

# THE WOMAN AND THE TRADITION OF BLACK LEADERSHIP IN ALICE WALKER'S *MERIDIAN*

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## Résumé

Cette étude met en lumière la résistance des personnages féminins à la structure objet-sujet qui existe entre Blancs et Noirs. Elle pose le réveil de conscience féminine comme point de départ de la reconstruction de la subjectivité radicale féminine ; un processus d'opposition radicale qui reconstruit leur nouvelle identité, leur subjectivité dans le roman *Meridian* d'Alice Walker. Dans une analyse du code ségrégationniste, la présente contribution se focalise sur la transgression opérée par les femmes afin d'apporter le changement entre les Blancs et les Noirs. En nous appuyant sur la psychanalyse de Judith Butler, spécialement celle formulée dans *Theories of Subjection : The Psychic Life of Power*, nous examinerons les formes de sujétion imposées aux Noirs, en général et des femmes en particulier, laquelle sujétion entraîne l'éveil de conscience des jeunes femmes lettrées pour engager la lutte. Les concepts du Womanism/ Black Feminism reproduisent leur militantisme radical contre le pouvoir ségrégationniste au Sud.

**Mots clés** : changement, réveil de conscience, résistance, ségrégation, subjectivité.

## Abstract

This paper investigates into the resistance led by revolutionary female figures who break the yoke of subject- object relations between Blacks and Whites. It reconstructs Black women's individual self through an oppositional consciousness: a revolutionary process that forms their new identity, subjectivity in Alice Walker's novel *Meridian* (1976)<sup>1</sup>. Central to this analysis is the description of the women's transgressions of the segregation code that brings change in the relations between Blacks and Whites. Resorting to psychoanalytical criticism, especially Judith Butler's psychoanalytic formulations in her *Theories of Subjection: The Psychic Life of Power*, the essay analyzes the forms of subjection imposed on Blacks, in general, and particularly, young educated women whose consciousness rises in order to fight back the system. The concepts of Womanism / Black Feminism echo the new radical militancy of these young learned women against the segregation apparatus in the South.

**Keywords**: change, consciousness, resistance, segregation, subjectivity.

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, any citation appearing in this paper will be from this edition and will be indicated with the initial M, standing for *Meridian*, and followed by the page number of the quoted passage.

## Introduction

Alice Walker's *Meridian* pictures two communities, Black and White, which live in the small southern town of Chicokema codified by racial segregation. The story is set in the 1970's and although Blacks have demonstrated for change in the 1960's, the relationships between Blacks and Whites are analogous to the subject-object pattern. In other words, their relationships are still ingrained in the hegemonic White power structure. The circus wagon and the tank in Chicokema constitute the remnants of the White regulative power, in charge of maintaining and preserving the segregation code. When this code is about to be violated by Blacks, as in the cases of the visit of the mummified White woman before the official day, and the funeral of a young black adolescent the Wild Child in the local chapel, they are confronted with an attack orchestrated by the Whites.

The process of resistance or subjectivity undertaken by these young learned women can be perceived as a struggle against the system of domination that foregrounds all forms of subjection. In *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Judith Butler writes that: "The analysis of subjection is always double, tracing the conditions of subject formation and tracing the turn against those conditions for the subject – and its perspective – to emerge" (J. Butler, 1997: 29). My concern in this essay is to explore their oppositional consciousness, that is, how the female militants achieve radical subjectivity in *Meridian*, coupled with their consciousness-raising and awareness of racial segregation and discrimination in the South.

Indeed, this paper investigates Walker's particular way of predicating radical female subjectivity that moves away from the stereotypical or traditional representations of black female subjects in their historical struggle for Civil Rights in the United States. More specifically, the focal point of the present paper is the way Walker represents and reforms the experience of Blacks' struggle by conjoining the collective task of male and female subjects, a cross-gendering, which erodes the traditional conceptions that subordinate women's roles in the discourse of African –American activism. Therefore, the question of this study is framed as follows: How is the resistance of the young female characters against the segregation apparatus in Chicokema enacted in order to transform them into subjects? How is their new subject position born out of resistance constructed in their relations with the Whites? In other words, how is the process of radical female subjectivity mediated in Alice Walker's *Meridian*?

