Walker's real or vicarious experiences. The characters who visited her are products of her imagination, her creations, and as such they grew out of her experiences. She effectively melds the memories of the literature she has read, the stories she was told by her mother and others, her experiences as a young girl growing up in the South, her experience as a civil rights worker and a welfare worker in the South, and her experiences in Africa with sexual and tribal oppression to produce The Color Purple, her historical novel for which the germ was a pair of drawers.

CHAPTER III

INVENTION AND MEMORY IN MERIDIAN AND THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND

Walker's highly successful employment of invention strategies in The Color Purple can probably be attributed to her honing of these skills in Meridian and The Third Life of Grange Copeland. Her inventive strategies remain the same but her inventive approach changes because of the points of view employed in each work.

Unlike The Color Purple, Meridian and The Third Life of Grange Copeland are not written in first person but in third person. The latter novels have an omniscient narrator who reports the actions, words, and thoughts of the major characters. In a 1983 interview with Claudia Tate, Walker made the following comment:

It's [writing] about living. It's about expanding myself as much as I can and seeing myself in as many roles and situations as possible. Let me put it this way. If I could live as a tree, as a river, as the moon, as the sun, as a star, as the earth, as a rock, I would. Writing permits me to be more than I am. Writing permits me to experience life as any number of strange creations. (185)

This statement is certainly true of the first three novels. In the first person narration of The Color Purple, Walker experiences life as the uneducated Celie and as the more

enlightened Nettie. In this first person narrative, she has to become the person speaking, leaving the responsibility of discerning larger meanings to the reader. However, in the third person narration of Meridian The Third Life of Grange Copeland, she hovers above the action reporting events and thoughts. These two means of narration require different inventive approaches, although Walker's general purpose for writing--her preoccupation with the spiritual survival of African-American people, especially African-American women--does not change from one novel to the next.

The progression in each novel is different--circular in Meridian and linear in The Third Life of Grange Copeland. This difference in progression combined with the third-person narration and Walker's purpose for writing each novel results in varying strategies of invention in all three novels, with similar inventional strategies in the first two novels and entirely different ones in The Color Purple.

MERIDIAN

In an interview with John O'Brien while she was in the process of writing Meridian, Walker said that her new novel, Meridian, would be about several women who were active during the sixties in the Civil Rights Movement.

She indicated that she would explore their backgrounds, families, marriages, affairs, and political persuasions, as they grew to a fuller realization or recognition of themselves (197). As it turned out, Walker primarily explored the lives of three characters, two female and one male who survived the Movement.

In an interview with Tate after the publication of the novel, Walker comments on characterization in Meridian. She indicates in the interview that she became aware that the brave people involved in the Civil Rights Movement were flawed. On television, they presented an image of control and wholeness, their heroic nature. That was the exterior image; inside they were in tremendous pain. Meridian's illness is caused by enormous stress. Her physical condition mirrored the intense mental pressure brought on by the racial brutality and intimidation she experienced. Walker concludes that the "body and the mind really are united and if the central nervous system is crucially unbalanced by something, then there are also physical repercussions" (179-80). Walker further defines Meridian's function as helping the reader relate personally to the Civil Rights era, a very important period in the development of America (Wilson 44-45). Walker's purpose

then in this novel seems to be focusing on the black woman in an intense period in history and her struggle to change through an understanding of self and love and also to show the effects of the Civil Rights Movement on its participants.

As she did in The Color Purple, Walker drew on several sources in composing. Barbara Christian in a 1980 analysis of the novel says the question of the novel as well as of Meridian's life is "the nature of social change and its relationship to the past and the future," a question that permeates the Movement. The novel then becomes a novel of ideas (205). The writer is faced with the task of presenting ideas through the lives of characters involved in a movement that would change their lives as well as an entire country. The novelist has to present a literal as well as an abstract view which will enable the reader to receive a concrete message.

Walker's initial inventive decisions had to include the following: (1) determining a purpose--relating a period of history, through Meridian, that is important in the development of America; (2) determining what language to use to express a coherent message and the point of view from which that message was to be communicated--standard English probably because the novel is one of ideas rather

than action and third--person narration which would allow authorial comment through characters; (3) searching the memory--recalling her own experiences as a civil rights worker during the Movement; (4) determining contents--exactly what she wants to include to support her argument from her own experiences and what she wants to manufacture.

Her persuasive intent is the same in this novel as it is in all the others: to explore and reveal the various experiences of the African-American woman and by so doing bring about a change which would influence actions and/or understanding in her readers which would include all people--males, females, African-Americans, whites. Her perspective is global. She uses African-American women as parts representing the whole. She makes use of the artistic proofs--ethos, pathos, and logos--in this novel as sources of persuasion.

Because of the back and forth progression of the novel, Meridian's character is not fully realized until the book is finished and the reader can reflect and put the various parts of the story and, thus, the person together. Walker admits herself that one reading of the novel will not yield an understanding of it because there is too much going on (Tate 178). However, as the novel progresses, in small and sometimes rather confusing increments, Meridian's

ethos is established so that by the time the novel is finished, the reader achieves wholeness of meaning as Meridian achieves wholeness of self.

In The Color Purple the reader feels a sense of immediacy to the action because there is no distance between the reader and the first person narrator who puts him in the thick of the action. Because the story is told by the main characters, the reader gets a first--hand view and the ethos of the characters is easily established. However, the establishment of ethos in Meridian is not so simply executed because the novel is written in third person and patchily told.

The novel opens rather strangely in a little town in Alabama called Chickokema. When the reader meets Meridian, she is gallantly leading a band of African-American children to view the supposed preserved remains of a white woman presumably murdered by her husband for infidelity. The exhibition, put on by the husband of the dead woman, is a traveling one-act freak show. Though it is the seventies, one day is designated for minorities to see the show; Meridian leads the children in protest by insisting that they view the show on a day set aside for whites. At this point (the opening pages of the book but sequentially very near the end) the reader gets others'

perceptions of Meridian: valiance in Truman's eyes, "How can you not love somebody like that!" and reverence or insanity in the eyes of the old sweeper, ". . . she thinks she's God or she just ain't all there. I think she ain't all there myself. (22) The narrator gives only her actions which further places Meridian's credibility in doubt. Surprisingly, in the opening lines the reader learns that Meridian often goes into a catatonic state as a physical reaction to the injustice she witnesses and experiences and that she lives in a house bare except for a sleeping bag and letters taped to the wall.

Walker uses persuasive tactics by establishing Meridian's ethos. Meridian evolves before the reader's eyes into someone who can be trusted, believed, respected, and someone for whom the audience can feel sympathy. Walker sets Meridian up as the persona who actually becomes her voice in this novel of ideas.

It is not until the narrator introduces Meridian through her dialogue with Truman that the reader begins to get an understanding of the character Meridian. Though a bit eccentric, her lifestyle reflects her own search for wholeness or completeness. The bare house symbolizes the fact that she has stripped herself of all amenities and even some necessities to lead an ascetic life of self

denial. Until Meridian explains her own eccentricities, her behavior seems bizarre. Meridian tells Truman in her initial utterances that what he sees "is a woman in the process of changing her mind" (25). She has "volunteered to suffer" (25) in an effort to bring about change in her own life as well as in the lives of others.

Walker further establishes Meridian's ethos in this opening chapter by going back into Meridian's past ten years before the encounter with Truman in the present. The reader learns that Meridian did not function well as a revolutionary because she admitted to her fellow revolutionaries that she could not kill. In this scene, Meridian's honesty and sincere desire to help her people are obvious. Also obvious as Christian indicates "is her resistance to accepting the easy solution, her refusal to speak the word without living its meaning . . ." (209). In another flashback, Meridian's attitude toward her parents presents itself: she and her father had kindred spirits, but she and her mother had unresolvable ideological differences. This opening chapter with its portrait of Meridian through dialogue and flashbacks reveals Meridian's inner struggle and begins the establishment of her credibility.

The writer further establishes Meridian's ethos in

these opening pages of the novel by showing her commitment, conviction, and solicitousness. Meridian's intelligence, despite her apparent "different" behavior, is also revealed. The reader can see Meridian's intelligence and reason for struggling in the conversation with Truman just before the flashbacks which indirectly define the basis for her quest. In their conversation the two discuss Meridian's leading of the children to see the freak:

"The whole thing was useless, if you ask me," said Truman. "You make yourself a catatonic behind a lot of meaning-less action that will never get anybody anywhere. What good did it do those kids to see that freak's freaky wife?"

"She was a fake. They discovered that. There was no salt they said, left in the crevices of her eye sockets or in her hair. This town is near the ocean, you know, the children have often seen dead things wash up from the sea. They said she was made of plastic and were glad they hadn't waited till Thursday to see her. Besides, it was a hot day. They were bored. There was nothing else to do."

"Did you fall down in front of them?"

"I never try to do that. I never have. Some of the men--the ones who brought me home--followed me away from the square; they always follow me home after I perform, in case I need them. I fell down only when I was out of the children's sight."

"And they folded your arms?"

"They folded my arms."

"And straightened your legs?"

"They're very gentle and good at it."

"Do they know why you fall down?"

"It doesn't bother them. They have a saying for people who fall down as I do: If a person is hit hard enough, even if she stands, she falls. Don't you think that's perceptive?"

"I don't know what to think. I never have."

"Do you have a doctor?"

"I don't need one. I am getting much better by myself. . . ." Meridian moved her fingers, then lifted her arms slightly off the floor. "See, the paralysis is going away already." (26)

This dialogue somewhat justifies Meridian's behavior and stance and shows that she is an intelligent woman who is aware of what she is doing and why she is doing it. Her strong senses of commitment and conviction also shine forth in this passage.

The same passage, though, juxtaposes Truman's lack of commitment and conviction against that of Meridian, whom he sees as stuck in the sixties. As a result, a rather negative ethos is established for Truman, who criticizes Meridian's behavior. Truman does not face challenges but runs away from them or acts as though they do not exist. His apparent non-involvement and revolutionary attire show his unrecognized inner struggle. He can see Meridian's problem but not his own. He is pictured as ridiculous, confused, critical, and lethargic in trying to find solutions to his inner struggle, while Meridian is pictured as the opposite, though still in search of a solution to personal and social change.

Thus, in these first few pages of the novel, the reader gets a view of Meridian as she will be near the end of the novel. The chapters that follow the first two provide vital background information that accounts for Meridian's

state at the opening of the novel.

As the novel progresses and more is revealed about Meridian, the reader's confidence in her increases regardless of her actions, for the reader knows from information given in the first chapter that Meridian realizes the incompleteness of her life and is earnestly trying to change. The reader learns much about Meridian: her experiences at Saxon College which included an abortion but also a vain attempt to save a child who had been labeled "wild child"; her experiences as a child with constant feelings of guilt and as a child wife and mother who deserts her husband and child to seek a college education; her fascination with Indian lore encouraged by her father who was a teacher of history; her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and, thus, Truman Held and the white woman, Lynne, who became his wife; her spiritual and physical degeneration; and her tortured relationship with her mother. Many of these experiences are upsetting, and would tend to make the reader suspicious of Meridian as a sincere personality, but the narrative is interspersed with comments and situations that support Meridian's credibility. For example, in a conversation with her mother, Meridian's father speaks of an Indian named Mr. Longknife who had killed many people during World War II.

Her father's conclusion about the man was that "he was a wanderer. He was looking for reasons, answers, anything to keep his historical vision of himself as a just person from falling apart" (55). The quest of this Indian mirrors Meridian's quest, for she wants to be of service in the present but simultaneously hold on to her past which included her Indian heritage. Meridian's deviant behavior is explained in the narrative of her great-grandmother, Feather Mae, who had an extraordinary experience in which she was overcome with ecstasy, fainted, but felt renewed as if by some "spiritual intoxication" (57). Statements and incidents such as these support Meridian as a believable character because they show that the behavior is not as uncommon as it may at first appear.

Though many of Meridian's actions generate questions on the part of the reader as to her credibility, clearly her relationships with others in the novel leave little question as to her earnestness. Meridian is important to the other characters in the novel. They stand in contrast to her and emphasize her strength of character and commitment. They illuminate her.

