

## Implications for Survival: Coping Strategies of the Women in Alice Walker's Novels

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Various strategies for coping have surfaced in the uncertain, arduous, and frequently faltering struggle by black Americans for equality of opportunity, coping strategies characterized variously as carefully considered judgments or mere reactions devoid of ideological commitment. These efforts have engaged the attention of historians, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and other scholars motivated by a perceived obligation to explicate the nature of the struggle and articulate viable modes for ameliorating the effects of discrimination. Literary artists have also manifested a similar interest by using the medium of imaginative literature to illuminate and dramatize the realities of the historical situation.

Alice Walker—poet, storyteller, essayist, novelist, and winner of the 1982 Pulitzer Prize for fiction (*The Color Purple*) has been heralded for her ability to dramatize the realities of the black condition, specifically, and the human condition in general. The inter-generational effects of poverty and discrimination, the operative distinctions between resistance and revolution, and the plight of desperate men and women are among the numerous and varied considerations that fall within the purview of her fictional creations. Of the numerous themes evident in Walker's fiction, the traumatic plight of black women is her proclaimed forte. In an interview with John O'Brien, Walker admitted this emphasis: "I am preoccupied with 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."<sup>1</sup> Her portrayals of the coping strategies of the women, bound by the common denominators of pain and suffering, indeed, possess a generalizability that is characteristic of literature of enduring value.

One would not expect to find in fiction a comprehensive, explicit set of instructions for coping with any situation, and certainly not a set of instructions comprehensive enough to address the multifaceted problems of race survival and progress. The very nature of fictional literature, however, permits the reader to observe circumstances and evaluate characters as they respond to a given milieu. From these observations,

plausible inferences may be drawn that shed light on past events and future possibilities. Inferences deriving from such observations are instructive in that the imaginative component of literature, requiring as it does the willing suspension of disbelief, permits considerable latitude in problem construction and resolution.

*The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Alice Walker's first novel, covers the time period from 1920 through the civil rights movement of the 1960s and depicts the cumulative effects of poverty and the disillusionment spawned by that poverty on three generations of a family of Georgia sharecroppers. *Life* in the title of the novel is a synecdochial figure representing a period of time in Grange Copeland's life during which his world view and value system undergo a demonstrable transformation that manifests itself in an increased acceptance of personal responsibility and a greater concern for the welfare of others. Despite the prevailing pessimistic tone, the novel does introduce a note of optimism as the protagonist—Grange Copeland—in his third life, the period during which he sought to make amends for his mistakes and to affect, in a positive way, the lives of those he loves—develops a close relationship with his granddaughter, Ruth, and establishes her survival as the controlling motivation of his life. One of the most poignant moments of reflection in the novel occurred after Grange had suffered numerous reversals in his efforts to ensure Ruth's survival, reversals resulting primarily from his own vacillating perception of the meaning of survival, and concluded: "Survival was not everything. *He* had survived. But to survive *whole* was what he wanted for Ruth."<sup>2</sup>

To survive *whole*. Grange Copeland's differentiation between merely surviving and surviving whole is often overlooked by critics analyzing the female characters in Alice Walker's novels, the analyses all too often obfuscated by too great an emphasis on the commonality of the women's plights: their humble beginnings, the brutality of their male partners, and the milieu of hopelessness (with the possible exception of *Meridian*) in which they operated. In actuality, though, Walker's female characters are more like the "pied" world described by Gerard Manley Hopkins in his sonnet "Pied Beauty," in which he intimated that the beauty of the universe, though often described as if it were one unbroken totality, is a much more "dappled" phenomenon, with folds, spots, patches, and pieces.<sup>3</sup> These pieces, he conceded, ultimately blend into a unified manifestation of beauty, but to overlook the diversity of the pieces would result in a gross oversimplification in assessing the total effect. Although most of the women in Walker's novels are victims of unfortunate circumstances who fail more often than they succeed, the common circumstances do not obviate the fact that the women do indeed differ in the manner in which they appraise and exercise their options. Some of them, like Grange Copeland himself, attempt only to survive; others of them, as Grange hopes for his granddaughter, attempt to survive whole.