My inquiry goes through three phases, representing the main articulation of this study. The first one is the young women's inner uprising or their emotional subjectivity. Their mental disposition or emotion which is their talking back is part of their emotional subjectivity. We shall be concerned with the young women's emergence from silence to radical militancy while verbally addressing the injustice committed against Blacks. The final stage is the crossing out of boundaries between Blacks and Whites, boundaries represented by the circus wagon and the

army tank. This strategy to break the segregation and its boundaries arises from the Civil Rights Movements with the young male students who are mobilized and trained along with Meridian in order to lay the ground for a new type of (male) leadership roles in Blacks' struggle to achieve Blacks' freedom and a more equal, integrated personality in the American society.

### **1. Radical Subjectivity: Inner Uprising**

Alice Walker's *Meridian* depicts the character of Meridian Hill through a particular way of transgressing fear. She confronts the segregation apparatus represented by the army tank on behalf of the members of the black community, and eventually displays a potential mode of her radical emotional subjectivity. While the woman's community expects her to accept, stoically, the racial code of discrimination, she rather decides to act like a fighter whose sole objective is to conduct the revolution. She actually seeks to deconstruct the tradition by which Blacks have suffered great harm so far. In fact, with its regulative function, the army tank has facilitated Blacks' control until the coming of the Civil Rights Movement which offers a platform of sharp resistance from the black community.

Therefore, acting as the scapegoat of the community, Meridian "volunteers to suffer" (M, 12). The decline, agony, deterioration and endurance result from the sufferings Meridian experiences on behalf of the black community. When Truman Held, Meridian's lover, recollects her sufferings, he considers that experience as a demonstration of her being totally ready. He admits that "if somebody has to go it might as well be the person who's ready" (12). The term "ready" mentioned by Truman confirms Meridian's physical and mental determination and commitment to her race. She is ready to change the status quo imposed on the entire black community, and she bluntly indicates it: "[they] were glad they hadn't waited till Thursday when they would have to pay money to see her" (13).

Zeynep Gambetti's insightful reflection on the notions of determination and commitment results in what he labels as "Subjectivation." Gambetti's concept of subjectivation "is nothing but an overdetermined moment of fixation that inevitably falls short of full determination. The subject is never fully determined or fixated, whence the possibility of freedom from hegemonic formations or of resistance to them" (Z. Gambetti, 2005, P.428). Subjectivation is evidenced through the particular wildness which is the formation of radical black female subjectivity in Bell Hooks' essay on "Revolutionary Black Women: Making Ourselves Subjects." Her notion of wildness is "the metaphoric expression of the women's inner will to rebel, to make a self against the grain, to be out of one's place. It is the expression of radical black female subjectivity" (B. Hooks, 1992: 49).

The notion of “wildness”, in Hooks’ terms, designates the women’s inner rebellion and self-definition, the result of which is a subversion of the stereotypical representations that objectify them. Thus, “wildness” announces the emergence of radical female subjectivity. In another essay titled, “The Politics of Radical Black subjectivity” Bell Hooks asks: “How do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization?” Her answer is emphatically simple and unequivocal: resistance, opposition and the most important is becoming a radical subject. That process of wildness or radical subjectivity "emerges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one’s own life, as one develops critical thinking and critical consciousness, as one invents new, alternative habits of being, and resists from that marginal space of difference inwardly defined"(Hooks, 1990: 15).

The initial step into wildness or radical subjectivity in Walker’s novel begins with Meridian’s awakening, that is, her consciousness which is followed by her mental determination or emotion. Such sentiments are energized by the injustice generated by the Whites’ repressive machinery and mechanisms which include segregation, discrimination, humiliation and violence. Her sentiment follows the verdict of a punishment against any Black who will attempt to violate one of the days prescribed to Blacks, and who will not respect the segregation laws in the small town of Chicokema. Indeed, she is seized with an inner resisting force and courage to defy the Whites’ disciplinary apparatuses; she decides to operate a rupture with the long tradition of subjection imposed on Blacks.

