

THE THEME OF TRANSFORMATION AND REBIRTH IN ALICE WALKER'S THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND

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Abstract

Walker, as an African American woman writer, creates works that address the cultural and spiritual needs of her community and contribute to the transformation of society. In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, the protagonists suffer under the sharecropping system which makes them lose their human qualities. Yet, Walker believes in the potential of African Americans to change and regain their humanity through a process of self-evaluation and through their quest for wholeness. Walker dramatizes the possibility of change in the character of Grange Copeland who transforms his life until he becomes a reborn man. His transformation from his "first life" to the "third life" occurs through the process of self-realization leading to a new identity with positive qualities. He realizes that racism has destroyed his life and made him guilty of the violence he inflicted on his own family and his children. Awareness is the first step to transformation. Those who have the willingness to change are redeemed as happens with Grange. Walker analyses the relationship between responsibility for one's actions and the restrictions that society imposes on the individual. She questions the ideals and boundaries that constrain the lives and identities of African American women and men in the South and conveys the idea that there is always the possibility of healing and self-worth to be achieved. In the end, Grange learns that society is not to blame for one's failures in life; the individual is responsible for himself/herself. He is portrayed as the archetype of a reformed masculinity. The aim of the paper is to analyze the theme of transformation and rebirth which is central to Walker's works. The dehumanizing aspects of racial and economic oppression are emphasized as well as the individual's potential to transcend this dehumanization and become whole. Walker's womanist concerns are also addressed in this paper.

Keywords: *transformation, rebirth, self-discovery, African-American, wholeness.*