Anne-Marion, her college roommate, seems militant on the surface but merely gives lip service to ideas on which Meridian acts. Their basic differences are well

illustrated in a conversation on capitalism which they both professed to abhor. Anne-Marion wants to enjoy the benefits of a capitalistic society while Meridian feels that all should enjoy the same status. When reminded of her professed admiration for socialism and communism by Meridian, Anne-Marion says, "I have the deepest admiration for them, but since I haven't had a chance to have a capitalist fling yet, the practice of those theories will have to wait awhile" (118). Her voice always stands in opposition to Meridian's. Meridian questions and seeks answers; she does not. When Anne-Marion decides to end the friendship with Meridian because "she could not endure a friendship that required such caring vigilance," she says to Meridian, "Meridian, I cannot afford to love you. Like the idea of suffering itself, you are obsolete" (125). Though she said Meridian was obsolete, she remained in touch with her by writing her letters monthly "with the most galling ferocity, out of guilt and denial and rage" (125). For Anne-Marion who was not ready to deny herself anything in an effort to help others, Meridian served as a conscience.

Truman Held and Lynne both turn to Meridian in their lowest moments. Truman, an artist who has no real identity of his own, drifts in and out of Meridian's life. Meridian

at first finds him fascinating, but the fascination slowly wanes when he becomes interested in the white women. According to Byerman, Truman's "quest for identification with the white world, both as a positive ambition and as a desire to escape his blackness, leads him to abandon Meridian and eventually to abandon the movement in order to live in New York" (154). Regardless of his actions, he always had to return to Meridian. He makes the following reflection on Meridian: "It would have been joy to him to forget her, as it would have been joy never to have been his former self. But running away from Lynne, at every opportunity, and existing a few days in Meridian's presence, was the best that he could do" (143). The reflection here is not a sexual one but one of respect and need. He was drawn to her because of the soothing effect she had on him. Meridian becomes his mentor.

Lynne Rabinowitz was a Jewish girl who joined the Movement in the early days. A virgin, she became the wife of Truman only to degenerate to a pathetic object in the eyes of African-Americans in the community in her reduction to a sexual object for the men involved in the Movement. She desperately wants to fit into their world but cannot because of her whiteness. Lynne is discussed in the novel long before the reader actually

meets her on a visit to Meridian's house before she moved to Chickokema. She was always an admirer of Meridian and probably somewhat jealous of her also because of Truman's attachment to Meridian. She gives on this visit what is probably an accurate description of Meridian: "It's just that you have everything. I mean, your people love you, and you can cope" (151). The "everything" she refers to here apparently does not mean material possessions but the things that make life worthwhile and endear one to other people. Lynne wishes for that. Instead of attempting to find meaning in her life and living by some standard, Lynne chooses to give her body to any man who wanted it. The following exchange between the two women sets up the contrast:

"You can't understand. Your life is so . . . there's something wrong with your life, you know. It's so, so, proscribed. Like you drew a circle around it and only walk as far as the edge. Why did you come back down here? What are you looking for? These people will always be the same. You can't change them. Nothing will."

"But I can change," said Meridian. "I hope I will."

"I live for the moment, no looking back for me. Take what life offers. . . ." (152)

Lynne's comments about Meridian as opposed to herself show the extent to which Meridian affects those around her. They also show others' perceptions of her; those perceptions coincide with what Meridian has said and done.

Lynne's not wanting to go back to her past, her not wanting to work with the people around her, and her not wanting to live a "proscribed" life accent the fact that Meridian is attempting to do those things because they are necessary in order to achieve the wholeness they all need. Lynne, like Anne Marion and Truman, needs Meridian. The three of them, individually and collectively, represent what Meridian would be if she were not involved in the quest for wholeness. This passage also iterates Walker's change theme in Meridian's statement that she can change whether the people around her change or not. It seems here that change is an act of the will.

Walker makes effective use of ethos as a means of persuasion by building Meridian's credibility through Meridian's own actions, the presentation of parallel situations and incidents, and other characters' perceptions of Meridian as well as vivid pictures of the supporting characters which serve as a foil for Meridian.

Also effective in meeting one's persuasive intent is pathos, the arousing of the emotions in the reader. Walker's intent is to show the effects of the Civil Rights Movement on its participants and the function of the main character to help readers relate personally to the Movement. As she does in The Color Purple and Grange

Copeland as well, Walker also wants to show that change is achievable.

Again, Aristotle defines emotions as "those states which are attended by pain and pleasure, and which as they change, make a difference in our judgements [of the same things]; for example: anger, pity, fear, and all the like, and also their opposites" (92). Aristotle first discusses anger and says that the speaker/writer must bring the reader/listener into an irascible state. However, in Meridian there is no major antagonist unless it is the Movement itself (which would present a paradox) or Truman. The Movement forced the participants to react non-violently to abusive treatment by showing a facade of complete control, when in reality they hurt very deeply inside. Anger is not generated, though, as a result of the effects of the Movement because it precipitates the personal examinations the characters have to make. The reader feels some anger toward Truman because of his attitude toward women. He honestly expected to marry a virgin when he had spent his time "devirginizing" women. When he found out that Meridian had been married and had given birth, his entire opinion of her changed. He felt that he deserved much more; he had been trained to demand a virgin. As a result, he married Lynne, a virgin eager to love and please

him and possessing the kind of worldly experiences and naivete he sought. Truman wants to identify with whites and, therefore, escape his blackness, a most unadmirable trait. He is a man who knows not what to do: he leaves the Movement, leaves the wife he thought he wanted, attempts to immerse himself in blackness by painting portraits of strong African-American women, and finally lives with a young blonde girl in New York. Men such as Truman who seek solely to indulge themselves at the expense of others, especially women, arouse anger in most people.

Pity is also an emotion that should be aroused in the reader. Pity is "whatever brings pain and anguish, and is in its nature destructive" (121). Perhaps one of the most pitiful scenes in the novel is the one in which Lynne and Truman meet and talk at Meridian's in Mississippi after the death of their daughter. Walker makes use of Aristotle's advice in making the scene graphic in action and in words:

"I could have made it," she said. "At least I could have stayed healthy."

"You always needed a shrink, it's symptomatic of your race."

Lynne had begun to cry, wiping her nose on the edge of her skirt. Truman watched with disgust.

"My race? my race?" Lynne turned her face up as if imploring the trees. She laughed in spite of herself.

He had never hated, aesthetically, the whiteness of Lynne so much. It shocked him. Her nose was red and peeling, her hair was stringy and--he scrutinized it quickly--there was some gray! And she was so stout! Stouter even than

the last time he'd seen her, after Camara died. He could not stop himself from thinking she looked very much like a pig. Her eyes seemed tinier than he'd ever seen them and her white ears needed only to grow longer and flop over a bit.

But what was happening (had happened) to him, that he should have these thoughts? There was a large pecan tree beside him. He leaned against it.

"Lynne," he said finally, "why don't you go on back home? There's nothing between me and Meridian. Not like you think. She doesn't understand why I keep bothering her any more than I do."

"Bull."

"Meridian is my past, my sister. . ." Truman began but Lynne cut him off.

"I've heard all that shit before," she said. "But it doesn't speak to what you did to me and Camara. Running off as soon as black became beautiful . . ."

It was his turn to laugh. "You don't believe that?" he asked.

"You bet your life I do. You must think I'm stupid. You only married me because you were too much of a coward to throw a bomb at all the crackers who make you sick. You're like the rest of those nigger zombies. No life of your own at all unless it's something against white folks. You can't even enjoy a good fuck without hoping some cracker is somewhere grinding his teeth."

"I married you because I loved you."

"Yeah, and you wanted something strange around the house to entertain your friends."

"Shut up, Lynne," said Truman, as he saw Meridian coming out of the house." (149-150)

This passage arouses pity in the reader and perhaps even a bit of anger. Truman and Lynne are pictured here as casualties of the Movement, for had it not have been for the Movement their paths probably would not have crossed. The scene reveals the intense anger they feel toward each

other. Lynne feels betrayed and used by Truman; Truman wonders what he ever saw in Lynne. They seemed to have been temporarily mesmerized by the cause in their initial meeting at the beginning of the Movement--caught up in their sincere desire to bring about social change. In this process a change was occurring in them, a change whose effects can clearly be seen in this conversation. At this point the reader pities both of them, for they have lost their focus; any attempt to regain it seems impossible at this point. Two who once loved each other so dearly, pity and hate each other so intensely. This scene along with many others supports Walker's purpose of relating the psychological effects of the Movement on those involved as well as helping the reader relate personally to it. This passage also emphasizes to the reader the importance of achieving personal change in order for social change to take place. This scene vividly demonstrates the pitiable state in which one finds himself when social change is attempted before wholeness of self is achieved.

Walker makes use of placability or mildness in comforting her readers. Although Truman incites mild anger and pity, Walker manages to placate the reader by having him realize that change is needed in his life in order for him to become whole. As a participant in the struggle for

social change, he had been rather successful but unsuccessful in personal change. So, Truman at the end of the novel takes on Meridian's role of searcher because, according to Walker herself, "his life has been so full of ambivalence, hypocrisy and obliviousness of his action and their consequences" (Tate 180). Of the choices given by Aristotle for causing anger to wane, Walker makes Truman repentant for his actions by having him settle things civilly with Lynne and take on the struggle. At the novel's end, Truman experiences a "Meridian-like" faint and, cloaked in Meridian's sleeping bag and wearing her visored cap, he wonders "if Meridian knew that the sentence of bearing the conflict in her own soul which she had imposed on herself--and lived through--must now be borne in terror by all of the rest of them" (220). A change has occurred in Truman, and the reader's anger has been assuaged.

Aristotle also stresses the emotions of loving, liking and friendship as necessary in endearing the reader/listener to the character thereby getting the desired response from the reader. Particular scenes in the novel endear the reader to Meridian because of her sincere desire to help others and to undergo the personal change needed to free herself. A case in point occurs when Meridian tries everything she can to save the wild child, a

young parentless girl who roams the neighborhood which surrounds Saxon College. When Meridian finally sees the child, she is so moved by the condition of the child that she goes into a catatonic state. Upon emerging, she sets out to help her. She captures, bathes, and feeds her and makes calls in an attempt to find a place for her to live. When the girl later dies, Meridian arranges a funeral service, which can potentially get her into trouble. This segment of the novel vividly portrays Meridian's concern for the downtrodden, a concern all must admire. However, this concern of Meridian's with others causes a conflict in the reader and in Meridian herself, for she seeks to help others throughout the novel, but has given up her own child for others to rear. This consumes her with guilt, and she attempts to mother all with whom she comes in contact. The reader is told when Meridian gave the child away that she did so with a very light heart, for she felt that she had done the child a favor by sparing him the infliction of the kind of guilt that she had received from her mother and would surely pass on to him. She gave up her child for his own well being. The reader wishes the best for Meridian despite her mistakes because she is intrepid in her pursuit to make amends and bring about the kind of change required in her life.

A major focus in Walker's purpose in this as well as all her other works is to bring about personal change in the reader which parallels emulation in Aristotle. Logos coalesces the ethical and emotional appeals because the deliberate argument pivots on the soundness of the logos the rhetorical enthymeme. Of the three kinds of argument, Walker's logos is based on the deliberative format in that she is trying to persuade and in so doing causing the reader to reassess an idea or belief. She makes use of the enthymeme because her conjecture is not real but fictional; her fictional characters and setting create probabilities.

An argument has failed if people are not moved to act as a result of hearing it. Of the three--ethos, pathos, and logos--logos is the most important in achieving that purpose. In converting her readers, Walker must prove through her narration that the kind of personal change sought by Meridian is achievable by creating emulation, the desire for change in the reader. The reader must identify with the characters, and they must be believable and make changes that are attainable. As shown by Walker in this novel, the kind of change required is attainable but difficult to achieve because characters' problems seem complex and painful to solve. Meridian exhibits positive emulative traits--courage, conviction, commitment,

endurance, patience. But she has so many inner conflicts to resolve that the task at times seems unachievable. Her transformation process is indeed complex. According to McDowell (262-73), the transformation process for Meridian of finding her identity or moral center in order to develop completeness of being involves several confrontations: with racial and sexual traditions; with her mother's religious, maternal, and political beliefs; and with her body in reaction to her struggle. The novel indicates that one must delve deeply into himself and into his past and be prepared to meet with obstacles of all kinds in order to bring about personal change. Attainable, yes. Difficult, yes. According to Christian, "Walker's ending suggests that even her [Meridian's] dearly won salvation is not sure unless we others sort out the tangled roots of our past and pursue our own health" (234). Each of us has to pursue our own wholeness if the society is to survive.