Meridian’s resistance to White hegemony begins with a psychological rupture with the Blacks’ long tradition of objectification, the rejection of their psychological subjection and submissiveness. Her motivation constructs a new female self through an oppositional consciousness, a revolutionary process to dismantle the ideology of White dominance, which turns the Black woman from passivity into a determined, active individual. Motivation is central to Meridian’s development of radical subjectivity. As Michel Foucault writes, “Motivation is more than a simple psychical function. Rather as a central core of subjectivity, motives must be analyzed as particular moments of the subject’s subjective configurations in his or her multiple and simultaneous expressions” (M. Foucault, 1982: 777-795). Moreover, while the conservative Blacks take time to weigh between walking close to the circus wagon, or stoically waiting for Thursday, their official day of visit to the mummified woman, Meridian is already motivated upon moving forward:

Meridian did not look to the right or to the left. She passed the people watching her as if she didn’t know it was on her account they were there. As she approached the tank the blast of its engine starting sent a cloud of pigeons fluttering, with the sound of rapid, distant shelling, through the air, and the muzzle of the tank swung tantalizing side to

side – as if to tease her – before it settled directly toward her chest. As she drew nearer the tank, it seemed to grow larger and whiter than ever and she seemed smaller and blacker than ever. (7-8)

Ignoring the crowd which has been standing there only to watch her, Meridian is rather motivated to turn her back on subjection in a way that she transgresses the legendary tank – the symbol of white supremacy. Her motivation causes great surprise among Whites and among some Blacks as well. The old sweeper – a black old man whose name is unknown in the novel but is identified only by his social status – cannot understand Meridian’s motivation and desire to confront Whites and stand up against them. He calls Meridian "weird gal" (7), a name that qualifies the girl’s strength. In effect, the “weird gal” is motivated to deconstruct the standards of womanhood. In this context, the man cannot help but speak out the idea in his mind: “as far as I’m concerned, this stuff she do don’t make no sense...” (8). For the sweeper, Meridian has no right to lead the Civil Rights Movement, while some men like him show little concern.

The courage and determination Meridian exhibits for the Movement has certainly meanings in the public space; they equally produce meanings in the private circle, as they resonate as a significant defiance of motherhood and wifehood. In her essay on *Slave and Mistress/ Ideologies of Womanhood under Slavery*, Hazel V. Carby argues that within the discourse of the cult of womanhood, motherhood and wifehood are glorified as "the purpose of a woman’s being" (H.V. Carby, 1987: 26). Meridian goes beyond that purpose, when she defies wifehood and motherhood and, demonstrates her capacity to transcend the qualities of womanhood. Proportionally, she steps out of the pattern of womanhood, and opts for “spontaneous and symbolic acts of rebellion” (L. Pifer, 1992: 77-88). Her rebellion is the vector through which she performs her agency outside womanhood and its myriad of interests such as marriage and motherhood. Openly opposed to marriage, Meridian does not obey Eddie, her husband, in the point of leaving room to his authority.

According to the narrator, “[Eddie] was still good – looking (...), and he treated her with gentleness and respect. But the longer they lived together the more she became obsessed with the horrible thought that Eddie, like his name, would never be grown up. She thought he would always be a boy” (64). She is not submissive to Eddie in the way that term is taught by the institution of marriage. On the contrary, she challenges her husband’s authority and therefore treat him as a “boy.”

