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Ahmed Seif Eddine Nefnouf

Kasdi Merbah University-Ouargla

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6770-1669>

nefnouf.ahmedseifeddine@univ-ouargla.dz

Mapping the Soul: Unveiling the Layers of Alice Walker's *Meridian*

Abstract

Alice Walker's *Meridian* is a profound exploration of identity, activism, and transformation set against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement. The novel delves into the complexities of personal and collective resistance, centering on Meridian Hill, a deeply flawed yet resilient protagonist who navigates the tensions of social justice, sacrifice, and self-discovery. This study examines *Meridian* as a multilayered narrative that intertwines themes of race, gender, and morality while challenging traditional notions of activism. Walker's fragmented storytelling and use of rich symbolism, such as the Sacred Serpent and the Sojourner Tree, enhance the novel's emotional and thematic depth. The analysis focuses on Meridian's journey as a microcosm of societal struggles, particularly the challenges faced by Black women in both private and public spheres. The feminist critique highlights Walker's nuanced portrayal of motherhood, autonomy, and agency. Additionally, the narrative's non-linear structure reflects the chaotic and multifaceted nature of social change. By situating the novel within its historical and cultural context, this study explores Meridian's enduring relevance in addressing issues of intersectionality and systemic oppression. It concludes that *Meridian* is not just a story of activism but a testament to the power of resilience and transformation in the face of adversity.

Keywords: Alice Walker, Civil Rights Movement, feminism, intersectionality, activism

Əhməd Seyf Eddine Nefnouf

Kasdi Merbah Universiteti-Ouargla

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6770-1669>

nefnouf.ahmedseifeddine@univ-ouargla.dz

Ruhun xəritəsi: Alice Walkerin *meridianının* təbəqələrinin açılması

Xülasə

Alice Walker's *Meridian*, Vətəndaş Hüquqları Hərəkatının fonunda qurulmuş şəxsiyyət, aktivlik və transformasiyanın dərin tədqiqidir. Roman sosial ədalət, fədakarlıq və özünü kəşfin gərginliyini idarə edən dərin qüsurlu, lakin möhkəm qəhrəman olan Meridian Təpəsində mərkəzləşərək şəxsi və kollektiv müqavimətin mürəkkəbliklərini araşdırır. Bu araşdırma Meridian-ı irq, cins və əxlaq mövzularını birləşdirən və ənənəvi aktivlik anlayışlarına meydan oxuyan çoxqatlı povest kimi araşdırır. Uokerin parçalanmış hekayələri və Müqəddəs İlan və Mühacir Ağacı kimi zəngin simvolizmdən istifadə etməsi romanın emosional və tematik dərinliyini artırır. Təhlil Meridian-ın ictimai mübarizələrin mikrokosmosu kimi səyahətinə, xüsusən də qaradərili qadınların həm özəl, həm də ictimai sahələrdə üzləşdiyi çətinliklərə diqqət yetirir. Feminist tənqid Walkerin analıq, muxtariyyət və agentlik haqqında nüanslı təsvirini vurğulayır. Bundan əlavə, povestin qeyri-xətti strukturu sosial dəyişikliyin xaotik və çoxşaxəli xarakterini əks etdirir. Romanı tarixi və mədəni kontekstdə yerləşdirməklə, bu araşdırma Meridian-ın kəsişmə və sistemli təzyiq problemlərinin həllində davamlı aktuallığını araşdırır. Bu nəticəyə gəlir ki, Meridian təkcə aktivlik hekayəsi deyil, həm də çətinliklər qarşısında dayanıqlılıq və transformasiya gücünün sübutudur.

Açar sözlər: Alice Walker, Vətəndaş Hüquqları Hərəkatı, feminizm, intersectionality, aktivizm

Introduction

Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976) is a landmark novel that intricately weaves personal and political narratives, offering a profound exploration of race, gender, and activism. Set against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement, the novel delves into the complexities of social justice, the moral ambiguities of activism, and the deeply personal struggles faced by those at the forefront of change. At the heart of the narrative is Meridian Hill, a young Black woman whose journey toward self-discovery and resistance reflects both the triumphs and sacrifices of those who dared to challenge systemic oppression.

