

CHAPTER - II

THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND : FROM EXPLOITATION TO SELF-LOVE

Alice Walker's first -novel The Third Life of Grange Copeland¹ is published in 1970. In an interview with Johan O'Brien Alice Walker has stated about her aim behind writing The Third Life of Grange Copeland as follows :

And I 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 ? Why should women stand for this ?²

If we study this novel in the light of the above statement, we realize that all the major women characters in The Third Life of Grange Copeland such as Margaret Grange, Josie and Mem are abused as whores by their own people, and especially by their men. Walker tries to tell their side of the story in the novel. She tries her best to reveal the injustice done to women by their men by focussing her attention on the behaviour of female characters. She tells us that it is the patriarchal system which is responsible for the exploitation of women at all levels of their existence.

Eventhough the novel is the life story of Grange Copeland, it is also the story of the sufferings, pains and hardships that black women - Margaret, Mem, Josie - face in their life. Their sufferings lead them to understand their situations to launch struggle to gain a meaningful place in the black world. These three women Margaret , Mem, Josie, have been

victimized by the black men : Margaret was left behind, discarded and abandoned by Grange Copeland, to die a silent death; Mem was killed by her own husband, Brownfield at the gunpoint and Josie was driven out of her own home by her own father, a man who stood for religion. Thus, just as the white man becomes a symbol of black man's oppression a black man becomes a symbol of black woman's oppression.

The Third Life of Grange Copeland covers three generations of the Copeland family and a period of American history from 1920s to the 1960s. W. Lawrence Hogue has summarised one view of that period that corresponds with Walker's selection, transformation, and arrangement of historical facts : "The American social structure turns the Black man into a beast suppressing his human qualities and accenting his animal tendencies. The Black man, in turn, reflects his violent relation, with his white landowner in his relations with his wife and son. He takes his anger and frustration out, not on the social system or the people who exercise its power but on his children and on the black woman, who, as he does in the master-servant relation, remains loyal and submissive." ³

Grange Copeland, the protagonist of the novel, has three lives and it is his "third" life that is most significant. The first phase of Grange's life is dominated by his response to an oppressive, and dehumanizing socio-economic structure of sharecropping that deprives him of his personhood.

He is the victim of sharecropping system which generates in him self-hatred as well as hatred for women. Out of frustration he brutalizes his wife, Margaret and denies parental love and care to his son, Brownfield.

In the second phase of his life he travels from South to North. It is here he becomes aware of his oppressor, the white man, Shipley and begins to hate him. In the second phase he undergoes a radical transformation and prepares for his third life. It is here he learns that he can't blame the white man for his own failure to be a man, that to do so is to grant other men the power of gods.

The Third phase of his life is concerned with his return to South, a return to self-love and compassion. He repents for the atrocities he has committed on Margaret and attempts to provide to his granddaughter, Ruth, socio-economic and psychological security. Earlier, he has denied security to Brownfield and others. It shows Grange's uncompromising attempt to create a new world, a new set of relations, where his granddaughter Ruth can have more chances, options and opportunities in her life than he or his son ever had. Thus it is the story of Grange Copeland's Metamorphosis.

But the important thing in the novel is the awareness on the part of Margaret, Mem and Josie. The novel tells the story of three women : Margaret, the most illiterate and submissive; Mem, literate and ambitious,

who dreams of her own world and Josie, an enterprising black woman who creates a world of her own and establishes her own economic empire where she dictates her terms to others and is boss. It is also about Ruth, who is yet to grow and yet to create her own world. As in the afterword to the 1988 Pocket edition of The Third Life of Grange Copeland she writes, "In my immediate family too there was violence. Its roots seemed always to be embedded in my father's need to dominate my mother and their children and in her resistance (and ours), verbal and physical, to any such domination."⁴ Thus the novel is her fictional portrayal of domestic brutality found in American society.

Grange's character is further developed in relation to the following set of characters.