Meridian gets divorced with Eddie and, plans to kill Eddie Jr, the child born of their marriage. As the narrator states "while she made her hands play with the baby, whom, even then, she had urge to kill. To strangle that soft, smooth, helpless neck, to push down that kinky head into a tub of water, to lock it in its room to starve" (67). In projecting the murder of her

own child, Meridian's desire is to undo her body from maternal expectations. Killing causes her to remain childless, and she resorts to killing in order to redirect her own attitude ingrained in her unconscious. In other words, she wishes to get rid of the trauma of slavery and forced childbearing that African American women have experienced:

It took everything she had to tend to the child, and she had to do it, her body prompted not by her own desires, but by her son's cries. So this, she mumbled, lurching towards his crib in the middle of the night, is what slavery is like. Rebelling, she began to dream each night, just before her baby sent out his cries, of ways to murder him. She sat in the rocker Eddie had bought and stroked her son's back, her fingers eager to scratch him out of her life. (63)

For Meridian, maternal sacrifice is nothing but another form of "slavery." Therefore, committing infanticide withdraws her from maternity, viewed as a channel for reproduction. As a result, she makes herself a woman capable of enacting her maternal agency. She moves from the status of an object of reproduction to a status of radical subject who gains control of her own body. She finally abandons the boy instead of treating him like a burden: "when she gave [her boy] away she did so with a light heart. She did not look back, believing she had saved a small person's life" (87). Meridian is presented as a counter-strategy to defy manhood with its control of the female body. Her "new" status as a childless woman challenges the social restrictions imposed upon women in general and their enforced maternity that prevents them from holding public roles.

At times, Meridian's status as unmarried and childless woman are conducive to political activism. She plays a crucial role in the voter registration drive for Blacks. Her involvement in the fight for Blacks' Civil Rights is oriented towards the dominating system and all the social mores, which, over the years have reified the black population of their subjectivity, deprived them of their voting rights as well as many other civil rights as well. Together with the Civil Rights workers, she protests against the ideological apparatus constructed by the White, as illustrated by the following passage in the novel:

There had been a Freedom march to the church, a prayer by the Reverend in charge, freedom songs, several old women testifying (...) which caused Meridian's body's to twitch with dread and finally, a plan of what their strategy was to be, and the singing of 'Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn me Round. The strategy was for a midnight march, with candles, across the street from the jail by the people who had not been arrested earlier, of whom Truman was one. The strategy was, in fact, for everyone not formerly arrested to be so. This was in protest against the town's segregated hospital facilities. But even as she marched, singing, to the courthouse square, which was across from the jail, Meridian could not figure out how it was supposed to work. The earlier demonstrators, she felt sure, would not be set free because a few singing people stood peacefully across from the jail. And the jail was too small to accommodate any more bodies. It must already be jammed (79)

All things considered, Meridian is a character who plays significant roles. She becomes the representation in the radical feminist who challenges stereotypical images of womanhood.

That radicalism also plays out when she defies conventional notions of passive female sexuality. Her struggle for radical subjectivity reaches its climax through an activism for desegregation and Blacks' emancipation. She is equally capable of awakening and empowering other young women among whom Anne Marion, Meridian's college roommate. Anne Marion is one of those young females who uses her tongue for the accomplishment of her radical subjectivity or opposition to the White's annihilating power which is consolidated through the use of tongue.

## **2- With Tongue: Emergence of Radical Subjectivity**

Anne Marion's radical subjectivity emerges in *Meridian*, first from her non-violence, her self-control, and her resistance to the police, the white repressive apparatus at Saxon College. In addition, she sticks out her tongue which anticipates a new transgressive attitude in order to dismantle the ideology of white dominance. With her tongue, Anne Marion executes a firm resistance as a police officer tries to shove her: "[Anne Marion's] temper was easily lost. When she was attempting to be nonviolent and a policeman shoved her, she dug her nails into her arms to restrain herself, but could never resist sticking out, to its full extent, her energetic and expressive pink tongue" (27). Anne Marion's act of sticking out her tongue sounds childish only on the surface. Significantly enough, it is an evidence of the emergence of her radical subjectivity. The tongue stuck out shows her determination to articulate a discourse both different and defying which the police officer will hardly understand. It is an act of expressing her own voice and language, and operate a rupture with the racist system that intends to silence Blacks and keep them in their legendary obedient and passive status.