Walker proves the point that change is necessary, but doubt remains as to whether her characterization of Meridian (because of its thoroughness) will encourage others to pursue the quest because the cost is indeed great, as exhibited by Anne-Marion and Lynne who are unwilling to take on the quest. They see what Meridian has to endure in order to reach a wholeness that may not

endure. Meridian acknowledges at the end of the novel that the cost of her suffering will mean a life of being alone. Not many people are willing to pay such a high price.

Walker does make the logos work in the confines of the fiction. The rhetorical enthymeme, personal change is necessary before social change can be achieved, is proven. The enthymeme lends itself to the fulfillment of the goal in fiction because fiction is contrived and the enthymeme is based on probability which is employed in fiction. As to whether this contrived action will work in real life situations and cause change to occur in readers remains to be seen. Walker does achieve the goal in a way because she forces the reader to look closely at the characters and see some of his own traits in them. The unstated part of the enthymeme in Meridian is that individuals are in an undesirable state, and society has not changed but can or will once individual changes have been made. In the enthymeme the substance of persuasion is provided by the audience. The unstated part of the enthymeme is in the values shared by the audience and the rhetor. Walker as a rhetor touches those values and emotions in the reader as a participant in the rhetorical act and forces him to see that the solution to social change is personal change first (even if only in the context of the novel). She is,

therefore, successful in her use of logos in a limited way.

THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND

Upon examining the first Walker novel, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, for Walker's use of ethos, pathos and logos, it is clearly evident that she was accomplished at persuasion by this means in the initial stages of her venture into novel writing. For it is in this very first novel that she effectively melds the artistic proofs to the achievement of their full effect--that of arousing a desired effect in the reader.

Walker's purpose is the same in this novel as it would be in the two that followed: to explore and reveal the various experiences of the African-American woman and by so doing bring about a change which would influence actions and/or understanding. Unlike Meridian, which is more of a novel of ideas, The Third Life of Grange Copeland delivers this theme in terms of action.

In the invention stage of the narrative, Walker had to make important decisions to insure her success in achieving her persuasive intent. She chose the chronological structure because she had never written a novel before (Tate 176) and third-person narration. The prose is straightforward and easy to understand; everything about the novel is concrete. As she did in the two novels

that followed, she searched her memory recalling facts from her own experiences and gave voice to them in the novel.

Her basis for the story of Mem is taken from a childhood experience which she shared in an interview with Mary Helen Washington. The father of a friend of hers had killed his wife, and Walker describes the body of the mother laid out on a slab in the funeral home; she reproduces this same scene in describing Mem's death in the novel:

. . . there she was, hard working, large, overweight, Black, somebody's cook, lying on a slab with half her head shot off, and on her feet were those shoes that I describe--hole in the bottom, and she had stuffed paper in them . . . we used to have, every week, just such a murder as these (in my home town), and it was almost always the wife and sometimes the children. (136)

In the 1973 interview with O'Brien, Walker intimates that in her first draft of the novel, none of which was ever used, Ruth is a civil rights lawyer married to a lawyer and a mother who returns to the South to rescue her father Brownfield from prison. She is committed to insuring freedom for her people. That version was filled with lovemaking and courage, but she thought it too recent and superficial. Because she had always wanted to explore the relationship between parents and children, she brought in Grange. Further, she wanted to explore the relationship between men and women, "and why women are always condemned

for doing what men do as an expression of their masculinity. Why are women so easily 'tramps' and 'traitors' when men are heroes for engaging in the same activity?" (197)

When commenting on this novel in 1983, Walker indicated that she wanted to write a realistic novel:

I wanted it to be absolutely visual. I wanted the reader to be able to sit down, pick up that book and see a little of Georgia from the early twenties through the sixties--the trees, the hills, the dirt, the sky--to feel it, to feel the pain and the struggle of the family, and the growth of the little girl Ruth. I wanted all of that to be very real. I didn't want there to be any evasion on the part of the reader. I didn't want the reader to say, "Now, I think she didn't mean this. This is a mean man: she meant him to be a mean man." I had a lot of criticism, of course, about Brownfield, and my response is that I know many Brownfields, and it's a shame that I know so many. (Tate 176-77)

Walker succeeds in making Brownfield, as well as the other characters, visual and realistic. The reader cannot evade the reality with which she confronts him. There is no doubt: Brownfield is a mean man incapable of change. So, how does Walker do it? How does she make her characters so convincing? With such a broad purpose and her wealth of information on the subject and invention strategies in place, Walker draws the reader into the narrative and produces her realistic novel by effectively making use of the artistic proofs.

In the first half of the novel, Brownfield and Grange are both portrayed as "mean men." However, as the novel progresses, Grange becomes gentler and more understanding while Brownfield becomes meaner, harder and more evil. In establishing the ethos of these two characters , Walker establishes her omnipresent change theory motif. She juxtaposes the growing meanness of Brownfield with the development of softness and sensitivity in Grange. It is necessary for Brownfield to become meaner in order for Grange's later transformation to be believable.

Walker actually gives more information about Brownfield's life than she does Grange's, for whom the book is entitled. She tells of Brownfield's early years, the poverty-stricken homelife, the ill-treatment of his mother by his father, his mother's fall into a lascivious lifestyle and her later suicide and murder of her own child, his father's desertion of him, and his involvement with older women who took advantage of him. Brownfield has experienced all of these trials by the age of sixteen. When these experiences of Brownfield's are related, he is pictured merely as a victim. His ethos is not really developed at this point. He mostly reacts and does not initiate much action. It is not until later that the reader sees a personality which is at first positive, for

he marries Mem whom he dearly loves and promises to cherish for the rest of his life. However, when he sees that the most that he can get out of life is the sharecropping existence he remembered so well from his own childhood and his own father's life, he becomes hostile, mean, angry, and impossible to live with. In a few pages he changes in front of the reader's eyes from a loving husband to a monster:

Three years later when he was working the same farm and in debt up to his hatbrim and Mem was big with their second child, he could still look back on their wedding day as the pinnacle of his achievement in extricating himself from evil and the devil and aligning himself with love. Even the shadow of eternal bondage, which plagued him constantly those first years, could not destroy his faith in a choice well made. 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. He did not care what anybody thought about it, but she was so good to him, so much what he needed, that her body became his shrine and he kissed it endlessly, shamelessly, lovingly, and celebrated its magic with flowers and dancing; and, as the babies, knowing their places beside her as well as life, sucked and nursed at her bosom, so did he, and grew big and grew firm with love, and grew strong. (49)

But this reality changes abruptly in one year to one that is extremely harsh when Broomfield realizes that his life is a repetition of his father's. His inability to change his sharecropping existence makes him become a monster who

abuses his children and his wife:

His crushed pride, his battered ego, made him drag Mem away from schoolteaching. Her knowledge reflected badly on a husband who could scarcely read or write. It was his great ignorance that sent her into white homes as a domestic, his need to bring her down to his level! It was his rage at himself, and his life and his world that made him beat her for an imaginary attraction she aroused in other men, crackers, although she was no party to any of it. . . . 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. (55)

At this point in the novel (the first fifth of it) Brownfield's ethos is firmly and convincingly established as that of a reprobate and one incapable of change. These passages reveal him to be a man who is not in control of his own destiny and who makes no attempt to control it. Over and over he blames others for his failure and punishes severely those most vulnerable and who should be most precious to him. As the novel progresses, Walker builds on the ethos she has established of Brownfield, but the reader is struck by his apparent insensitivity to others. He has no regard for his wife and children and deliberately supplies them with as much misery as he can. Walker paints him realistically and achieves her purpose of showing him as a "mean" man by describing his actions: his pouring of

oil into streams to kill the fish and his drowning of cats; his murder of his albino son by setting him out in the cold so that he would freeze to death; his humiliation of Mem in front of others; first his planning of Mem's downfall and his later coldblooded murder of her by shooting her in the face with a shotgun. Walker consistently shows that Brownfield is incorrigible. The one time that he offers a reason to Mem for his treatment of her occurs when she draws a gun on him and forces him to move with them into a decent residence. He does so then only because his life is in danger. Not one incident occurs in the novel where he is pictured any other way. The reader never questions the fact that Brownfield is a "mean man." Brownfield is clearly established as the antagonist.

Prior to and during the complete characterization of Brownfield, the reader gets only brief views of Grange, the father Brownfield partially blames for his state. Grange is introduced in the first three chapters of the book and reappears thirteen chapters later. The initial presentation of Grange raises ire in the reader, for he is a poor representative of his species. He is unable to care for his family in a fashion which he desires; he has no relationship with his son and cannot even touch him; he grossly mistreats his wife; he follows a drunken routine

that negatively affects his family; he contributes greatly to his wife's death; he deserts his family after he sees that he is in an impossible situation for improvement.

After the first three chapters, the reader has a negative impression of Grange but not as negative as the one given of Brownfield. Walker relates Grange's tale in a reportorial style. Though Grange exhibited many of the same actions his son would later emulate, he seemed not to have the hardness of his son. In these first pages, Grange Copeland appears briefly as a man frustrated with his situation, bearing the burden of the black sharecropper's existence in the early 1900's. Rather than continue to see his family suffer, he takes the path of many before him, the road to the North. At this point in the novel, his ethos is not firmly established. However, when he returns thirteen chapters and ten years later, he does so in a surprising way: he enters Josie's bedroom in which Josie and Brownfield are bedded as though he is expected and is respected as though he is the man of the house. He marries Josie two weeks after his return.

The first time the reader sees Grange after his abrupt entrance, he is bearing food for Brownfield's family. The reader learns immediately that Grange never came to Brownfield's house empty handed. Grange chides Brownfield

for his lack of concern for his family and the reader is told that "Grange felt guilty about his son's condition and assuaged his guilt by giving food and money to Brownfield's family" (70). In this scene, Brownfield's insensitivity is juxtaposed against Grange's anxious care and concern for his son's family. In his time away from the South, Grange learned something of the value of human life and a man's responsibility to his family, traits which Brownfield never exhibits. Several times in this brief chapter which focuses on the birth of Ruth and Grange's involvement in it, the reader is reminded of the guilt that Grange feels for having deserted Brownfield and the way in the present he attempts to make up for his transgressions. When he discovers that Ruth has in fact come into the world, he is appalled that there is neither fire nor food for Mem. He builds a fire and prepares a stew for the family from the food he had brought with him. At the close of the chapter when Brownfield begins to berate Grange for his lack of involvement with him as a child, Grange endures this punishment in silence, an indication that he is truly sorrowful for what he did now but performs actions which will compensate for what he did not do in the past. Brownfield, severely angered by his father's actions, continues to hate him and chooses not to follow his

example. Thus, Walker begins to establish a positive ethos of Grange juxtaposed against the extremely negative ethos of Brownfield. As Grange becomes softer, Brownfield becomes harder.

After Grange's reappearance in Chapters 16 and 17, he does not appear again until Chapter 31 in which he has custody of Ruth as a result of Brownfield's killing of Mem. In this and the remaining chapters Grange's credibility as a sensitive and changed man eager to right the wrongs he has committed is fully developed. He is not portrayed as perfect, for he admits that he married Josie for her money, and he holds a deep hatred for whites. However, he is committed to the "survival whole" of Ruth by securing her future. This combination of imperfection and commitment assures his credibility as a changed man. He is as consistent in his rightness as Brownfield is in his wrongness. The contrast between these two makes both believable. Through the development of their ethos, Walker's change theory is made plausible.