Grange Copeland and his wife Margaret

It is through Brownfield, the son of Margaret and Grange that we come to know about their miserable past. Grange Copeland was labourer on the farm of a white man named Shipley. He has no control on his life. He is a victim of the circumstances created by the white man. He was a " tall, thin, brooding man" of 35. At best Grange is a man of silence. When Margaret wanted to send Brownfield in school, he merely shrugged and thus shows his unwillingness to do so. Again when his mother

needed a dress, he merely shrugged never saying a word about it again. In this way he cut himself off from such topics of conversation.

As Grange Copeland is the victim of sharecropping, he takes out his frustration by brutalising his wife, Margaret and Brownfield, his son. He is oppressed by white society, as a result he doesn't like Margaret and Brownfield. So in order to escape from his oppression Margaret wanted to leave Grange and go North to Philadelphia, with Brownfield's uncle, Silas. Margaret was a submissive woman who agrees her husband whenever possible. He treats her as if she is a pet animal. Walker gives us a realistic picture of her hardwork :

His mother left him each morning with a hasty hug and a sugartit, on which he sucked through wet weather and dry, across the dusty clearing or miry, until she returned. She worked all day pulling baits for ready money. Her legs were always clean when she left home and always coated with mud and slime of baits when she came back. ⁵

Because of poverty Margaret is forced to work hard leaving Brownfield alone at home. On the other hand, Grange does nothing for the living of his family. He is a drunkard who spends the early part of each week recovering from the weekend's drunken binge. By Thursday, animal-like he stalks the house and swings from the rafters of the porch. On Saturday Grange cleans up and escapes down the road into the town into the arms of the prostitute, Josie, without thinking of his wife's feelings

and mentality. When he returns home late Saturday night he threatens to kill her and Brownfield, while Margaret and Brownfield hide themselves in the woods. Thus he is more an animal than human being who has no sympathy for the kind, devoted, docile and hard-working wife, Margaret.

Grange rarely speaks to her and whenever he does, he usually insults her. In addition to this, Brownfield is informed by his niece, Angeline, that his mother wants to leave Grange because he is not a good man to live. He is a debtor, who has borrowed so heavily that Grange tries to persuade her to take to prostitution. He had once tried to "sell her" to Mr. Shipley, the white man, to relieve himself out of his debt. Eventhough she works hard and holds on as many responsibilities as she can, she is neglected and abandoned by Grange. Therefore, she feels alone, alienated and rejected. Thus Grange acknowledges his inability to care for his family.

In fact Grange is a heavy drunkard and turns himself to violence. He becomes jealous of Margaret and gets angry even if she just says "how're you" to other men. On the contrary, Margaret is aware that Grange is going with other women and has been meeting Josie since the day they were married. She realizes that her husband is unfaithful to her which arouses in her mind self-contempt to grow. Facing insults and beatings from Grange, Margaret can no longer continue without some diversion

from the drudgery of her life. Grange's persistent faithlessness and increasing disregard provokes her to lead a life of debauchery. Having refused to "sell herself", Margaret now chooses to give herself freely to the man who drives the truck or to anyone else. Her new life provides her new painted good looks and new fragrance of beds, of store-bought perfume and of gin. After carrying on in this manner for some years, she gives birth to a light skinned son, named Star, the symbol of her betrayal.

After the birth of Star, the illicit child of Margaret, Grange threatens her that he will permanently desert her. To which she reacts by way of rebellion. It is here we notice that Margaret who is kind and submissive turned into a wild woman looking for frivolous things. On the weekends now she becomes a "huntress of soft touches, gentle voices and sex without the arguments over the constant and compelling pressures of everyday life."⁶ Thus Margaret tries to live life the way she prefers. When Grange has been gone three weeks, Margaret knows he is really gone this time. Unable to envision life without him, she poisons herself and her oddly coloured baby. Margaret finds an alternative to her despair. Ironically perhaps, she killed herself because she loved Grange so much that she couldn't live without him and could not forgive herself of the sin of infidelity. Hogue writes, "On the one hand, The Third Life of Grange Copeland reproduces an established definition of manhood taking care of self and family-that becomes the model for measuring the worth and value

of the Afro-American male. On the other hand, the text places that definition of manhood in an Afro-American constellation, where it has no chance to materialize." ⁷