The operative terms from psychological and sociological research and

theory that inform the analytical model for this discussion are appraisal and locus of control. The appraisal component of coping strategy refers to those distinctions that individuals make when categorizing a given set of circumstances as potentially harmful, beneficial, or relevant, and includes “a perception of the range of coping alternatives . . .”<sup>4</sup> Appraisal requires, as well, a calculation of the risks involved in the coping alternative selected. Locus of control, the second component of the analytical model, represents the extent to which individuals perceive mastery or resolution to reside within their own power.<sup>5</sup> An idealized continuum of coping strategy, then, would include an evaluation of existing circumstances, a consideration of available options, and a perception of self-determination.

These components of coping strategy—appraisal and locus of control—cannot be applied in a linear analysis, but do provide the framework for a discussion of the women’s perception of their situations, their appraisal of the options available to them, as well as the extent to which they view the possibility of ultimate success and assume personal responsibility for that success. Thus, this study concerns itself not so much with the common environments of the characters selected, not so much with their distressingly similar reversals and failures. Rather, the objective is to examine the extent to which each woman recognized her possibilities as well as her limitations and attempted to alter, in a systematic way, restrictive environmental influences.

The three characters selected for this analysis are Margaret and Mem from *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) and Celie from *The Color Purple* (1982). The emphasis on commonality decried earlier is invoked here briefly, but necessarily, for it is that commonality that illuminates differences in the coping strategies employed by the women. To compare the coping strategies of Meridian with those of Margaret or Mem or Celie, for example, would result in distortion because of vastly different historical circumstances. Similar distortion would inhere in comparing the three selected characters with the high spirited, indomitable Shug (*The Color Purple*, 1982), who consistently demonstrates confidence in her ability to ensure her own well being. But in Margaret, Mem, and Celie, the vulnerable ones, victims of environmental deprivations and extreme insensitivity—even brutality—on the part of their husbands, is found the parity necessary for an analytical comparison of varied strategies of coping with similar circumstances. These three women exemplify the type of women described by Alice Walker in an interview with Mary Helen Washington: “women who are cruelly exploited, spirits and bodies mutilated, relegated to the most narrow and confining lives, sometimes driven to madness.”<sup>6</sup>

The two characters selected for this analysis from *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* are, in relationship to Grange, his wife Margaret and his daughter-in-law Mem. Grange Copeland, a black tenant farmer in Georgia, passes on to his son Brownfield a legacy of defeat. Both men are

disillusioned by the sharecropping system, cognizant of and resigned to their inability to escape from it. The hopelessness that accrues in response to their economic imprisonment erupts constantly, venting itself on the only people who will tolerate their rage: their wives and children. The rage that characterizes Grange is transmitted to his son and manifests itself in the men's insensitivity to the needs of their wives, mental cruelty, physical brutality, and infidelity, infidelity that is unique in that both men ultimately become lovers of the same woman. Thus Margaret and Mem inherit the same set of circumstances, but variations in the way they appraise their available options are evident. The fate of Margaret is only sad, pitiful—not tragic—while Mem's ultimate failure is at least dignified by a series of courageous attempts to rise above the set of circumstances she inherited.

Dramatized in the opening chapter of the novel is Margaret's failure to capitalize on an opportunity that represents, possibly, her only avenue of escape from a miserable existence. She is shown with her husband and her ten year old son, Brownfield, watching her sister and family depart for Philadelphia after a visit with the Copelands in Georgia. Margaret's opportunity to leave with them and make an attempt to establish for herself and her young son a more meaningful existence in the North is even approved by Grange who says, in uncharacteristic softness, "You could've gone."<sup>7</sup> Her dismissal of Grange's encouragement and his confidence that she could learn the ways of the "norse" (Margaret's own pronunciation of the word "North") is indicative of her resignation to her current situation. Although the informed reader understands that Margaret's sister and family are guilty of perpetuating the rather widespread exaggerations of the blissful life in the North, there can be no doubt that Margaret's current quality of life is less satisfying than that of her sister's.