Both characters' ethos are also established through the other characters in the novel, especially the children. Brownfield's children hate him because of the ill treatment they receive from him. In a very descriptive passage the response of Ornette, the oldest daughter, to her father's

consumption of food is given:

Ornette sat dazed, watching her father pick up his meat with his hands and tear at it, sending the juice flying over the tablecloth Mem was proud to make white. When her father was eating Ornette could not think of him as anything but a hog. She blinked her eyes as he said to her over a mouthful of peas and bread, "What you looking at me for?"

.....
"What's the matter with you stupid?" Her father's eyes were on her, intense and hard, like the eyes of a big rat.

I wish he'd get swell up and die! she thought behind her alerted but sad and empty face. I wish he'd just do that for us so we could bury him! (82)

Brownfield's children hate him and wish that he would die. The startling realization came for the children and perhaps for the reader too when Brownfield calculatedly planned the demise of Ruth. No doubt remained that he was ruthless. When they had to move from the house they all dearly loved because Brownfield had deliberately not paid the rent, the children were genuinely hurt. The narrator indicates that the children thought that he was capable of change and, in fact, thought he had changed but learned that they had made a mistake. They realized that he was more changeable than changed (108).

Grange, on the other hand, was loved by the children because he always showed solicitude toward them. He brought them the foods that they liked. His genuine goodness, though, is shown best in his interactions with

Ruth. When the relatives from the North had come to get the children, Ruth had clung to her grandfather. This act guaranteed that she would stay with her grandfather and supports the fact that Grange had changed and was indeed a good man, for a child loved him, and children do not mistake love in people.

In the same passages in which Walker establishes the ethos of the characters, she establishes pathos which is necessary in making a change in the judgment of the reader by evoking certain mental images and reactions in the reader thereby convincing him of the argument. Walker does a masterful job in this first novel. Her use here is similar to what she did later in The Color Purple.

Walker indicates in her purpose statement for this novel that she wanted to make the message visual, that she wanted to make her message and meaning realistic that there would be no doubt as to what she was trying to do. She succeeds. The reader feels every emotion set forth in Aristotle's Rhetoric that is required in order for the rhetor to be successful in persuading the reader. The reader cannot evade the feelings Walker evokes through her vivid descriptions and dialogue.

Clearly, the adversary or antagonist in the novel comes in the form of Brownfield Copeland, who in many ways

resembles Albert and Celie's stepfather in The Color Purple. Aristotle asserts that the audience must be brought into an irascible state by showing that the adversary is the worst kind of villain, by using things that make men angry and by showing the adversary as one who arouses anger. Walker follows this advice to the letter. Brownfield's total disregard for human life and the feelings of those for whom he should feel closest place him in the category of a villain. Perhaps the most graphic passage which describes the intensity of Brownfield's villainy is the one in which he tells Josie about his reaction to the albino child to whom Mem had given birth:

" . . . Well, you know what I did to my wife when that baby was born? I beat the hell out of her a minute after I seen that baby's peculiar-looking eyes. She was just a-laying up there moaning, she were too weak to holler, and I beat her so she fell right out the bed. I 'cused her of all **kinds** of conniving with white mens round and about, and she jest kept saying she didnt do nothing with no white mens. 'I swears to God I didn't!' She says. And I axed her, "How come this baby ain't got no brown color on him?" and she says, '**Lawd knows I don't know, Brownfield**, but he yours! and I said, 'Don't you go lying to me woman . . . if he ain't black he ain't mine!' Well I told her if that child didn't darken up real soon she'd better git prepared to get 'long without him. And she cried and begged and cried and begged, and she started leaving him close to the fire and in the sun when it come out, but that baby stayed like he was, not a ounce of color nowhere on him. An' one night when that baby was 'bout three months old, and it was in January and there was ice on the ground, I takes 'im up by the arm when he was sleeping, and like

putting out the cat I jest set 'im outdoors on the do'steps. Then I turned in and went to sleep. 'Fore I dropped off, Mem set up and said she thought she heard the baby but I told her I had done looked at him and for her to go back to sleep. I kept her so wore out them days that she couldn't even argue; she was so tired she didn't fall asleep like folks--she just fell into a coma.

"I never slept so soundly before in my life--and when I woke up it was because of her moaning and carrying on in front the fire. She was just rubbing that baby what wasn't no more then than a block of ice. Dark as he'd ever been though, sorta blue looking.

"Now, 'cording to you I done that cause I thought that baby was by a white man. But I knowed the whole time that he wasn't. For one thing, although it were white, it looked jest like me. . . ." (225)

This passage and many others like it in the novel graphically reveal Walker's ability to evoke anger in the reader. Who would not be angered by a man who beats his wife immediately after she has given birth to a child and who then strikes fear in her for something for which he knows she bears no responsibility? The man is ruthless. Further he actually murders a child and tells the story several years later with no feelings of remorse but with feelings of justification. By using the voice of Brownfield to tell this story rather than relating it herself, Walker intensifies the pathos because Brownfield relates the story to Josie in a matter-of-fact manner.

Not only does the preceding illustration arouse anger, but it also arouses pity, and it does so in the manner

Aristotle recommends. Walker makes the action close at hand by having Brownfield relate the story in a very descriptive manner. At this point in the narrative, the reader already knows the many punishments Mem had suffered at the hands of her husband and feels even more pity for her because she lived in constant fear of a man she had to know to be obsessed with evil. And then to find her own flesh and blood frozen to death by an act performed by that man would be too much for one person to bear. Her state was indeed pitiable because she was trapped in a winless situation, for she had no one to turn to for help. The description of Mem trying to rub the lifeless infant back to life renders the scene even more pitiful. This scene, as well as many others like it in the novel, causes the reader to feel compassion for Mem and anger and hatred for Brownfield, exactly what Walker was trying to attain.

Aristotle also recommends placability or mildness as emotions for arousal in the reader in an effort to soothe the reader once the anger and hatred have been aroused. Of the options Aristotle gives for placation, Walker chooses death for Brownfield; he is not worthy of living under any circumstances. He victimized every person with whom he came in contact in the novel. He is intolerable for his inability to repent, his lack of respect for human life,

his failure to recognize that he and not any other has responsibility for his destiny and his inability to think of anyone other than himself. The reader becomes so angry with Brownfield that it would be next to impossible to create a fictional situation that would appease the reader. Death becomes then the only recourse. When the death occurs, the reader wants to applaud because Walker has convincingly deemed him worthy of death by arousing only anger in the reader on the part of Brownfield.

However, the case is not the same for Grange Copeland, who begins as a mean man who is very similar to his son, although he dies also. Walker incites anger in the reader against Grange when he is first introduced in the novel because of his ill-treatment of his wife and son. Grange leaves and goes to the North and returns a gentler person, for he has experiences that make genuine change in him and endear him to the reader although he is still not a perfect man.

Upon his return to the South, he demonstrates that he is a changed man and one to be admired, for he makes every attempt to make amends for his sins against his family. Walker makes strong use of placability and mildness in assuaging the reader's feelings toward Grange. Of the options given by Walker to induce placability in the

reader, Walker chooses to show the offender as extremely repentant for what he has done. Several passages from the novel arouse placability in the reader on the part of Grange: "Grange felt guilty about his son's condition and assuaged his guilt by giving food and money to Brownfield's family" (70).

Upon seeing Mem, his daughter-in-law, in a deprived condition, Grange's repentant spirit is revealed:

Grange felt, among all the other reasons for her being laid so low, his own guilt. That was why he spent so much time with his grandchildren, and brought them meat and vegetables, and gave them money on the sly, and reaped in full the anger of his wife and the unflagging bitterness of his son. (73)

Grange does quite a bit of self-analysis in the novel and spends time explaining to Ruth. The following passage adds to the placability; it is one in which he tells of the effect his granddaughter has had on him:

"The white folks hated me and I hated myself until I started hating them in return and loving myself. Then I tried just loving me, and then you, and ignoring them much as I could. You're special to me because you're part of me; a part of me I didn'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!" (196)

With scenes and passages such as these, Walker convincingly shows that Grange, unlike his son, is worthy of trust and deserves to be liked, for he is a good man, a

man transformed. Who could not like a man who takes responsibility for the insuring of the survival of his granddaughter in a world which he knows will treat her cruelly? He prepares her for the realities of life and "fixes" it as much as possible for her to be an independent person. He instills her with wisdom of old and provides her with money to make the transition easy for her once he has left her permanently.

Similar to Albert and Pa (Celie's husband and stepfather) who were to follow them twelve years later in The Color Purple, Brownfield's and Grange's actions are appropriately rewarded in the novel. Although Grange also dies at the end of the novel at the hands of the police, the reader is satisfied because Walker had prepared the reader for such an ending. Grange was willing to die for Ruth. To him that was the true act of selflessness--for one to give his life for someone. By contrasting the hardness of Brownfield with the more gentle demeanor of Grange and showing by degrees the development in each man's hardness and gentleness respectively, Walker makes placation in the reader realistic.

The Rhetoric also addresses the emotions of loving, liking and friendship. Needless to say, neither of these feelings is directed toward Brownfield, who is designed to

be hated. Grange and Ruth generate these feelings in the reader. Their closeness, that of grandfather and granddaughter, endears them to the reader, for their love is genuine, and they will do anything for each other. Their conversations and time spent together in winemaking and other activities make the reader feel their genuine closeness.

In the Rhetoric, Aristotle says that pathos furnishes the speaker/writer with arguments subsidiary to the logical ones (131). This statement is certainly true in the novels of Walker because she creates her own reality within her fictional world and makes her logical argument work with the support of the ethical and emotional proofs. In this novel, she makes use of the deliberative format because she is trying to persuade and in so doing make the reader reassess an idea or belief. The deliberative speaker/writer is also concerned with "those things upon which advice is feasible; and these are all such as can be referred to ourselves as agents--all that we ourselves can originate and set in motion; for in deliberating we always carry back inquiries to the point where we find that we have, or have not, the power to achieve our objects" (Aristotle 20). The deliberative format allows the writer of fiction to give advice indirectly through the actions,

words and thoughts of the characters in the work. Deliberation, according to Aristotle, forces the reader/listener to examine self and apply the arguments to self, which is exactly what Walker as a rhetor wants to do.

Within this deliberative format, the enthymeme is the perfect vehicle for achieving her purpose, for it allows for argument based on conjecture and probabilities, the bases for fiction. As in the other novels, Walker's enthymeme is based on change and whether or not it is attainable.

The slavery-reminiscent sharecropping system of the South provides the setting for Walker's novel. The characters seem trapped and victimized by the system, and their treatment of others can sometimes be blamed on the conditions under which they live. African-American men are stripped of their manhood by the system because they have no control over their own lives, not to mention the lives of their families. Ruled by the white landowners to whom they can only bow and retaliate in their minds, they take their frustrations out on their families and especially their wives who do not have the strength to fight them back. They are the only ones over whom the men can have dominance. It is in this setting and situation that Walker tells her story and endeavors to persuade her reader that

change is possible even in the worst of circumstances.

She clearly establishes the ethical and emotional proofs while simultaneously establishing the logical proofs. Brownfield is a mean man who never changes; Grange is a mean man who changes. Both come from the same environment, experience similar frustrations, and even share the same woman. One primary difference exists between them: one leaves that environment and moves to the North for a while and the other never leaves the South.

Walker's deliberative sequence is well illustrated in the development of both Grange and Brownfield, the former for the better and the latter for the worse. The reader learns that Grange's experiences in the North provide the catalyst for change that he needs to transform his existence from one of selfishness and self-hate to self-love and concern for others. The experience is related in the novel many years after it happened.