Thus Margaret embodies a kind of germinal unconscious attempt at feminine self-realization. Her attempt at self-realization is unconscious and unsuccessful. Margaret represents those black women who are totally dependant on their husbands for their living and have severely limited options before them in critical situations. She has not achieved a level of independence from Grange that will enable her to feel she can survive without him. Thus Walker describes her as "suspended" woman who has sown the seed of self-realization for later female generation. Margaret is one of those black women who are submissive and loyal because they have limited control over their own lives. As a result they lose their respect and identity. As she is unable to survive without Grange, she has no other option except killing oneself by poisoning. But noteworthy aspect of her life is awareness in her of "self". Thus she becomes guide to the coming generations of the black women.

Brownfield and Mem

Brownfield is the son of Grange and Margaret. After the death of his mother while returning from funeral of Margaret he wears the same stony mask his father wore. He leaves the house and decides to follow the

footsteps of his father, Grange Copeland. Fate leads Brownfield into the same juke joint earlier frequented by his father. He quickly joins Josie, the owner of Dew Drop Inn and soon joins into her daughter Lorene's bed. By one definition of manhood Brownfield has come of age- in demand by two women, each of whom uses him to inspire jealousy in the other.

Mem was cherry brown, not yellow like Josie or dark and hairy like Lorene. She was plump and quiet with demure slant eyes. In due course of time, Brownfield is mystified and intrigued by her. However, Mem is not match for him. She is clean whereas he is ugly. She is educated, sophisticated and teaches in a school whereas he is uneducated, rough and illiterate and works on the farm as a sharecropper. Mem teaches Brownfield to read and write. Gradually he develops a deep love for her which results in their marriage.

After their marriage, they care for each other and share joys and sorrows together :

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 didn't 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.⁸

Unfortunately, in committing himself to sharecropping, he enters the same trap his father felt compelled to escape. Brownfield and Mem are still on the same farm and deep in debt; but Brownfield tries to forget his frustration in the nurturing arms of his wife, Mem. Thus his love produces more babies and thereby adds to burden of more responsibility. Brownfield realises that his own life is becoming a repetition of his father's life when he is unable to send his five year old daughter, Daphne, in school. He knows very well that he couldn't save his children from slavery. He realizes that these children are no more of him. Like him they have to work on the fields of white men. He sets out to break her, demean her, humiliate her in front of his friends. He accused Mem of being unfaithful to him, of being used by the white men, his oppressors; a charge she tearfully and truthfully denied.

Being frustrated he takes to drinking and visiting Josie on the weekends. He starts treating Mem like a nigger and a whore which he knows she is not. He moves Mem and his children from shack to shack, wherever she can get work. Like his father, every Saturday night he beats her, trying to put the blame for his failure on her imprinting it on her face. In due course, Brownfield degenerates and is dehumanised, so much so

that the marriage that had started with love comes to a state of total failure. When he tries to correct her language, he asks : "Why don't you talk like the rest of us poor niggers?..... Why do you always have to be so damn proper? Whether I says 'is' or 'ain't' ain't no damn humping off your butt."⁹

In the beginning both Brownfield and Mem live a happy life; however, their happiness doesn't long as they prefer to live on sharecropping, the system that is evolved by the whites. Mem tries hard to help her family out of poverty, but she is forced to move from one share cropper's cabin to another. She hates arrogance of the white man who put them out without warning or explanation. Walker describes depressed state of her mind in the following words :

Each time she stepped into a new place, with its new, and usually bigger rat holes, she wept. Each time she had to clean cow manure out of a room to make it habitable for her children, she looked as if she had been dealt death blow. Each time she was forced to live in a house that was enclosed in a pasture with cows and animals eager to eat her flowers before they were planted , she became like a woman walking through a dream, but a woman who had forgotten what it is to wake up. She slogged along, ploddingly, like a cow herself, for the sake of the children. Her mildness became stupor; then her stupor became horror, desolation and, at last, hatred.¹⁰

However, Mem is a self conscious black woman who fights like a lioness to keep her family intact. As long as Mem is submissive and

docile with Brownfield, there is no problem in their relationship with each other. Brownfield's rule is accepted without any challenge. As a result, he thinks himself to be the ruler of his family.