That intention to silence all the Black adds to the frustration felt by the community when the president, another representative of the white authority orders not to organize a funeral service for the Wild Child – an adolescent of thirteen murdered by a white driver – in the local chapel. The President's order leads to Anne Marion's revolt, expressed in angry words. Anne Marion sends words to the guards in uniform and equipped with guns once the Wild Child's casket reaches the gate, already closed in order to prevent any Black from admittance into the local chapel. When she sees her schoolmates sweating under the heavy casket that carries Wild Child's dead body, and notices the guards – all of whom are Blacks – who stand by with their guns, and try to scatter around all the students at the place for the burial procession, she understands that they are strongly attached to the tradition which objectifies Blacks. She ultimately turns her rage at them, and voices out their cowardice, their irresponsibility that makes the Black community what it has become: "that flaky bastard...that mother's scum is going to turn us around" (30).

Through these words, indeed, Anne Marion directly speaks to the guards who have always supported the almost immutable argument that the purpose of Blacks' existence is to

serve Whites. For her, the guards have never accepted change over accommodation, but have remained subordinated to the status quo. Anne Marion believes that they have narrowed the focus of the struggle down to issues that imply subjugation towards Blacks. They seem to view the large issues such as Civil Rights Movement as unattainable and inopportune. Therefore, rather than considering the guards as the representation of hope and the possibility of black resistance, change for the future black generation, she views them as a symbol of failure because they are "nothing but a disrag for those crackers downtown. [They] can't stand up to 'em no more than piss can fall upward. [their] mama should've drowned [them] in the commode the minute [they were] born" (30).

Beyond that emphasis on the guards' total failure, and worst, their negative existence, Anne Marion's discourse highlights their ignorance. She stick out her tongue for two reasons: she means to mock at this ignorance embodied by the guards, and her attitude is an expression "of defiance, of will, of courage" (B. Hooks, 2015: 28). In her description of this category of woman who shows defiance, will, courage, Bell Hooks adds: "a woman who spoke her mind, a woman who is not afraid to talk back" (B. Hooks, 28). In the light of Hooks' opinion, it can be said that Anne Marion is a courageous, defiant and willful woman whose tongue has become instrumental to the emergence of her radical subjectivity. Her tongue becomes an instrument which shapes her feminine self. In other words, with her tongue, she moves away from silence to defiant speech or talking back.

Apart from Anne Marion, Louvinie's radical subjectivity is performed in the act of narrating stories. While she is expected to be accommodated to the prescribed Plantation rules that have deteriorated her while reinforcing her status of slave or non-human being, she opts for a redefinition of herself, that is, a construction of a new self. In that process, she is engaged in storytelling which constitutes an attempt in the construction of radical subjectivity in the feminine. Louvinie's storytelling is actually focused on an old man who is used to bury the white children up to their necks. In fact the story she narrated would have looked effective if it did not take into account the realities of the Saxon household and Saxon children. But with the Saxon children in the center of her storytelling, we can see how Louvinie's story triggers a terrible punishment which finally results in the cutting and burial of her tongue. As it is reported, "Louvinie's tongue was clipped out at the root" (33). Such a punishment is executed by Master Saxon, who is in charge of implementing the master-slave relationship, maintaining and preserving the silence code among Blacks.

When Meridian visits the Saxon library, in the place where the archive, the archaeology of Louvinie's story is preserved, she has the opportunity to be recalled that Louvinie was a woman of strong character who has never accepted to lose her tongue to the detriment of the Whites' enthusiasm. Being amputated, Louvinie would not like things to be done as Whites



want but as she wants. What she has wanted with her tongue is the following: “she smoked it until it was as soft and pliable as leather...she buried it under a scrawny magnolia tree on the Saxon plantation” (34). Actually, Louvinie’s bravery becomes Meridian point of reference from which her agency develops. Meridian is engaged in the defense of the magnolia tree also called “The Sojourner”, the tree under which Louvinie’s tongue is buried.