Margaret's myopic appraisal of her own situation and her hasty dismissal of this opportunity to escape her life with Grange—a life marked by his violent rages, his excessive drinking, and his flagrant infidelity—suggest her unquestioning adherence to a value system that dictates and perpetuates her own subservience. She is, in actuality, the embodiment of the psychological orientation to which Walker often alludes when she invokes Zora Neale Hurston's "mule" concept. The essence of that concept is that black women have been socialized to believe that it is their duty to bear, stoically, the burdens of the world. Margaret fails to explore the available possibilities and, thereby, becomes inevitably entrapped, considering it her "lot in life" to accept the prevailing circumstances, no matter how demeaning.

Eventually, however, Margaret does react to her situation, and therein lies the disappointing flaw in her character; she *reacts* but does not take control of her life. Walker describes Brownfield's impressions of his mother's transition:

Somewhere along the line she had changed. Slowly, imperceptibly. Until it was too late for Brownfield to recall exactly how she had been when he had loved her. It seemed to Brownfield that one day she was as he had always known her, kind, submissive, smelling faintly of milk; and the next day she was a wild woman looking for frivolous things, her heart's good times, in the transient embraces of strangers.<sup>8</sup>

Two key words in Brownfield's description of his mother's transformation should be noted: *frivolous* and *transient*. These words accurately depict the mindlessness and the futility of Margaret's escapism. Failing to appraise, in an intelligent manner, the potential harm of her actions, Margaret turns to other men as an antidote to the general hopelessness of her situation and Grange's flagrant affair with Josie, a prostitute. The "way out" chosen by Margaret could claim no potential for success and evinced no conscious effort to deal, in a rational way, with the realities of life.

Brownfield's recollection of Margaret's submissiveness is not nostalgic inasmuch as he did not view that trait favorably. His perception of this trait is noted in the following passage:

His mother agreed with his father whenever possible. And though he was only ten Brownfield wondered about this. He thought his mother was like their dog in some ways. She didn't have a thing to say that did not in some way show her submission to his father.<sup>9</sup>

The submissiveness would return during the weekdays as she shrank from Grange's angry moods and sought to be "sober and wifely, but . . . on weekends . . . she became a huntress of soft touches, gentle voices and sex without the arguments over the constant and compelling pressure of everyday life."<sup>10</sup> Thus, the shifts between submissiveness and wantonness, neither trait bearing significant potential for enhancing the quality of her life, form the pattern of her coping strategy and represent the extent of her efforts to alter the quality of her existence.

Though some could view the wantonness as an effort to alter the quality of her life in that such a course of action could possibly bring some degree of happiness, the reality is that nothing in her experience justifies a belief, on her part, that her irresponsible behavior would yield beneficial results. The son recalls his father's jealousy even "if she spoke, just to say 'how're you?' to other men."<sup>11</sup> And Josie, Grange's lover, later spoke of Margaret with contempt, commenting on the folly of [Margaret's] thinking that she could keep Grange by making him jealous of other men. The relevant consideration here is that whatever Margaret's motivation for her indiscretion may be, her actions evince too little forethought and analysis to qualify as considered judgments, that must necessarily take into account the potential for success that inheres in the course of action pursued. When Grange finds himself unable to tolerate her behavior, and his minimal concern for her disappears completely, he leaves her. And with characteristic shortsightedness, Margaret, who has never had the courage or sufficient insight to evaluate the options available to her, sees no way out and takes her own life as well as the life of her infant son.