The idea of the black man taking out his frustrations on the black woman is not new. Hurston popularizes the image of the black woman of an earlier time as "the mule of the world". The image is based on the assumption that the black woman has been the only human creature more helpless than a black man living in a white world. However, Mem breaks the mold of the black woman brutalized because of her helplessness. Rather, Mem is the target of Brownfield's abuse because her power, not her lack of it, allies her with Brownfield's white oppressors. The source of her power is her education, an education Brownfield doesn't have. She endures his burdens with great courage and dignity.

After facing hard times Mem decides to challenge the power of Brownfield by her awakened womanist consciousness. Consequently, the survival of the whole becomes important to her. She tries to grab power from Brownfield as the head of the family and assumes the responsibility of caring the family. The moment Brownfield informs her that they were going to move to Mr. J.L.'s, she challenges his decision and says :

I already told you,..... you ain't dragging me and these children through no more pigpens. We have put up with mud long enough. I want Daphne to be young lady where there is decent folks around,

not out here in the sticks on some white man's property like in slavery times. Me and these children got a right to live in a house where it don't rain and there is no holes in the floor.¹¹

She decides not to move to the place chosen by her husband. She finds out a new and better house and signs the lease. In addition to this she wants Brownfield to work in a factory in the town; instead of living in a shack on a white man's farm. The very act of taking decision on behalf the family is taken by Brownfield as a threat to his manliness. Therefore, he believes that the decision that is made by him has to prevail in his house. He says :

We moving exactly when and where I say we moving. Long as I'm supporting this fucking family we go where I says go. I may not be able to read and write but I'm still the man that wears the pants in this outfit !¹²

Brownfield doesn't have the courage to say that what he says is right. Therefore, he insists that he is a man and his order should prevail. However, she is so awakened that nobody can prevent her from taking appropriate action for her family. Therefore, she declares :

You do exactly what you want to, Brownfield, you do exactly what you want and go precisely where you please. But me and these children going to live in that house I leased. We ain't living in no more dog patches; we going to have toilets and baths and 'lectric lights like other people !¹³

And also for the first time she reveals what she has done for the family. She says that throughout her life she has to work hard to support their family. But Brownfield is too mean to think of her generosity and sacrifice. To fulfill her dream, she takes a job and announces that she will take the children to live in town whether he goes or not. As this decision is not approved by Brownfield, he beats her. At this time Mem reacts: "I'm sick and tired of this mess."¹⁴

When Brownfield beats her, furiously she hits him over the head with the gun. He can quit wailing like a old seedy Jackass. He lies on the floor groveling in his own blood and vomit. At this triumphant moment she dictates to him certain rules of conduct in the new home she is going to control. These are almost like "Ten commandments" given by a woman :

Now, First off you going to call me Mem, Mrs. Copeland, or Mrs. Mem R. Copeland And second, you is going to call our children Daphne, Ornette and baby Ruth. Although you can call anyone of them 'honey' if you got a mind to. Third, if you ever lays a hand on me aging I'm going to blow your goddam brains out-after I shoots off your balls, which is all the manhood you act like you sure you got. Fourth, you totch a hair on one of my children's heads and I'm going to crucify you Fifth, you going to learn to eat your meals like a gentleman, you ain't going to eat like no pig at my table. You going to use spoons and knives and forks like everybody else that got some sense. Sixth, I don't care about your whoring round town, but don't you never wake me up on Sunday morning garbbling on me when you been out all Saturday night swinging your dick. Seventh, if you ever use a cuss word in my new house I am going

to cut out your goddam tongue. Eight, you going to take blame of every wrong thing you do and stop blaming it on me and Captain Davis and Daphne and Ornette and Ruth and everybody else for fifty miles around. Ninth, you going to respect my house by never coming in it drunk. And tenth, you ain't never going to call me ugly or black or nigger or bitch again. 'cause you done cause you done seen just what this black ugly nigger bitch can do when she gits mad !¹⁵

All Brownfield can do is cower against the door and sob , "yes, ma'am." He agrees to her code of conduct. Finally they leave for town in order to enjoy a life of comfort and conveniences. Both of them get jobs in town that gets them out of the damp of the Davis diary and lets him regain his health.