Through *The Sojourner*, Walker aims to highlight the courage, audacity and determination of a woman whose handicap did not seem to her an obstacle. Acting in this way makes her a woman who gives power to the future generation of women who can use their own tongue in the performance of their resistance. In the same light, quoting Susan Willis, Lynn Pifer writes: "Named *The Sojourner*, the magnolia conjures up the presence of another leader of black women, who, like Louvinie used language in the struggle for liberation. In this way, Walker builds a network of women, some mythic like Louvinie, some real like Sojourner Truth, as the context for Meridian’s affirmation and radicalization" (L.Pifer,1992, Pp.77-88).Undoubtedly, Meridian and Anne Marion are considered as icons, the heroic representation of the female subjects who serve some memorable roles in Walker’s creation. It is very possible that their womanist stance (their ability of free and bold speech) along with the characters of Louvinie and *The Sojourner* set in motion the struggle for Blacks’ liberation.

As has been demonstrated, in Walker’s fiction indeed, the tongue has a symbolic importance for all the characters such as Meridian, Anne Marion, Louvinie and *The Sojourner* who shape their radical subjectivity through their own voice and language. Also, concerning Meridian, she has become an agent of the black community’s awakening during the Civil Rights Movements because of the leading role she plays. She is the one who provides the bridge necessary to cross the structure of racial domination which also constitutes the symbolic boundary which segregates the Whites and Blacks. Playing that role, she performs the "bridge leadership", that is, she is the one who has prepared and laid the ground to break through the segregation structure in the small southern town of Chicokema.

### **3- Bridging the Gaps between Whites and Blacks**

In an article entitled “African American women in the Civil Rights Movements. Trailblazers or just nominal members?” Esther Swam postulates that:

although, women and especially black women made up the larger part of participants in the African-American movement for Civil Rights during the 1950s and 1960s and can be seen in almost all pictures that were published of the movement’s demonstrations and campaigns, the roles they played in the movement have largely been overlooked by historians whose accounts mostly examined the national Civil Rights organizations and their leaders, all of whom were men. Only since the early 1980s have especially female historians started to look particularly at female participants and leaders of the Civil Rights movement and their contributions to the movement (E. Swam, 2016, P.2)

Walker's Meridian Hill has much resemblance with those female leaders because she makes Blacks aware of racial problems they are made victims of and also, she strives to create conditions for them to survive. What is more, she helps to spread the Movements among her people and ultimately participates in the awakening of the guano plant workers' children. Unable to move the army tank which blocks their sight of the circus wagon, the children turn to Meridian, whom they seem to call to their rescue. When Meridian arrives on the place where all the children are gathered, what is important to notice is their standing posture as confirmed by the narrator: "the children were on the opposite side of the square from the circus wagon, the army tank partially blocking their view of it. They were dressed in black and yellow school uniforms and surrounded somebody or something like so many bees. Talking and gesticulating all at once, they raised a busy, humming sound" (6).

As it can be noticed, the gathering of the children on the square announces some change in Chicokema. For instance, the fact that they are "talking and gesticulating all at once" may confirm the assumption that they have been yet organized while the whole South is antipathetic with Civil Rights agitations. In addition, in the presence of Meridian, they are always ready to show a great deal of assurance and security. At the heart of the narration, glimmers Meridian's commitment to mobilize the children and, march in front of them: "it was as if Meridian waited for them to get themselves nicely arranged. When the two were in the tank and swinging its muzzle in her direction, and the others were making a line across the front of the wagon, she raised her hand once and marched off the curb. The children fell into line behind her, their heads held high and their feet scraping the pavement" (7).