Grange had been living in New York for a while as a bum, a purse snatcher, and just living by any illegal means possible. One night he was in Central Park and surreptitiously listened to the conversation of two lovers. He learned that the woman was pregnant and the man to whom she was talking, the father of the child, was married. The man gave the woman a wad of money which she threw on the

ground. He later left the woman, and Grange, completely moved by the entire scene, felt sympathy for the woman, retrieved the money, and attempted to give it back to her. An argument ensued, and the woman became almost hysterical at Grange's nerve. Backing away from him, she fell into a frozen pond, and chose to drown rather than accept Grange's help in order to save her own life. This event precipitated a change in the life of this once evil man. He experienced a kind of purgation after the event:

The death of the woman was simple murder, he thought, and soul condemning; but in a strange way, a bizarre way, it liberated him. He felt in some way repaid for his own unfortunate life. It was the taking of that white woman's life--and the denying of the life of her child--the taking of her life, not the taking of her money, that forced him to want to try to live again. He believed that against his will, he had stumbled on the necessary act that black men must commit to regain, or to manufacture their manhood, their self-respect. They must kill their oppressors.

He never ceased to believe this, adding only to this belief, in later years, that if one kills he must not shun death in his turn. And this, he had found, was the hardest part, since after freeing your suppressed manhood by killing whatever suppressed it you were then taken with the most passionate desire to live!

After leaving the park that night he had waited for an end to come to him. He was both ready and not ready. He felt alive and liberated for the first time in his life. He wanted to see a thousand tomorrows! For, perhaps because he had both killed and not killed the woman (it was her decision not to take his offered help, he reasoned), he did not know if his own life was required. But his exaltation had been part readiness to die. As a sinner, after seeing the face of God, is ready then immediately to meet

him, not wanting a continuation of his sordid past to reverse his faith. (153)

Obviously, the event was life-changing for Grange and fits well into Walker's deliberative sequence for proving her argument. One has to have a kind of spiritual experience or a point at which regeneration must start. After this experience Grange's purpose in life changed; he was becoming a new man who had to return to the South to make amends for the earlier wrongs he had committed. Walker continues the proof of the argument by showing a gentler and repentant side of Grange, a man who "takes on the responsibility of raising Ruth, his youngest grandchild, with the same vigor that he had shunned the responsibility of raising his own son" (Christian 183).

Further proof of Grange's change comes in his statements and actions regarding his past wrongs. In his later years when he reflected on his life, he acknowledged the wrongs he had committed toward his first wife, Margaret; his lover and later second wife, Josie; and his son, Brownfield. He was able to forgive Josie her indiscretions toward him in her intimate involvement with Brownfield because he realized that his marriage to her was out of expediency rather than true love. All that Ruth knew of Grange was his third life, which was the one in

which he had learned to love. In a conversation in which she told him that she could never imagine him as a murderer or a thief, Grange replied, "The mean things I've done. Think of me, when I'm gone, as a big, rough-looking coward. Who learned to love himself only after thirty odd years. And then overdone it" (157). By putting such words in Grange's mouth, Walker makes his change believable. Grange's words and thoughts throughout the second half of the novel show that he does not glory in his change but that he has, in fact, been reborn, that he realizes his mistakes and is grateful that he had the ability to do something about them. He does not have a holier-than-thou attitude but one that indicates that he is aware of the three lives he has lived and what it took for him to become a better human being.

Brownfield, on the other hand, never reaches this point in his life. Unlike Grange who goes North and has a regenerative experience, Brownfield remains in the South and degenerates. Brownfield's negative growth fits also into Walker's deliberative sequence. He does almost any imaginable wrong that a man can do to his family. Briefly toward the end of the novel, Brownfield thought about Ruth and her hopeful outlook on life and decided that he wanted to remove hope from her, to prove to her that regardless of

what her grandfather said, the real world fostered hate and not love. But for the first time, he thought about love and decided that it was a lie. It bothered him that he had become the enemy to his family but only fleetingly. He determined to remain hard because all that he had was "changelessness," and he could not clarify the duty of love. His entire life had been one of hate, and he resolved to continue that pattern (226-27).

Walker establishes the sequence of events and thought patterns in the novel in such a way that they prove her argument. The reader, though, might question its validity because Brownfield sees himself as a victim of a system which disenfranchises him and strips him of his manhood and on a father who deserts him. Walker as rhetor realizes this and brings the point to the attention of the reader near the end of the novel in a blaming session in which Josie, Brownfield, and Grange participate. Speaking for Brownfield, Josie intimates that Brownfield loves Grange. She adds that Grange walked out on Brownfield, leaving him to be pushed around by "white folks" who made him do things when he did not mean them (206). Grange, who is clearly Walker's persona, utters the following impassioned reply:

"By George, I **know** the danger of putting the blame on somebody else for the mess you make of

your life. I fell into the trap myself! And I'm bound to believe 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 gits 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?" (207)

Grange goes on to say that the man in him had to emerge and take responsibility for his actions. At the end of this exchange, Grange tells Brownfield that they are both guilty and neither one of them can progress until they make a move in the right direction. Brownfield's reply reenforces his avowed hardness and changelessness: "I don't have to admit a damn thing to you, and I ain't about to let the crackers off the hook for what they done to my life!" (209) Grange pleads with him to find a place inside himself reachable only to him, but this plea falls on deaf ears.

Walker's logos works. The rhetorical enthymeme--personal change is possible even in adverse situations--is proven. She proves it by showing that the sharecropping system demeans and dehumanizes. Through Grange and Brownfield she shows two possible ways of handling it--either to succumb to its power and use it as a scapegoat for one's actions or to rise above it and find peace within

one's self. Of the two characters Walker says that Grange was fortunate because he was touched by the love of something beyond himself while Brownfield was unable to change. He could not give his life to or for anything (O'Brien 194).

Walker presents these two alternatives in a logical and believable manner, in a manner that shows that the change is achievable with a great deal of soul searching and hard work, the kind that Meridian has to do. It requires delving into one's past, but in this novel unlike Meridian, she gives a vivid alternative as to what will happen if the right choice is not made in the person of Brownfield Copeland. Walker appeals to the reader's logic. Given the two alternatives, one strongly unappealing to any reader and the other clearly the more rational choice, which would he choose? Juxtaposing Brownfield against Grange makes the logical argument more convincing.

At the end of the novel, Grange kills Brownfield and is later killed himself by the local authorities. At first this might seem to be an unjust reward for Grange, who is clearly the protagonist and, perhaps, deserves to live. Walker, however, has prepared the reader for this event as one that is believable since Grange's second entrance into the novel. Without a doubt Brownfield has to die so that

Ruth may live, for the court had given her to him. Living with him would have meant pure hell and a total reversal of the preparation that Grange had made for her future. At this crucial point in the narrative, Brownfield has to die, and Grange has to kill him in order for Ruth to live. Grange's one wish and all of his preparation for her had been toward one goal: not just for her to survive, for he had done that, but for her to survive **whole** (214).

This quest for wholeness and the death-giving-life motif in connection with change is seen in Meridian as well. Therefore, the same question arises again: Can Walker's solution work outside of the confines of fiction? Ruth like Meridian will be a woman alone, facing the same kinds of injustices heaped on women everywhere. Even with the financial and emotional support Grange has given her, is her whole survival possible?

Another question also arises in the solution Walker offers: Is it possible, when existing in a system that enslaves and, therefore, dehumanizes, to find the kind of peace within one's self when all around a pernicious society regards the enslaved as neither men nor women, boys nor girls, but subhumans?

Walker succeeds in writing her realistic novel. The reader sees Georgia and feels the pain and struggle of the

people who lived there in the forty years the novel spans. She succeeds in writing her realistic and visual novel by almost faultless use of the artistic proofs as means of persuasion in proving her argument. The reader clearly knows who is right and who is not; he is made to feel the agony and even joy that the characters place on themselves as well as others; he can see that the ideas and arguments presented are probable and even reasonable. The reader actually feels pain when reading the novel and hopes for the best for the characters. In this first venture as a novelist, Walker clearly established herself as a master of persuasion through use of the artistic proofs and succeeds at what Aristotle saw as the purpose for their use-- creating a desired effect in the reader. For Walker, that effect is the desire to change.

In the two novels, Meridian and The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Walker proves herself to be an expert in the use of ethos, pathos, and logos in presenting a convincing argument.

MEMORY

Memory in the contemporary sense involves making the reader actually remember the events and lessons to be learned from the novel and either consciously or unconsciously apply them in his own life. The rhetor is

successful if he presents ethical character, draws on the emotions of the reader, and presents a probable argument. Walker achieves this goal by successfully merging the three and presenting a work that is most memorable, causing one to reflect on it long after it has been read.

Of the two novels, The Third Life of Grange Copeland is probably more memorable because of its graphic details and the fact that it is steeped in concreteness. Recalling the visual images presented in the novel automatically reminds the reader of what is and is not acceptable behavior and the main idea of the novel that change is achievable. Walker concerns herself with presenting the oppressions and injustices that have been inflicted on women. This novel concerns itself with this idea and provides image upon image of those injustices. The reader cannot forget them. So vivid, they surface over and over in the memory. So vivid is the portrayal of Grange Copeland that if the reader thinks of change, he thinks of Grange which just happens to be its rhyming word.

Meridian, however, is not so graphic. What the reader remembers most from it are the ideas presented. When is it right to kill? (A question answered graphically in Grange) What is the nature of social change? Is there a connection between personal and social change? What is

required from the past in order to achieve change? When the reader thinks of Meridian the character, he thinks of a woman in search of herself and a woman who does indeed find herself. These thoughts will allow the reader to answer the haunting questions in terms of Walker's presentation alone or in terms of his own values. Either way, he is forced to look at them.

Both novels have a haunting effect. They are entirely memorable because of Walker's use of persuasive techniques. Walker is successful as a rhetor, for she presents ideas in such a way that they are indelibly printed in the mind of the reader.

Memory in the contemporary sense is also connected with the canon of invention in that the rhetor makes use of it in the creation of ideas. Walker's content in both of these novels is a composite of her experiences; she says so herself. Meridian and Grange serve as her voice in the novels and espouse her ideas, ideas acquired through her training, observations, or personal participation. Not only do her ideas come through in the words of the characters, but also many of the actions she presents she has lived or witnessed herself.

Memory is important to the writer of contemporary fiction, especially Walker who relies on it heavily in the

presentation of her ideas. She is clearly a poet with a song to sing.

INVENTION SYNTHESIS

Invention is a powerful means of persuasion available through the use of the artistic proofs which are produced by the writer and created by his own genius. According to Aristotle, when these proofs are used effectively, they produce arousal or change in the reader. Walker's persuasive intent is to produce change in her reader, and the artistic proofs are the vehicle for the achievement of her purpose.

Walker has a deep structure and a surface structure purpose which runs through all three novels. Deep structually, she is concerned with the survival whole of her people, with the exploration of the oppressions and insanities, and the the loyalties and triumphs of African-American women. On the surface of each novel, she shows that change can occur: personal change in The Color Purple and The Third Life of Grange Copeland and personal and societal change in Meridian. She makes use of the experiences of African-American women in achieving her purpose at the surface. All of the works are drawn together by her huge thesis, to which she adds her own warrants.

Walker finds the means of proving her arguments through the use of the artistic proofs: ethos, pathos, and logos in each novel. The construction of these proofs requires skill and conscious construction by the writer but are apparently natural in Walker and not deliberate. From one novel to the next, she skillfully builds her argument by establishing the good character and credibility of each protagonist--Celie, Nettie, Meridian, Grange, and Ruth--are all indeed ethical. Walker obviously knows what stirs others through her means of appealing to the audience in each novel--total identification with Celie's plight through first-person narration in The Color Purple; the total identification on the part of the reader again in Meridian by allowing the reader to delve back into Meridian's past via her thoughts and actions; and by the portrayal of the brutal reality of life in the sharecropping South. She touches the reader's feelings, sometimes even bringing tears because the narrative plays heavily on the emotions. In using the artistic proof of logos--the proof contrived in the words themselves, Walker makes use of the enthymeme because it is based on probability and makes her logos work within the confines of her novels.

CHAPTER IV

STYLE AND ARRANGEMENT IN THE COLOR PURPLE, MERIDIAN, AND THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND

Books One and Two of the Rhetoric deal with the speaker and the audience respectively, and Book Three focuses on the speech itself in its emphasis on style and arrangement. All three--the speaker, the audience, and the speech--must receive adequate attention in order to be persuasive.