As Brownfield's power lies in his maleness, Mem's weakness too lies in her femaleness. Like white masters who used to rape black women in order to crush their resistance and humble the black men, Brownfield also decides to use his maleness in order to control and weaken Mem. He can achieve this only by forcing on her unwanted pregnancies. With vengeance, Brownfield forces two pregnancies upon her, and although the babies do not live, her pregnancies take away her health and her chance of employment, and when the rent goes unpaid they loose the house. Consequently, Brownfield succeeds in bringing her back to Mr. J. L's shack, the place of his choice. Brownfield has won the battle. His reasons for intentionally bringing his family down are those of a man who

places his pride before his family's welfare and even his own. Thus Brownfield is successful in placing her in a shack once again.

Rather than thinking about the bad state of the family, Brownfield feels happy that he has succeeded in bringing down his family. He shamelessly tells Mem :

You was going to have your house, straight and narrow and painted and scrubbed, like white folks. You was going to do this, you was going to do that, Shit, you thought I fucked you 'cause I wanted it? Josie better than you ever been. Your trouble you just never learned how not to git pregnant. How long you could keep going with your belly full of children? ¹⁶

No doubt Mem has been defeated by her husband but she has not lost hope. She is too ill and weak, and couldn't do more than threatening him. Ready to face life once again she tells Brownfield that she is going to leave him after her recovery. She also decides to work again for better future. True to her word, Mem gets well and holds a job as a domestic servant. The Jewish man she works for pays her well and is even kind enough on occasions to drive her home after dark. There is never any hint of anything sexual between Mem and her white boss. In fact Mem has never been guilty of the infidelity Brownfield has accused her of; but the sight Mem getting out of the white man's car one Christmas Eve reminds Brownfield of the image of his mother climbing out of a white man's truck many years before. Hating Mem for being strong enough once more to

leave him and linking her in his anger with the mother who also deserted him. Brownfield waits only until she enters the circle of light from the front porch and fires his shotgun into her face and kills her. Thus Mem is the victim of manly ego and ruthless action of a thoughtless man, Brownfield. Like Margaret, her self-realization or initiative actions against her husband, Brownfield leads her to tragic death. Mem is a kind of woman who fights for rights till the end of her life without surrendering the threatening of her husband. In this way Walker celebrates the character of Mem.

Josie : Her ill-treatment by the Black Men

Josie is another black woman who creates the world of her own when she is victimized and driven out of her own house by her own father. Though unwed, Josie becomes pregnant at the age of 16. Her father a "minister", refuses to forgive her and humiliates her as much as he can. However, on his birthday, to try to buy back her father's affection and forgiveness she gives a party. She drinks a lot but her father forbids the male guests, many of whom have paid for her services, to lift her from the floor after she falls and begins to be the labour. Perhaps, indirectly, Josie blames Lorene, her child daughter, for the loss of her father's love. This is why Josie never cares about Lorene. Josie opens a business in which she offers drink to herself and to the male customers. Lorene works

right alongside her. At times Lorene and Josie even share the same lovers. Evidently, Lorene is nothing but a burden of Josie.