Meridian is certainly doing what some Black women have done before her. Her conviction as a leader comes from a woman leader as she evokes her achievements in the following: "At times she thought of herself as an adventurer. It thrilled her to think she belonged to the people who produced Harriet Tubman, the only American woman who'd led troops in battle" (106). Historically, Harriet Tubman was known as the leader of the Railroad Underground invasion. She initiated the Railroad Underground that helped many slave fugitives towards the North in search of freedom. In reality, Harriet Tubman can be considered a trailblazer in the movement for Black Liberation. She has initiated the ground on which Meridian can stand up and, lead young male troops that are supposed to cross out the racial boundaries. As Laverne Gyant writes in her article "Passing The Torch : African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement", " even though some women remained behind the scenes, many African American women relied on the strength, self-determination, creativity, and faith of their foremothers to prepare them for their role as leaders" (L. Gyant, 1996, P.641).

Like Harriet Tubman's leadership which has been carried out by many African American women, Meridian plays the forefront role of torchbearer or trailblazer on the purpose

that it will fall in the hands of the children. In the same light, Marlon Ross explains how the “monstrous female icons and Republican Mothers” may be the ones whose purpose is “to prepare the next generation of young males by teaching them the virtue of the race/nation, a virtue that she is exceptionally fitted to inculcate and embody exactly because she is more a transcending witness to history than a participatory agent shaping its course directly.” (M. Ross, 2006, Pp.5-6). In the same vein, Ross concurs with what Belinda Robnett has stated in the following: "African American women operated as “bridge leaders”, who – through frame of bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation – initiated ties between the social movement and the community and between prefigurative strategies aimed at individual change, identity, and consciousness and political strategies aimed at organizational tactics designed to challenge existing relationships with the state and the societal institutions" (B. Robnett, 1996, P. 1664).

As in the case of Meridian, she performs the role of bridge leader while mediating the children’s march towards the circus wagon: “the schoolchildren were passing in and out of the wagon....the last of the children were leaving the wagon. Meridian stood at the bottom step, watching the children and the adults come down. She rested one foot on the rail that ran under the wagon and placed one hand in her pocket.” (9). Meridian’s final standing position at the bottom level of the circus wagon conveys a message of inflexible determination and change. Since her presence does not the going up and coming down, for sure something was started, that would not discontinue so soon.

## **Conclusion**

The main subject under investigation in this study is the young educated women’s awareness or consciousness of the long tradition of the Uncle Tom’s status always experienced by the Black people in the South and their struggle to break with the object-subject relations between Whites and Blacks. The visit to the mummified White woman and the funeral of the Wild Child in the local chapel are the main causes of the young black learned women’s refusal to accept the differences and injustices that constitute the social order in the South. For them, the Civil Right movements have brought many changes. Therefore, they are not ready to assimilate the past with its fixed tradition of domination over Blacks. Actually, it is a premeditated injustice which turns to be an expedient moment for young Black women’s inner uprising in order to break with the tradition and most importantly to construct their radical subjectivity through militancy after long years of subjugation. They thus organize a collective resistance against white hegemony.

My investigation of this resistance has consisted in bringing to the fore the way subjectivity is mediated in Walker's novel, notably through the different phases in the process of constructing radical subjectivity. The first phase is signaled by emotional subjectivity, which consists in the young women's psychological determination or motivation for agency. The next stage is their talking back that signals their revolution against the white community that has contributed in silencing them, making them reified objects. And, the final step is their crossing out of the racial boundaries symbolically represented by the circus wagon and the army tank where both poor black and white children are led together in order to lay the ground for the preparation of future leaders. Ultimately, young black women's struggle reconciles the Blacks and Whites of the same socio-economic category in solidarity. Walker's female characters serve memorable roles and, they can be considered as some heroic representations in the feminine leadership.

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**1ere observation:** "**the President**" figure ainsi dans l'ouvrage Meridian. Il s'agit d'un représentant de la classe dominante blanche dont le nom n'est pas mentionné dans le roman sinon sous le patronyme de "**the President.**"

**2ème observation:** la phrase a été corrigée et elle peut prendre fin à partir de "**racial segregation.**"

**3ème observation:** la phrase prend fin à partir de "**from the Whites**". c'est une erreur de construction.