Grange Copeland, in his third life, cannot find the correct words to tell

Ruth, his granddaughter, about his life with Margaret. He doubts Ruth's ability to understand and forgive his own degradation, his lack of truth and honor, and his affair with Josie that contributed to Margaret's bewilderment. He doubts, as well, that Ruth can understand her grandmother's revenge and ultimate efforts "to play her husband's game." He recalls that Margaret "threw away on other men what she felt her husband did not want."<sup>12</sup> He cannot find the words to tell Ruth that "the sweaty, unkind years plastered themselves across [Margaret's] lovely facelike layers of dull paint put on every year."<sup>13</sup> These words also accurately describe the deterioration in the marriage of Brownfield and Mem Copeland, Ruth's parents. Brownfield, in young adulthood leaves Green County for Baker County, Georgia, and meets Josie, the woman with whom Grange had maintained a long-term love affair.

Although Brownfield, like his father, becomes one of Josie's many lovers, it is Mem who reminds him of the ultimate in fine womanhood. Mem is Josie's niece—bright, articulate, and beautiful. Brownfield describes her as "someone to be loved and spoken to softly, someone never to frighten with his rough, coarse ways."<sup>14</sup> He ultimately succeeds in winning Mem's love, and their marriage is, initially, a happy one. But approximately five years later, they are overcome by the stress involved in simple survival.

Over the years they reached, what they would have called when they were [newly] married, an impossible, and *unbelievable* [italics in original] decline. Brownfield beat his once lovely wife now, regularly, because it made him feel, briefly, good. Every Saturday night he beat her, trying to pin the blame on her by imprinting it on her face; and she inevitably, repaid him by becoming a haggard, automatus witch...<sup>15</sup>

The contentment and joy of the early married years are replaced by misery, scorn, and contempt.

Initially, Brownfield idolizes Mem. Her education and beauty are, to him, desirable attributes. But these become the selfsame attributes that he seeks to destroy by inflicting upon her a desolation that matches his own. So, after several years, their marriage assumes the same predictable pattern of Grange and Margaret's marriage: Saturday night beatings, recovery from hangovers, suspense and tension, followed by another week bearing the characteristics of the preceding one. Temperamentally, Mem, like Margaret, is essentially docile, doing whatever she needs to do to promote Brownfield's sense of manhood. But Mem's character is more complex. Mem is capable of experiencing genuine anger, as opposed to mere despair, and is also ambitious enough to hope for better things. "There was a time when she saved every cent she was allowed to keep from her wages as a domestic because she wanted, someday, to buy a house. That was her dream."<sup>16</sup> Mem's ambition derives, in part at least, from her ability to differentiate between the potentially harmful and the potentially beneficial. She analyzes the flaws and deficiencies in her current standard of living and detests the deficiencies so vehemently that she feels compelled to effectuate change. Mem's dissatisfaction with the quality of her life inspires her to buy a home.

Being forced to move from one sharecropper's cabin to another was something she hated. She hated the arrogance of the white men who put them out, for one reason or another, without warning or explanation. She hated leaving a home she'd already made and fixed up with her own hands. She hated leaving her flowers, which she always planted whenever she got her hands on flower seeds. Each time she stepped into a new place, with its new, and usually bigger rat holes, she wept.<sup>17</sup>

Mem's anger derives from the discrepancy between her current status and a desired status, and her response to this discrepancy suggests the possibility of ultimate success. This success will not soon become a reality, however, because of Brownfield's extravagance and unwise investments each time Mem saves money to buy a home.

After two unsuccessful attempts to buy a home, Mem ultimately has her hour of glory. She stands up to Brownfield and, in one triumphant moment, informs him that she and her children will live in the house for which she has secured a lease and that if he chooses to live with them, he will treat her with respect and abide by the rules she has established. They move, for the first time, into a decent house with indoor plumbing, a refrigerator, and other conveniences they have not known before. While Brownfield grudgingly enjoys the unaccustomed comfort of the new home and finds his new job in the frozen pie factory much more dignified than dirty farm work, he cannot forget that it was Mem who searched for a decent home and signed the lease without his consent or knowledge. He vows to bring her down, and he succeeds when she—swollen with pregnancy and weakened—can no longer work. They are forced again to the shacks on the plantation.