Josie doesn't care about Lorene's emotional or physical needs. She merely allows her to exist. By the time Lorene is 16, she too, like Josie becomes a mother without a husband. Like Margaret and Mem, Josie, doesn't find happiness with new men. First of all, because of her father's harsh treatment she goes into "business". In order to avoid further degradation by men she does her job with gusto that denied shame, and demands her money with an authority that squelches all pity. She comes to love, sex and money, the two having become an inextricable link in her profession. It is because of her profession that she comes across Grange and his son, Brownfield. While her sexual loyalty to Grange is hardly total, her emotional commitment is absolute. Once Grange returns from North, she shuts Brownfield out. In spite of the fact that her own father has never shown any mercy to her, she sells her only security, the Dew Drop Inn, to give Grange enough money to buy his farm. She abandons the only business she knows to become Grange's wife. Josie waits most of her life to have Grange's love, but she doesn't.

Josie is reduced to washing clothes for whites and blacks to buy her food. No doubt, Josie creates a world of her own. She creates economic security for herself and her daughter, Lorene. However, once she is

involved with Grange she begins to lose everything including her Dew Drop Inn. As a result she loses her independence and becomes vulnerable and dependent on others.

Thus, like all other Copeland women, she too becomes a victim. However, all of them do fight valiantly against their situations and also against their oppressors. They fight not only for themselves but for their family. It is in Ruth, the granddaughter of Grange Copeland, that Alice Walker perceives the hope for a fully grown up person and also for an independent black woman. Thus The Third Life of Grange Copeland highlights the problems of the black women in their day to day life. They are led to self discovery and self knowledge and attain regeneration. Thus Walker indicates that the hope of a better and self fulfilled life could turn into a nightmare in a black woman's life.

Ruth : A child of the Future

Walker would have ended the novel with Mem's death, but the title of book suggests that this is Grange's story. There are the three children, Ruth, Daphne and Ornette, of this tragic marriage to inspire questions about the future. Grange's return makes the novel a study in contrast between the man who sees the error of his ways and the man who never does; between the one who eventually learns that a man's definition of self comes from within, not from some "cracker", and the one who never learns

that lesson. The remaining part of the novel develops the character of Ruth, Grange's granddaughter, the precursor of later Walker women who have a chance to overcome brutality and injustice to survive "whole".

Grange reappears before the birth of the third granddaughter, Ornette . He is totally a changed man who hates his son for shooting Mem and even couldn't bear to touch his parting son, Brownfield. He hates his son and his silly action. The second half of the book reiterates Walker's point about blame, already effectively illustrated by the events of the first half. Grange and Ruth's story is necessary to complete Walker's point about forgiveness.

The only justification Brownfield gives for murder is that he likes plump women and Mem's skinniness was more proof that she was unable to provide for him. His weakness is that he can never accept fully the blame for his failure as a provider and as a human being. Mem's weakness is that she forgives him easily believing that kindness can convert the enemy : If she had been able to maintain her dominance over him perhaps she would not stand now so finished. Her weakness was forgiveness, a stupid belief that kindness can convert the enemy.

Ruth goes to live with Grange and Josie after the death of mother and father's imprisonment for the murder of Mem. Josie's money from the sale of her juke joint financed their farm. Grange willingly shoulders the

burden of teaching Ruth the hatred that will enable her to survive. He takes care of not telling her about his past-his second life-that would convince her that he hates the whites as completely as he professes. He tells her that he has rejected the white woman's hand who is drawn in an icy pond in Central Park because she was calling him black "nigger". Thus Grange tries his best to arouse hatred in Ruth's mind for the white's, his oppressors.

Grange thinks that fighting every man can not be his way. On the other hand, he thinks that each man has to free himself from the hostility of the whites. Everyone of us must prepare oneself to defend, to protect and to keep it inviolate from the whites.

Grange believes that the reformation of America is impossible, and the only way blacks can feel "free and easy and at home" is to leave this country. He says to Ruth : "I don't mean this farm; I mean in this country, the U.S. I believe we got to leave this place if we 'spect to survive. All this struggle to keep human where for years nobody knowed what human was but you. It's killing us."¹⁷

However, Ruth is optimistic and believes in the feasibility of change.

She says :

May be it would be better if something happened to change everything; made everything equal; made us feel at *home*.¹⁸

Thus Ruth, the child of the future generation is favorable for change which Grange thinks impossible and too late. She tries to assure him that no more they can do what they have done in the past. The only thing we can do is to forgive them and forget the past.