In discussing style, Aristotle notes that style includes language and diction. A good style must have two characteristics--clarity of language and appropriateness to the subject. The language is appropriate if it expresses emotion and character and if it is in proportion with the subject (197). The language must be natural and not artificial, for artifice does not lend itself to persuasiveness. An examination of Walker's novels reveals that she realized the importance of the use of clear and appropriate language in writing persuasive fiction. Walker's use of language varies from one novel to the next and even within novels depending on her purpose.

In The Color Purple, Walker uses what she terms Black folk English in the letters of Celie. In the letters of Nettie, she uses educated diction, a sharp contrast to

Celie's uneducated diction. In describing the language of the novel, Walker made the following statement in a 1984 interview with Sharon Wilson:

The language is so beautiful and one of its beauties is its brevity. People said what they had to say. They did not beat around the bush, they did not take all day--they didn't have all day. They'd say this, that and the other thing, and be done with it. I like that very much, and that's partly why the novel is written so succinctly. I wanted to underscore that kind of directness. (38)

In using the language as she did, Walker follows Aristotle's dictates for the use of clear and appropriate language. In the same interview, Walker admits that she was using the language of her Georgia parents and grandparents because it is so "amazingly alive."

Walker captures the language used by African-Americans in the rural South, specifically Georgia, in Celie's diction. Fifer describes it as "uneducated but personal, difficult but precise" (158). Celie's vocabulary is limited to the words she hears in her rural environment, words unfamiliar to the majority of Americans, words used in a closed society. However, through these words, she produces a discourse that results in powerful diction, one that reflects her level of understanding, aptly conveys her intended meanings and is appropriate for use by a character of Celie's social status and level of education. Her

dialect creates the reality of her existence, an existence of deprivation but one that through writing produces self-awareness.

Celie's vocabulary consists of words common to the language, but in Celie's dialect they are sometimes difficult to recognize individually: "naw" for no, "toofs" for teeth, "ast" for ask, "spose" for suppose, "preshate" for appreciate, "nary" for neither, "suh" for sir, "tween" for between, "direar" for diarrhea, "newmonya" for pneumonia, "two berkulosis" for tuberculosis. When Celie uses these words in the context of her discourse, she produces diction and thereby a style that accurately reflects the ethos of the speaker, the significance of the subject matter, and the way the audience must view the language.

The syntactical structure of Celie's letters also enhances the style. In the beginning of the novel, the sentences are extremely short, choppy, and incomplete as one would expect from a writer of Celie's background and experience. A typical example occurs when Celie describes Kate, Albert's sister who comes to visit: "This time Kate come by herself. She maybe twenty-five. Old maid. She look younger than me. Healthy. Eyes bright. Tongue sharp" (28). They also contain non-standard subject/verb

agreement, as illustrated above, as well as dialectical omission of the verb illustrated in the opening sentence of the second epistle: "My mama dead" (12). Other distinct syntactical differences can be seen in word order and use of pronoun case. The use of "us" in the position of the subjective case pronoun "we" pervade Celie's letters.

The diction and syntactical structure of Celie's letters increase the credibility of the novel. Celie's own comments on communication are insightful. When Darlene and Jerene attempt to change the way Celie talks by correcting her every word, Celie becomes frustrated and confused and reaches the following conclusion: "Look like to me only a fool would want to talk in a way that feel peculiar to your mind" (194). She realizes that she speaks differently from others but is more concerned about her happiness. She is not encumbered by her language but liberated by it, and the reader has no problem discerning her meanings once he adjusts to the dialect.

The diction and syntactical structure of Nettie's letters differ greatly from Celie's. Though Celie and Nettie share the same diction when they are children, Nettie's diction changes once she becomes educated and expands her world through travel in Europe and Africa. Fifer points out that both languages are "honed fine within

their oddly formal conventions, are both stylized and fluid" (158).

Nettie's letters contain educated diction and the syntactical structure of the majority dialect. Her vocabulary is extensive and syntactical structures complex and not rampant with short, choppy, and fragmented sentences as Celie's are. So different is her language that Celie makes the following entry after reading the first three of Nettie's letters: "What with being shock, crying and blowing my nose, and trying to puzzle out words us don't know, it took a long time to read the first two or three letters" (34).

Like Celie's letters, Nettie's letters reflect Nettie's background and experiences. Nettie's first letters are written before her background is expanded and bear a resemblance to Celie's in diction:

When I left you all's house, walking, he followed me on his horse. When we was well out of sight of the house he caught up with me and started trying to talk. You know how he do, You show is looking fine, Miss Nettie, and stuff like that. I tried to ignore him and walk faster, but my bundles was heavy and the sun was hot. After a while I had to rest, and that's when he got down from his horse and started to try to kiss me, and drag me back in the woods. (119)

An entry after her education and travel follows and represents a typical Nettie entry:

When we returned home everyone seemed

happy to see us. When we told them our appeal to the church and the Missionary Society failed, they were disappointed. They literally wiped the smiles off their faces along with the sweat, and returned, dejected, to their barracks. We went to our building, a combination church, house and school, and began to unpack our things. (213)

Her style is marked by sophisticated use of the language and syntactical structures appropriate to her level of understanding but not necessarily to that of her audience, the uneducated Celie. However, when Nettie's language enters Celie's world, Celie is so happy that she recognizes the difference and accepts it even though she has to decipher the language. She views Nettie as different rather than herself since Nettie is entering her world and not the reverse. Her comment regarding the difference in the manner in which Tashi, Olivia, Adam, Samuel, and Nettie speak shows her level of acceptance: "Speak a little funny but us gitting use to it" (215).

Walker not only uses diction to show development in Nettie, but that same kind of development is shown more specifically in Celie. A writer of short, choppy, sentences at the beginning of the novel, Celie writes longer, fuller sentences as the novel progresses. Her first entries are powerful but short:

My mama dead. She die screaming and cussing. She scream at me. She cuss at me. I'm big. I can't move fast enough. By time I git back from the well, the water be warm. By time I git the

tray ready the food be cold. (12)

The following entry which appears toward the end of the novel after Celie has made eighty-one entries shows growth in diction as well as experience:

I loves Chinese food. So off us go to the restaurant. I'm so excited about being home again I don't even notice how nervous Shug is. She a big graceful woman most of the time, even when she mad. But I notice she can't git her chopsticks to work right. She knock over her glass of water. Somehow or nother her eggroll come unravel. (218)

The preceding passage shows growth in vocabulary as a result of experiences on Celie's part. She shows familiarity with Chinese cuisine, an experience foreign to her at the beginning of the novel and can use the language associated with it. Her syntactical structures are a bit more sophisticated but retain the mechanical problems exhibited at the beginning of the novel.

For the most part, Celie's and Nettie's uses of language are true to their development as characters with only a few exceptions. A case in point occurs in an exchange between Celie and Harpo near the beginning of the novel:

Harpo tell me all about his love business now.
His mind on Sofia Butler day and night.
She pretty, he tell me. Bright.
Smart?
Naw. Bright skin. She smart too though, I think. Sometime us can git her away from her daddy.
(37)

With Celie's limited vocabulary and experience at this point in the novel, how could she make a distinction such as the one made in this passage? Even today, among African-Americans in the South, bright is commonly used to mean light-skinned rather than its standard English meaning of intelligent.

Another questionable passage is found in the dialogue in which Celie, in a moment of anger, places a verbal curse on Albert. The diction and syntax seem too sophisticated for Celie. Two sentences especially stand out: "Until you do right by me, I say, everything you ever dream about will fail.... The jail you plan for me is the one in which you will rot, I say" (187). Walker, in these instances, either deliberately concedes to the intelligence of the reader or unknowingly lets down her authorial mask momentarily.

These deviations detract only a small amount from the novel as a whole. Walker superbly establishes two distinct narrative voices in the work. In so doing, she shows the versatility of language in the hands of two very different handlers of it. Their styles, vastly different and distinct, communicate a message of hope, justice, and love.

In Meridian, Walker also adheres to Aristotle's benchmarks of clarity and appropriateness in achieving rhetorical success. The subject matter and Walker's

purpose in Meridian require a style completely different from the one she uses in The Color Purple. Meridian is intelligent and well educated, a product of educated parents and in search of her identity. The focus of the novel is philosophical and involves the exploration of the nature of social and personal change, a lofty subject indeed. Her purpose is to create the desire in the reader to realize the need for change and understand the processes involved therein. The audience for this novel would have to be on Meridian's intellectual level. Walker, therefore, uses language and diction commensurate with Meridian's background and experience. She also must use the vocabulary of the Civil Rights Movement where it applies since it is a major element in the work.

Meridian's third-person narration and omniscient point of view immediately set it apart from The Color Purple. The dialogue in the work is authentic and reflects the intellectual abilities and ideas of types involved in the discussions. The language and diction of the young revolutionaries is characteristic and reflective of such groups which assembled in the seventies. The dialogue between Meridian and her counterparts in the revolution around the question of whether Meridian would kill or not for the revolution has a dual effect: through language it

reveals the seriousness with which Meridian takes all things, and it forces the reader to ponder the same question for himself. The dialogue moves swiftly, not giving Meridian an opportunity to ponder the question but to answer honestly.

"I know I want to do what is best for black people. . ."
"That's what we all want!"
"I know there must be a revolution. . ."
"Damn straight!"
"I know violence is as American as cherry pie!"
"Rap on!"
"I know nonviolence has failed. . ."
"Then you will kill for the Revolution, not just die for it?" Anne-Marion's once lovely voice. "Like a fool!" the voice added, bitterly and hard.
"I don't know."
"Shee-it. . .!"
"But can you say that you probably will? That you will."
"No." (31)

This dialogue captures the essence of the language and diction used by revolutionaries after the nonviolent era of the sixties. Always vehement in their stance, the revolutionist's ardor for the cause and lack of patience and understanding for those who would not join it is captured in this scene. The call and response technique common in African-American interchanges wherein a kind of attesting to stated beliefs is employed successfully here and adds to the credibility. Group responses like "Shee-it" and "Rap on!" were also common and further reify the scene.

Also appropriately and effectively used are the brief exchanges in French between Truman and Meridian. These exchanges and the narrative about their use between the two further authenticate the ideas and actions of the novel. Truman had spent a year in France and knew the language better than Meridian and spoke it affectionately to her as lover. Its inclusion is appropriate, for it is characteristic of students with the intellectual abilities of Truman and Meridian to have such knowledge and to like using it.

Other dialogue in the novel--between Meridian and her mother, between Meridian and Lynne, between Meridian and Lynne and Truman, between Meridian and Anne-Marion--typifies the language and diction used by persons of the types represented by each character: Meridian, an intellectual consumed by an idea regardless of its origin; Lynne, a young Jewish woman who joins the revolution and becomes a victim of it; Truman, a quasi-revolutionary unsure of his identity; Mrs. Hill, Meridian's mother, a woman loyal to religious and familial traditions; and Anne-Marion, a pseudo-intellectual and revolutionary in name only.

There is more narration in the novel than dialogue. The narrator shares the same educated and intellectual

diction of the majority of the characters in the novel and has an all-knowing perspective. The language and diction of Meridian lack the warmth and simplicity of The Color Purple. Formal and complex, the vocabulary and syntactical structure express emotion and character and are in proportion to the subject matter.

The novel is sprinkled throughout with the vocabulary of the intelligentsia as well as plain language. The use of polysyllabic words like verboten, capitulate, resplendent, indignant, venerable, companionable, lucid, ambivalent, and cajole are intermingled with ordinary words in producing a diction that reflects the ethos of the speaker and the level of intelligence required of the readers of the novel.

Highly refined, the syntactical structure of the sentences in the narration show a variety of sentence patterns and sentence types. Walker makes use of periodic and loose sentences as well as simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. She also makes effective use of fragments. For the most part her sentences are long, rhetorical, and packed with information. The following sentence is a typical example of Walker's brilliant use of diction and syntax in producing effective narration:

But Meridian continued to huddle there, and her mother, her body as stately as the prow of a

ship, moved off down the hall where she stood head and shoulders above all the girls-- Meridian's classmates--who seemed an insubstantial mass of billowing crinolines and flashy dresses, gathered there. (122)

This passage occurs as a remembrance from the past when, as a college student, Meridian is emerging from a month-long catatonia. In the scene, Meridian has failed miserably in the delivery of a speech before a large group of people in her high school. Her mother, who was in the audience, voices great disappointment in her, resulting in a "dwarfed" feeling in Meridian. The mother, on the other hand, takes on the personage of a giant in Meridian's eyes. The passage captures this feeling through its diction and syntax.