Mem's most tragic moment does not occur when, returning home with gifts for her children on Christmas Eve, she walks into the sight of Brownfield's gun and is killed. Her most tragic moment comes on the day that she is made aware of Brownfield's devious scheme to remove the family, himself included, from the most comfortable living conditions they had ever known. He has systematically plotted her downfall.

As it was, he could not seem to give up his bitterness against his wife, who had proved herself smarter, more resourceful than he, and he had complained about everything often and loudly, secretly savoring thoughts of how his wife would "come down" when he placed her once more in a shack.<sup>18</sup>

The intention here is not to berate Brownfield for secretly planning Mem's downfall. Mem's lack of circumspection, her failure to calculate her risks as well as her opportunities, was her fatal flaw.

The fact that Mem's efforts are not ultimately successful could lead the casual observer to categorize her with Margaret and claim that both were equal losers. Mem, however, brought to her experiences two dimensions of coping that distinguish her from Margaret: a dissatisfaction, sufficiently potent to inspire meaningful efforts directed toward improving her lot in life and a sense of her own responsibility for that improvement. But Mem lacks an important attribute necessary for effective coping. Her appraisal of the possibilities for success fail to take into account the evil of which Brownfield is capable. Walker refers to Mem as a "nonfighter," a reference that should not be interpreted literally but in the context of

Walker's own definition of the word: Mem was not evil and [Brownfield] would profit from it."<sup>19</sup> Because Mem is not evil, she does not attribute this trait to others, a naivete that clinches her failure. Thus, despite the admirable quality of her perception, she does not succeed because of her failure to anticipate appropriately the risks involved in her chosen course of action.

Perceiving the "locus of control" over the outcome of events to reside within oneself is one dimension of the analytical model applied in this study. This trait is consistently elusive in the coping strategies employed by Celie in *The Color Purple*, the last character included in this analysis. She is, nonetheless, more complex than her limited vocabulary and broken language suggest, and she demonstrates—at intervals—the capacity to separate the potentially harmful from the potentially beneficial and to appraise the probable outcomes of the options available to her. Although her occasional triumphs are largely attributable to the assistance and intervention of others, she comes closer to utilizing the full range of coping strategies presented in the model than do the other characters analyzed.

*The Color Purple* is a moving narrative depicting the devotion of two sisters, Celie and Nettie, separated by continents for approximately thirty years. Celie remains in the rural South, but Nettie travels to Africa as a missionary. The novel is epistolary, the reader's sole source of information for a significant portion of the work being Celie's letters—addressed to God because she has no other confidant. She begins writing to God after being sexually abused by the man whom she thinks, at the time, is her real father. Only fourteen years of age at the time, Celie is warned by him, "You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy."<sup>20</sup> For years thereafter, Celie pours out to God her thoughts, her fears, her impressions of others, and her aspirations—as modest as they are.

Celie's repertoire of coping strategies early in the novel is marked by a dependence on the intervention of others, a seeming inability to envision ultimate success as a phenomenon of her own making. The trait of dependency is established early in the work as Walker depicts Celie's reaction to conversations between her father and Albert, the man she later marries. She hears Albert ask her father for permission to marry Nettie, her younger, more attractive sister, and listens as her father refuses permission. She also hears her father telling Albert, "But I can let you have Celie . . . She'd come with her own linen. She can take that cow she raise down there back of the crib . . . She ugly . . . But she'll make the better wife."<sup>21</sup> From March to June she listens to these negotiations between Albert and her father and, on one occasion, she is even called into the room with them so that Albert can take one more look at her.