The first step towards forgiveness is the proper assigning of blame . To a greater extent Grange is able to take that step. When Brownfield is released after seven years in prison, Grange tries to force him to take that first step toward facing his own culpability. But, Brownfield doesn't care for his suggestion and goes on plotting vile things. Grange tries his best to convince Brownfield you are the one who is weak and has no feeling of doing on yourself. You all the time begins to think up evil and begins to destroy everybody around you, and you blames it on the crackers. He says to Brownfield that we got our own souls; don't we ? But, Brownfield is hard and cruel enough to neglect his suggestions.

Willingness to accept blame depends on the strength of the individual's soul. Even in an old age Grange believes that the spoiling of the human soul makes forgiveness impossible. However, Ruth argues playfully that he actually caught his soul in the nick of time, just before it spoiled completely. Now Grange is completely changed fellow who gives priority to forgiveness and acceptance of blame.

Grange feels that he himself is beyond redemption. However, he always wants to preserve Ruth's soul in its youthful freshness. His prime duty was to prepare Ruth for some great and Herculean task, some magnificent and deadly struggle, some harsh and forbidding reality. Her "whole" survival is important for him. Grange's plan is to teach her everything he knows. He boasts; "Your aim's a heap better than mine!"¹⁹ He longs to shelter her always behind the barbed-wire barrier that he has erected between her and the impersonal cruelty of the outside world. One day, four civil rights workers leave Grange feeling that he has been asleep for 40 years. Thus civil activists believe in changes both at social and spiritual levels in society.

One day, the two couples - one black, one white - have come to persuade Grange to register to vote. What shocks and surprises Grange is that the black husband and wife are not outside agitators but young people from his home county. They inform him that blacks are voting in Green County and that they will soon even run for office. Grange remains skeptical but envies their idealistic belief in the possibility of change. He has not changed to the point where he can offer the white couple the hospitality of his front porch, but gives the four a watermelon as a parting gift and waves good-bye to all of them.

When Brownfield returns from the jail, with the help of Josie, he tries to disown his children from Grange. One day on her way to school, Ruth meets her father, Brownfield. He asks her why does she forget her daddy? At this moment he tries to convince her that he is a changed man. But Ruth doesn't believe it. Ruth says :

You never cared for us; you never cared for
mama or Daphne or Ornette, or for me²⁰

Thus, Ruth is fully conscious and self thinking girl who knows very well what is right and wrong. She hates Brownfield for the lack of charity. Because of his negligence Daphne has to work in a crazy house in North and Ornette becomes an excessive drinker and a man of foul words. She blames Brownfield for neglecting his responsibility and being an unworthy father. Firmly Ruth rejects his love by crying, "*I don't like you, I don't like you, I don't like you !*"

Ruth watches the Atlanta civil rights marches on television. She agrees with the marchers that it just might be possible to change the minds of the "crackers". The only black faces she sees is on T.V. news. Everyday Chet and David talked of integration in schools, restaurants and picture shows. All these programmes appeal Ruth. Her grandfather is glad that such hope exists unspoiled in the minds of the young. Grange really wants for someone to change people like Brownfield.

In spring she sees a long line of the student marchers parading up and down the street in Baker Country. She is amazed to see real blacks and whites marching together in her home town and other girls and boys actively taking part in marches. As Ruth is leaving town someone pushed a piece of paper into her hands. At the top of the page she sees a white man and woman chained to a rock. The rock was called "racism"; underneath is written "You will Not Be Free Until We Are Free." Thus it is a pleasant thing for the blacks that all are fighting for equality, survival and liberty of the blacks.

At one moment Ruth and Grange learn that Brownfield has decided to take them to court in order to get Ruth. He wishes that he could ask Mem's forgiveness because once he acknowledges his own guilt. Brownfield is repulsed when he hears Josie echo his own constant blaming of the white man. The moment comes and goes quickly. He decides that there is nothing that he can do; one final time he gives his fatal shrug. He wants Ruth for the same reason that he would want any other possession : she is his. Besides, he wants to hurt Grange for deserting him. Brownfield never considers changing; he never considers taking Ruth into his home and simply being kind to her.