Walker makes use of plain language in the passage, but it is the arrangement of the words which results in sophistication of style used so commonly by Walker in this novel. The diction describes her feelings and emphasizes her nervousness. The use of the word "huddled" captures Meridian's complete demeanor. Walker creates imagery through diction of the mother as a flag ship with the girls falling behind as smaller ships; the Spanish Armada comes to mind. The main idea is stated in the independent clause which begins the sentence, but it, however, begins with but, a conjunction which connects nothing at the beginning

of a sentence. Syntactically but works well, for it is emphatic and stresses Meridian's subordinate position to her mother, plays on her fear, and shows Meridian's emphatic position. In addition it leads to the ship metaphor which provides the dominant image for the passage. Compound-complex, the sentence contains two independent clauses and two dependent clauses. The content of these clauses further emphasize the differences between Meridian and her mother. The independent ones contrast Meridian's weak demeanor to the strong demeanor of her mother; the dependent ones show the power and conviction of the older woman over Meridian's classmates who are described as "insubstantial masses."

Walker also makes effective use of fragments. The following is part of the narration explaining the events surrounding Meridian's visit to Lynne upon Camara's death:

As they sat they watched a television program. One of those Southern epics about the relationship of the Southern white man to madness, and the closeness of the Southern black man to the land. (173)

Walker seems to use the fragment here for emphasis, for within the fragment, she makes a statement that serves as a topic sentence for the remainder of the elaboration.

Walker employs non-conventional sentence structures, like the preceding ones, throughout the novel. She uses

them as if they were exclamation points. Her overall style in this novel is marked by its elegance in the use of polysyllabic words and varied syntactical structures. The primary difference in the language and diction in this novel and the first and third novels is the purpose for which she is writing. She conveys ideas in Meridian whereas she is concerned with concreteness in The Color Purple and The Third Life of Grange Copeland.

The language and diction of The Third Life of Grange Copeland are steeped in concreteness, for Walker stated that she wanted to write a visual novel. She "wanted the reader to be able to . . . see a little bit of Georgia. . . to feel it, to feel the pain and the struggle. . . ." (Tate 176). Visual novels require concrete verbs and accurate name words that immediately conjure up images in the mind of the reader. The reader must see and feel, so sensory images must be created.

The following passage, a description of Brownfield eating dinner and perceived through the eyes of Ornette, is one in which Walker appeals to the senses of sight, touch, and hearing:

Ornette sat dazed, watching her father pick up his meat with his hands and tear at it, sending the juice flying over the tablecloth Mem was proud to make white. When her father was eating Ornette could not think of him as anything but a hog. She blinked her eyes as he said to her over

a mouthful of peas and bread, "What you looking at me for?"

Her eyes quickly riveted to her own plate and she began slowly to eat, trying very hard not to hear the whistling noise her father made as he sucked at the meat and gobbled the peas. (82)

Walker employs third-person narration and the omniscient point of view. The narrator in this novel is not as sophisticated as the one in Meridian, for the novel is not an intellectual piece. It deals with the very basic desires of man: to be treated with dignity and to have the essential requirements for daily existence. The characters are African-American sharecroppers with backgrounds similar to the characters in The Color Purple. She makes use of a plain style with few polysyllabic words even in the narration. This novel also has more narration than dialogue. Here, Walker is actually "telling" a story and again telling it with a clarity of language and appropriateness to the subject required for success in persuasion.

The language used in the dialogue reflects the educational and social levels of the characters. Mem, trained to be a schoolteacher, uses standard English for the most part, and so does Ruth who receives the benefit of a good education for that period of time. Grange, not formally educated, speaks well; his above average use of language can probably be attributed to his stint in the

North where he received exposure and experiences which enhanced his language skills. Brownfield and Josie have similar speech patterns, that is, they make the same kinds of errors. These characters come from the same environment as the characters in The Color Purple but do not speak the same Black folk English. Perhaps, the third-person narration accounts for the difference. Walker is not as true to the patterns of dialect in this novel as she is in The Color Purple.

The narration is sprinkled throughout with graphic images of poverty among sharecropping families and cruelty resulting from the inhumane system. The passage that follows is replete with visual description of the scene Brownfield had waited to bring to reality for Mem. Mem had, through her own initiative, found a decent home for the family and forced Brownfield to move into it. Brownfield, however, lay in wait for Mem's weakness in order to bring her down to a level he thought suitable for her. The passage reveals Walker's magnificent skill as rhetor:

It was like an overwhelming bad dream, and Mem fainted and was loaded half conscious into the cab of the truck that came to move them. She had no chance to pack, to cover her things from the weather, to say good-bye to her house. She was too weak to argue when the friends he got to help him move broke her treasured dishes, tore her curtains, dragged the girls' dresses through the

mud (106).

Walker's intention of making the reader feel and see is realized in this passage. The language in the passage is quite visual and creates a vivid picture in the mind of the reader. With the exception of one word (overwhelming), the passage is made up entirely of monosyllabic and bi-syllabic words. Their use produces a frenetic staccato rhythm which parallels Mem's frenzied state at the time the action takes place.

Diction and syntax work together in creating the desired effect. The passage consists of three sentences: one compound-complex, one simple, and one complex. The syntax seems simple or reservedly complex, but the structure has a depth of narration. She uses a series of descriptors in two of the sentences with no conjunction connecting them. The employment of the asyndeton adds to the frenzied effect of the passage. The first series of descriptors are active infinitives (to pack, to cover, to say) and create visual images in the mind of the reader. The active verbs (broke, tore, dragged) in the following sentence are all active and while describing what happened to her belongings, describe vividly what has happened to Mem in her marriage: She has been literally broken, torn, and dragged by Brownfield in the same manner in which the

dishes, curtains, and dresses have. She is too weak to argue for the same reason. The diction and syntax are difficult to discern from the writer, from the narrator, and from the text. They become one. Clearly, the narrator maintains ethos through style by creating the emotional frenzy felt by the character. In this passage as in others throughout the novel, the author uses language to express emotion and character and uses language in proportion to the subject.

In all three novels, Walker masterfully employs a style that is appropriate to the subject and the characters. Her versatility is apparent, and it appears that the point of view from which she chooses to write dictates the style she uses. Through language, she clearly establishes ethos, pathos and logos almost guaranteeing that she succeed in proving her argument. Vital to her success also is arrangement, the final canon to which Aristotle gives attention.

Arrangement has to do with the ordering of the material, and, according to Aristotle, has four divisions: the proem or introduction, statement, argument, and the epilogue or ending. Arrangement, in conjunction with invention and style, plays a key role in helping the writer achieve the persuasive intent.

Walker makes effective use of the canon of arrangement in all three novels. In the proem of each novel, Walker employs Aristotle's suggestions for an effective beginning. Aristotle indicates that the proem paves the way for what follows; it can give a hint as to plot, giving an idea of what the story is about. He indicates that "the superlative function of the proem . . . its distinctive task, to make clear the end and object of your work" (223). Within the proem, the speaker/writer can use various means: appealing to the goodwill of the audience or arousing anger, engaging or diverting attention, or even making the audience laugh. These means may be used in order to put the audience in a receptive frame of mind and in establishing a positive ethos (221-224).

The proems in the first three Walker novels immediately engage the reader in the action and prepare him for what is to follow. The proem of The Color Purple is probably the most succinct. The first entry in this epistolary novel, a disclosure addressed to God and preceded by a warning given to the writer by her major antagonist, is less than one page in length, contains twenty-three choppy sentences, but ably prepares the reader for what is to follow. It gives a hint of what is to follow and immediately raises the reader's ire by allowing

the reader to know that the writer is fourteen years old and already a victim of incest. From the first page, the reader can only hope that the situation for the writer, who does not sign her name, will improve. The portrayal is of a woman trapped by the opposite sex, her own inadequacies, her race, and her obvious low self-esteem. The remainder of the novel will possibly work all these problems out, for the situation of the writer could not get much worse. Thus, the reader is engaged and continues to read.

The proem in Meridian is its first chapter, "The Last Return." Christian in her 1980 essay refers to this chapter as an embryo because it presents the whole.

. . . the rest of the novel will give flesh to Meridian's essence. The novel is an unraveling of the reasons for her continued nonviolent protest, as conditioned by her own past and the history of the South, a history that has led her to ask impossible questions and pursue seemingly absurd paths. (210)

"The Last Return" in sixteen pages covers the major themes of the novel as well as the reasons for Meridian's present quest for wholeness, which is fleshed out in detail in the remainder of the novel.

In the introduction, Meridian has been found by her long-time friend, Truman Held, who is not surprised to see her leading a protest in Chicokema, Alabama. When they finally engage in conversation, the reader is taken back to

a time in the sixties when a group of Meridian's friends, fellow Civil Rights workers, are discussing whether each would kill for the Revolution. While Meridian contemplates her answer, the reader is taken further into the past to a time when Meridian felt she had lost her mother and back again to the revolutionary group, and, finally to the present, the conversation with Truman.

Meridian's musings in the series of flashbacks and the present experience with Truman provide the skeletal framework for what is to be developed in depth as the novel progresses. The reader can see the significance of the past in Meridian's life even before her birth as well as the effects of the Civil Rights Movement on her psyche. Christian says it best:

In fusing dream, action, counterpointal times and places, and motifs and characters, [in the first chapter] Walker shows us the way to her pattern, a pattern that will be arranged and rearranged as we question Meridian's way of life, her persistent identification of her body with her soul, her past with her present. This insistence is both her strength and her weakness. (209)

The proem in The Third Life of Grange Copeland covers eleven pages in which the tone of despair, which alternately with hope pervades the entire novel, is set. This opening chapter serves several purposes in "preparing the reader for what is to follow." Written in third-

person, with a mind/voice of the child Brownfield, this opening of the novel vividly shows the Copeland family's meager existence in the sharecropping South juxtaposed against the seeming opulent existence of the family members who are returning to the North after a visit with Brownfield and his family. It is indeed a pitiful scene in which the theme of the dehumanizing sharecropping system of the South (which runs throughout the novel) is set into motion. Walker graphically portrays the Copeland family's degeneration and the hopelessness which surrounds Brownfield in the vivid scene in which Brownfield becomes entangled in earthworms, a symbol or even a foreshadowing of his inability to free himself from the entanglements of the sharecropping system to which he eventually succumbs. Also important in the proem is the position relegated to the woman in the novel, one of weakness and acquiescence to the leadership of the husband, another theme which permeates the narrative. All of these ideas are established in the proem and follow Aristotle's formula of success in arranging a work.

In the proem, a positive ethos is established, the reader is immediately engaged in the activity, and the reader is placed in a receptive frame of mind. Whether the reader knows about life in the rural South or not, the

information is shared in a realistic way that leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that the events are believable and worthy of attention.

Aristotle begins his discussion on arrangement with the idea that the two parts of a speech are the stating of the case and the proving of it. The statement and the argument are "indispensable constituents" (220). They are essential to the argumentative speech but are not applicable to works of art as are the proem and the epilogue. In a literary work, especially fiction, the work itself makes the point, and the statement and the argument are never given as such. Walker's argument, therefore, can be examined in terms of plot arrangement and point of view.

Walker has a dual purpose in her fiction. Her deep structure purpose of exploring oppressions, insanities, loyalties, and triumphs of African-American women permeates the works. On the surface of each novel she explores the probability of change: personal change in The Color Purple and The Third Life of Grange Copeland, and personal and societal change in Meridian. Though the themes are the same, the arguments and points of view are different in each novel.

In The Color Purple, Walker mainly proves that

personal change is achievable. She chooses to tell the story from the first person point of view and presents the actions of the story from the vantage point of Celie and her sister, Nettie. First-person narration functions well in this novel because it engages the reader in the thick of the action without any intrusion from the author. Because of the nature of the action of the story and the honesty with which both narrators reveal the events of the story, the reader learns with the storytellers all the events. The reader practically becomes one with the narrator and shares in the joys and sorrows as they occur.