Although Celie realizes that her marriage to Albert will be one devoid of love and mutual respect, a marriage motivated only by the desperation of a widower seeking a mother for his children left motherless when his



wife was killed by her lover, her plans are not to avoid the marriage altogether, but to escape from the marriage later—with Nettie's assistance. She writes to God:

It took him the whole spring, from March to June, to make up his mind to take me. All I thought about was Nettie. How she could come to me if I marry him and he be so love struck with her I could figure out a way for us to run away. Us both be hitting Nettie's schoolbooks pretty hard, cause we know we got to be smart to get away.<sup>22</sup>

Her ability to envision success is evident, but her plan of escape is linked to Nettie.

The plan is thwarted. Nettie does live with Celie and Albert for a time, but finds living with them for an extended period intolerable because Albert is unable to conceal his desire for her. Even after Nettie travels to Africa as a missionary and the sisters are separated for many years, Celie continues to dream of Nettie's return, again making her escape contingent upon Nettie's cooperation. Celie's hopes to escape her miserable marriage lie dormant while she mistakenly believes that Nettie is dead. She does not hear from Nettie for many years. But her hopes are reactivated when she learns that Nettie is alive. In a letter to God, she reveals the renewal of her hope to escape: "Now I know Nettie alive, I begin to strut a little bit. Think, when she come home, us leave here."<sup>23</sup>

The dissatisfaction exhibited by Mem in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* that enables her to visualize a more satisfying quality of life is also seen in Celie. She aspires, but the dependence on others prevails. Her ambition to lead a life of greater dignity and fulfillment becomes linked to yet another person, Shug Avery, her husband's lover. Shug and Albert were lovers in their youth, but his family opposed their relationship and arranged his marriage to a more "respectable woman," ironically later killed by her lover. Shug's return to town after many years' absence poses several problems for Celie. Albert begins to stay away from home for days at a time and when Shug becomes ill, he brings her home so that Celie can help nurse her back to health. After Shug's health and energy return, Celie tolerates Shug and Albert's renewed love affair, aware that they are sleeping together almost every night in the next room. Yet when Shug announces her plans to move on to another town, Celie begs her to stay, explaining to Shug, "He beat me when you not here."<sup>24</sup>

Celie's perceived need of the intervention of someone else to protect her own physical well being in this instance is reflective of her general attitude or coping style. The sense of dependence evident in her behavior is not problem-specific; that is, her inclination toward dependence does not vary from one problem to another. Whether confronting day-to-day issues or making decisions at pivotal points in her life, the same attitude is evident. Her occasional triumphs, as noted earlier, can be attributed to the intervention of others. She seems to possess no self-sustaining motivation that enables her to approach her problems with the expectation of success, independently achieved.

Shug Avery channels Celie's anger into purposeful activity when Celie

learns that Nettie is not dead after all. Celie discovers that Nettie has written to her regularly for many years, but Albert has hidden the letters in a large trunk in their home. This is a punitive action on Albert's part, directed toward Nettie for refusing his sexual advances. Celie becomes so enraged that she vows to kill Albert for this monstrous deed, which she perceives to be the most despicable thing he has ever done. At Shug's insistence, however, Celie begins sewing, an activity that Shug believes will absorb some of Celie's anger. Initially, she makes pants for herself and Shug only, but later makes them for others or merely for the sake of making them. Despite her obvious talents in her new hobby, Celie's characteristic lack of confidence leads her to believe that she is wasting time until Shug encourages her to convert the dining room into a sewing factory and assists her in the organization of what proves to be a profitable business venture. Shug then blesses the effort by declaring, "You making your living, Celie. . . Girl, you on your way."<sup>25</sup> Only then is Celie satisfied; she still requires Shug's approval and validation of worth to appreciate fully the importance and potential success of her own work.