When Quincy, the young man and his wife, Helan, along with other two whites Bill and Carol, come to Grange's house to request him to vote

in the election for Sheriff, governor, police chief and county commissioner. Grange says no because everyone of them is crackers. At that time Helan, a black wife of Quincy laughs and says firmly, "That's not what we found in Green County."²¹ When they were arguing with one another Helan laughed a lot. She seemed as carefree as a bird. She also informs him that Quincy is going to run for Mayor and automatically I am going to be the first black lady of Green County. Grange tries to dissuade them by saying that they all are crazy. The noteworthy thing here is that the blacks are enjoying free, fair and fearless life and contesting election for entering in the parliament. This change is unbelievable as well as important in the history of the blacks. It also highlights the history of the blacks in the past and its present.

In the final chapter Grange shoots Brownfield with his blue steel Colt 45. rather than let him have custody of Ruth. Grange, in turn, is shot for his crime. Grange gives the killer no excuse for harming her. He knows well that Ruth can live peacefully, harmlessly and harmoniously in her future.

Undoubtedly Ruth is going to live in a changed world - changed by the absence of her grandfather, who on the last day of his life looks to his granddaughter like "Ruth's ideal of God", but changed as well by people like the civil rights workers, who believe that working for the future is more

important than assigning blame for past injustices. Ruth counts herself among the ones willing to forgive whites "If they don't do bad thing no more."

Thus the novel is about social and spiritual change. It is significant as it represents a move beyond in its portrayal of relations between the black men and the black women. Margaret died because she could never forgive herself; Mem, because she was too willing to forgive. However, Ruth chooses to live with the flaw of unforgiveness rather than to believe that Brownfield is capable of change. That toughness, that willingness to be unforgiving when necessary, combined with the compassion that makes forgiveness possible once it has been earned, is Ruth's defense against the future. The combination is what will enable her to survive whole rather than merely survive.

Walker's initial draft of The Third Life of Grange Copeland began with Ruth a civil rights lawyer in Georgia. However, Walker felt that such story will be too recent and too superficial. So that she brought in the grandfather which gave the novel the depth of generations. Ruth is not only a product of her past, but she is also the child of the future, even though Walker finally decides not to specify that future. She achieves a self-realization, a definition of self, that moves her beyond

most of Walker's earlier women and that looks ahead to some of the spiritual and psychological triumphs of her later ones.

The Third Life of Grange Copeland not only informs us about the three lives of the Grange Copeland, but also about the three generations of the black women. Margaret, Mem, Josie represent their respective times and tortures given to them by highly racist, male-dominated and sexist American society. At the same time Walker celebrates awareness in them about their exploitation and oppression. They are presented as rebellion fighting against the orthodoxy and ill-treatment of their men. In the course of time they undergo a radical change, change they expect and believe necessary for their survival. But Ruth, a representative of future, lives a different life than her grandmother and mother lived. She is living in a changed society where there is no place for racism. Thus she represents bright and colorful future of the black women.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Alice Walker, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, (New York : Pocket Books, 1988).
2. Johan O'Brien, Interview with Black Writers, (New York : Liveright, 1973), p.197.
3. W. Lawrence Hogue, "History, The Feminist, and Alice Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland ", MELUS, (1972), pp. 49-50.
4. Alice Walker, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Afterword, p.344.
5. Ibid., p.7.
6. Ibid., p.27.
7. W. Lawrence Hogue, " History, The Feminist, and Alice Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland, p.56.
8. Alice Walker, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, pp. 72-73.
9. Ibid., p.81.
10. Ibid., pp. 84-85.
11. Ibid., pp. 118-119.
12. Ibid., pp. 123.
13. Ibid., p.124.
14. Ibid., p.131.
15. Ibid., pp. 138-139.
16. Ibid., p.151.
17. Ibid., p.292.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p.297.
20. Ibid., p.302.
21. Ibid., p.329.