The plot is arranged sequentially, beginning with a proem that prepares the reader for the actions to follow and continuing with virtually straight narrative with a few missing details of relevance to the narrator and the reader as well. For instance, Celie does not know where her children are, nor does she know where her sister is, nor does she know that the man whom she thought to be her biological father is actually her stepfather. These missing details are discovered later in letters given to Celie in a group by her friend Shug, who retrieves them from Albert, Celie's cruel husband who has kept them from Celie for more than twenty years. Celie records these letters in her journal, and the reader discovers the missing details

moments after Celie.

The plot is developed in such a way that Walker's theme of the achievement of personal change is realized. At the beginning of the novel, Celie is fourteen years old and a victim of incest. As a result of the incestuous relationship, she gives birth to two children who are taken from her at birth and given to a family. She is told that the children are dead. Later, she is separated from her sister, the only person who genuinely cares about her at the beginning of the novel. While engaged in a marriage that suppresses her even further, Celie's growth process begins. She meets and falls in love with Shug Avery, a blues singer who serves as a gauge of what can be achieved by women. Shug also provides encouragement and makes Celie aware of her own femininity.

The turning point in the novel occurs when Celie finally has the courage to stand up to Albert who has oppressed and suppressed her for more than twenty years. Her outburst to him in the presence of the entire family serves as a catharsis which begins a new life for her. Celie finally begins to enjoy her life by traveling to and living in Memphis for a while and by beginning a career as a designer of pants and a seamstress. The story ends with Celie in a state of absolute bliss: she is reunited with

her children and sister whom she thought she would never see again, and she is at peace with Albert and all who are a part of her world.

As Celie tells her story, she tells the story of her own development. That development can be traced step by step as she relates one experience after the other. The reader sees and feels her growth from a naive, intimidated young girl to a woman who is self-assured and self-sufficient. As she tells her story, she also tells the story of others whose growth can also be seen. The plot is arranged, for the most part, chronologically and is easy to follow.

Meridian is related from third-person point of view with an omniscient narrator who reveals the thoughts and actions of the characters in the mind/voice of certain characters. Christian concludes that a mind/voice directs the flow of action and thought. The novel is divided into three parts with brief chapters whose titles reflect their content. The three parts--"Meridian," "Truman Held," and "Ending"--have a distinguishable mind/voice which pervades that portion of the novel. Meridian flows through the past and present of "Meridian." "Truman Held" is dominated by the mind/voice of Lynne and Truman, and in "Ending" Truman's and Meridian's voices play with and against each

other (Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition 218).

The omniscient point of view employed in Meridian, though different from the one used in The Color Purple, is appropriate for use in Meridian. According to Holman, use of the omniscient point of view allows the author to know, see, and tell whatever he/she wishes, and to exercise the ability to do so at will. The author can shift from the exterior world to the interior world of the characters themselves. Freedom of movement in time and place and freedom to comment on the actions and thematic intentions of the story are important features of the omniscient point of view (308). This point of view is especially well suited to Meridian, for the circular arrangement of the plot requires a point of view which lends itself to freedom of movement in time, space, the inner selves of the characters, and the exterior workings of the physical world.

Walker has commented on the arrangement of Meridian. She calls it a crazy quilt.

. . . [W]hen I wrote Meridian, I realized that the chronological sequence is not one that permits me the kind of freedom I need in order to create. And I wanted to do something like a crazy quilt, or like Cane--if you want to be literary--something that works on the mind in different patterns. . . . A crazy quilt . . . only looks crazy. It is not "patched"; it is

planned. . . . A crazy-quilt story is one that can jump back and forth in time, work on many different levels, and one that can include myth. (Tate 176)

Walker admits here that, on the surface, the novel may appear disjointed, but a method is indeed employed.

A novel of ideas, Meridian has a plot arrangement that is based on the process the major character undergoes in the search for personal and societal change. Her search for wholeness involves a thorough examination of her past before she can make any progress in the present or preparation for the future. The three major parts of the novel are carried forward not by plot but by "Meridian's attempt to resolve, or preserve the reality of, the question of knowledge, history and murder" (Marcus 135).

The first part, "Meridian," spans from a time in the seventies in New York to a time in the rural South before Meridian was born, a time in which her mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and Indian ancestors lived. At the end of the section, the time is the seventies again. "Truman Held," mainly covers periods before, after, and during the sixties and moves forward to the beginning of the book. "Ending" goes beyond the opening of the book in Chicokema and ends at the beginning.

Of the three novels, the plot of Meridian is the most intricate and the most artful. In a movement analogous to

the ebb and flow of the tide, Meridian ebbs backward and surges forward. Each retreat into her past makes her less bound to her former existence and more resolute in her pursuit of wholeness. The novel takes loops, turns, and stretches, in sometimes small and rather confusing increments, in its forward movement. So effective is this movement that the reader achieves wholeness of meaning at the end of the novel at the same time that Meridian achieves wholeness of self. Walker skillfully employs a progressive/regressive format which parallels the characters' progressive/regressive movement in the quest for wholeness of self. She consciously fashions form to content, creating an organic whole. The arrangement of the plot reinforces the main idea of the novel, the idea that personal change and wholeness cannot be achieved unless one goes backward into the past for resolution of conflict.

Like Meridian, The Third Life of Grange Copeland is also written in third-person and from the omniscient point of view. However, the plot is arranged chronologically. Walker compares the structure of this novel to a patchwork quilt, a format that works well because the novel is devoted to rigorous realism (Tate 176). The title of the novel offers a clue as to the arrangement of the plot, for the eleven parts which are divided into forty-eight chapters,

cover the three lives of its title's character with emphasis on his third life. Though the coverage of the three lives is uneven, the plot elliptical and episodic, the work as a whole is organic and proves Walker's thesis that change is achievable.

The novel covers approximately sixty years and three generations in the Copeland family. Erickson aptly describes the development of the narrative:

The style of narration is deceptively simple. Each element is in itself simple, but the steady accumulation of detail creates a complicated effect of density and generational depth. The novel's forward movement is swift, inexorable, and yet--paradoxically--casual and perceptive. The numerous shifts of situation through the novel give it an epic-like sweep which makes it seem hard to maintain one's bearings and to keep track of developments as an entire sequence.
(73-74)

Erickson correctly assesses the development of the plot; however, the structure is designed to emphasize the focus of the title, Grange's third life. When viewed in terms of the three lives, the structure of the novel supports its theme.

Grange's first life as a sharecropper in the South is covered in the first two very brief chapters of the book. His second life is revealed in flashbacks when he is living his third life of redemptive actions for a much too cruel past. The linear development of the plot also includes

Brownfield's demise. Walker expertly juxtaposes Grange's and Brownfield's progression and regression respectively in a manner that moves the plot forward and proves her thesis that personal change is possible even in adverse situations.

The epilogue represents the fourth and final element of a speech, according to Aristotle. Composed of four elements, the epilogue represents closure to the argument. Though all of these elements are not readily applicable to fiction, a work of fiction must also be brought to closure in a manner similar to that of an argumentative speech. Two of the elements--putting the readers in the right state of emotion and refreshing their memories--can be applied to Walker's fiction. In a 1976 essay entitled "Saving the Life That Is Your Own: The Importance of Models in the Artist's Life," Walker states her perception of the function of a writer:

It is, in the end, the saving of lives that we are about. Whether we are "minority" writers or "majority."

It is simply in our power to do this. We do it because we care. . . . We care because we know this: the life we save may be our own. (14)

She also says in this essay that the novels of white American writers tend to end gloomily as though there were no better existence for which to struggle (5). In these

statements, Walker shares her views of the writer's function and the note on which novels should end. She reifies those beliefs in her novels.

The epilogue of The Color Purple shows the optimism and hope Walker seeks to share. Of the three novels, the ending of The Color Purple is the happiest. The life of Celie, who at the opening of the novel lived in complete distress, is made complete with the arrival of her sister and children, the one thing she has desired from the beginning of the book. Her life has been saved and a state of satisfaction reached on the part of the reader who has been suffering with her throughout the novel. Gloom is non-existent.

The final chapter of Meridian, appropriately entitled "Release," also meets Walker's criteria for a satisfying ending but in a way entirely different from The Color Purple. In "Release," the reader is taken full circle to the book's beginning. Meridian, however, is in a different state than she was at the book's opening. She appears strong rather than weak, cleansed rather than sick, whole rather than incomplete. Meridian's life has been saved through her own introspective efforts, and it is clear that Truman has assumed the quest. The novel does not end with the characters in a gleefully happy state as in The Color

Purple but with a tone of optimism and hope for the future.

On the other hand, The Third Life of Grange Copeland ends tragically in a murder/suicide. However, it contains a muted optimism which echoes the Christian idea of death-giving-life. Grange's death simply means that Ruth will live. Much lies ahead for her that she would not have been able to receive under the authority of Brownfield. In killing Brownfield and himself, Grange saves Ruth's life.

Walker's endings show that there is a need to struggle for a better existence. The major characters in the three novels emerge from their struggles as stronger and wiser individuals with a reason to live.

In conclusion, through the appropriate use of the tenets of style and arrangement in the writing of her novels, Walker produces clear and understandable narratives. Rhys Roberts (50) summarizes Aristotle's advice on style well: "Attend to delivery. Use language rightly. Arrange your material well. End crisply." Walker takes the advice literally and uses it in producing excellent works of fiction.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In a 1984 interview with David Bradley, Alice Walker intimated that she was reared to see what was right and wrong in the world. She feels it to be her obligation as a writer to "right" things through her writing. She was taught to look at things out of balance or out of joint and try to bring them into balance (30). Her first three novels exemplify that notion.

Walker is successful in her attempts in righting the wrongs as a writer of fiction because she presents her arguments in a most persuasive manner by employing the Aristotelian tradition as explained in the Rhetoric. The wrongs that Walker sees in these novels can be "righted" by the occurrence of change in individuals. In all three novels, she thoroughly develops the idea of change and its evolution in the lives of people. The recurring motif in all of Walker's work is the exploration of the experiences of African-Americans, especially women. She is concerned with the whole survival of her people.

Walker assumes a difficult task: making realistic and acceptable to the reader the possibility of change through the experiences of African-Americans. An innately skilled

rhetorician, she unconsciously employs the canons of rhetoric--invention and memory, style and arrangement, and delivery through format--in achieving her goal.

Walker brings to her writing a broad range of experiences in the South, in Africa, and other parts of the world. She draws on these experiences in supplying the content for the novels. In all three novels, she uses similar techniques when using the artistic proofs. Her strong appeals to the emotions of the reader, the reasoning of the reader and the creation of a credible ethos in the narrator and the characters work because of her skilled use of language and diction. Combined with her inventive mode and style is the arrangement of the work in achieving an organic whole.

In analyzing Walker's work, it is difficult to separate the entities that make her writing persuasive because she uses all of the means of persuasion simultaneously, the mark of a true rhetorician. As writer, she becomes one with the work. The cumulative effect of her work is convincing and authentic because of her ability as rhetor to totally engage the reader and make him one with the text. In a 1976 essay entitled "Recording the Seasons," Walker comments that "there is a reality deeper than what we see, and the consciousness of a people cannot

be photographed. But to some extent, it can be written" (228). She sets out to write record those deeper realities in her novels.

Her success can probably be attributed to her strong commitment to what she views as the function of the African-American Southern writer:

No one could wish for a more advantageous heritage than that bequeathed to the black writer in the South: a compassion for the earth, a trust in humanity beyond our knowledge of evil, and an abiding love of justice. We inherit a great responsibility as well, for we must give voice to centuries not only of silent bitterness and hate but also of neighborly kindness and sustaining love (26).

Walker records the experiences of her people in a manner that transcends lines of gender, race, and sex. She reflects the basic human condition shared by all with the idea of hope and change for the future. As seer, she plots the way for the attainment of one's highest level of achievement, one's personal meridian.

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