Shug intervenes in yet another instance, urging Celie to take advantage of an inheritance. When Celie's stepfather (Alphonso) dies, she learns that the house in which he lived belongs, legally, to her and Nettie. She now knows that he is not her real father. Alphonso's current wife explains to Celie, "Your real daddy owned the land and the house and store. He left it to your mama. When your mama died, it passed on to you and your sister Nettie. I don't know why Alphonso never told you that."<sup>26</sup>

Celie recalls her stepfather's abuse and decides that she wants nothing that comes from him. Shug places the situation in perspective by assuring Celie that the property was willed to her and she has every right to assume the ownership. This event represents a pivotal point in Celie's life wherein she comes close to sacrificing a deserved inheritance because of her inability to recognize fully the possibilities within the range of her own influence.

Support groups and network systems are recognized concomitants of survival, but their inefficacy as substitutes for self-determination is dramatized forcefully in Walker's depiction of Celie's faltering efforts to survive. Nettie, upon whose assistance Celie depends, travels to Africa. Her return is uncertain. Shug, with whom Celie eventually develops an intimate relationship, temporarily replaces Nettie as Celie's source of support. But Shug leaves to pursue her singing career and later marries. After a protracted period of adjustment, Celie's perception of locus of control begins to shift from others to herself. In a letter to Nettie, she writes of Shug's promise to come home, concluding the letter with her first affirmation of self-determination: "I be so calm. If she come, I be happy. If she don't, I be content. And then I figure this the lesson I was suppose to learn."<sup>27</sup> The text does not provide an enumeration of Celie's goals or evaluate the level of her aspirations, but at last she envisions contentment without assigning responsibility for that content-

ment to anyone other than herself.

Alice Walker's portrayal of these women presents a range of coping strategies that can be tested for their generalizability to real life situations. Although the regressions and failures accompanying the efforts of these women are frequently disappointing and occasionally alarming, a catalogue of the coping strategies employed by these women is revelatory of the problems and possibilities involved in recognizing and assessing options, calculating risks, and activating self-determination. The characters in this analysis cannot be neatly categorized as three unfortunate women who suffer deprivation and brutality. Their responses to a common plight are indeed "dappled," as each woman brings to her experiences a unique temperament and repertoire of coping strategies.

Generalizing beyond the fictional context and attaching universal significance to the specific must, necessarily, be approached with caution, fictional literature having no inherent obligation to reflect reality. Enduring literature, however, has traditionally attained that status largely as a result of its timelessness and universality, its relevance beyond the immediate context. Although the dynamics of group interaction may preclude a perfect analogy between individual and group survival, the coping strategies employed by the characters in this analysis may be evaluated for their potential effectiveness when applied to real-life situations. The strategies in the analytical model begin with appraisal, a vital component of coping strategy. This strategy involves appraising circumstances and anticipating potential outcomes, undeniably valuable dimensions of coping because they increase the possibility of ultimate success. They serve to underscore the contrast between an existing status and a preferred status. But this appraisal is not, in itself, determinative of success. Self-determination, the belief that the locus of control over the outcome of events resides within oneself, emerges as the *coup de maitre* that concretizes Grange Copeland's differentiation between merely surviving and surviving whole.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>John O'Brien. *Interviews With Black Writers*. (New York: Liveright, 1973) 192.

<sup>2</sup>Alice Walker. *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970) 214.

<sup>3</sup>Gerard Manley Hopkins. "Pied Beauty." *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. W. H. Gardner and H. H. MacKenzie, ed. 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) 69.

<sup>4</sup>Robert E. Lazarus, et al. "The Psychology of Coping." *Coping and Adaptation*. George V. Coelho and David A. Hamburg, ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1974) 260.

<sup>5</sup>Katherine R. Parkes. "Locus of Control, Cognitive Appraisal, and Coping In Stressful Episodes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 46, (March 1984).

<sup>6</sup>Mary Helen Washington. "An Essay on Alice Walker." *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature*. Roseann P. Bell, Bettye J. Parker, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1979) 139.

<sup>7</sup>Walker, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, 14.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 177.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 58-59

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Walker, *The Color Purple*, 11.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 17, 18.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 192.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 215.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 247-48.