Walker's storytelling transcends the boundaries of traditional historical fiction by focusing on the intersectionality of identity. Through fragmented narrative techniques, she explores the deeply intertwined nature of personal trauma and societal transformation. The novel critiques not only the external forces of racism and sexism but also the internal contradictions of the Civil Rights Movement, particularly the marginalization of women within the struggle. Meridian Hill, as both a protagonist and a symbol, embodies the resilience and ambiguity of individuals navigating the tension between personal fulfillment and collective responsibility.

Research

This study examines *Meridian* as a text that is as relevant today as it was in the 1970s. By analyzing its themes, narrative structure, and cultural context, this research aims to illuminate the novel's contribution to literary studies and its reflection on ongoing struggles for equality and justice. Through its nuanced portrayal of activism, *Meridian* invites readers to grapple with the complexities of transformation—both societal and personal—and challenges us to confront the sacrifices inherent in the pursuit of freedom.

By situating *Meridian* within its historical, feminist, and cultural frameworks, this study reveals how Walker's narrative continues to resonate with contemporary debates on intersectionality and systemic inequality. Ultimately, *Meridian* is a testament to the enduring power of literature to provoke reflection and inspire change.

Theoretical Background

Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976) is set during a pivotal period in United States history, shaped by the lingering effects of the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of second-wave feminism. The 1960s brought transformative milestones, such as the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), but Black women were often marginalized, with the focus placed on the roles of Black men in activism (Walker, 1976, p. 25). By the 1970s, the Black Power movement and second-wave feminism emerged, creating ideological tensions. However, second-wave feminism, predominantly led by white women, frequently excluded the concerns of women of color, highlighting the need for a more inclusive approach to activism. In *Meridian*, Walker critiques these limitations by centering the struggles of Black women, who face intersecting racial and gendered oppression (hooks, 2000, p. 35; Lorde, 1984, p. 45).

Walker's own life experiences significantly inform the novel. Born in 1944 in Eatonton, Georgia, she grew up in the segregated South and faced both racial and gender discrimination. Her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and her early literary successes, such as *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), shaped her exploration of identity, justice, and activism in *Meridian* (Lorde, 1984, p. 45). Like the protagonist, Walker grappled with the emotional toll of resistance, and her critique of the Civil Rights and feminist movements highlights their exclusion of Black women (Walker, 1976, p. 40).

The novel's themes are best understood through feminist theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and the concept of intersectionality. Black feminist scholars, such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde, emphasize the importance of addressing the unique experiences of Black women, who face compounded oppression due to both race and gender (hooks, 2000, p. 35; Lorde, 1984, p. 45). In *Meridian*, Walker portrays a protagonist who struggles to balance personal desires with collective activism, critiquing how Black women have historically been sidelined in both feminist and civil rights movements (Walker, 1976, p. 25).

CRT, as pioneered by Kimberlé Crenshaw and Derrick Bell, offers a lens to analyze how race is

a social construct institutionalized to perpetuate inequality (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 130). Walker uses *Meridian* to critique the Civil Rights Movement's inability to address the compounded oppression faced by Black women, which stems from both racial and gendered hierarchies. Additionally, Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality examines how multiple identities—race, gender, class, and sexuality—intersect to create unique systems of oppression. Through the protagonist's journey, Walker illustrates the compounded challenges faced by Black women, shedding light on how these intersecting identities shape their activism (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 145).

By drawing on these theoretical frameworks, *Meridian* critiques traditional narratives and underscores the need for more inclusive approaches to social justice. Walker's novel reveals the complexities of activism and identity, offering a nuanced exploration of race, gender, and resistance within the historical and social context of the 1960s and 1970s.

Literature Review

Scholarly attention on Alice Walker's *Meridian* focuses on its exploration of intersectional identities, activism, and the unique struggles of Black womanhood. Scholars argue that the novel critiques the Civil Rights and feminist movements for marginalizing Black women, whose experiences are shaped by intersecting oppressions of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1243). Walker portrays the protagonist, Meridian Hill, as navigating the exclusionary nature of these movements, challenging their masculinist and racialized frameworks (hooks, 2000, p. 35).

Critics such as Valerie Boyd emphasize Walker's critique of the Civil Rights Movement's patriarchal structure and the invisibility of Black women's contributions. *Meridian*'s struggles with societal expectations around femininity, marriage, and motherhood highlight the complexities of Black womanhood (Boyd, 1996, p. 45). Similarly, Susan Willis explores the emotional and psychological toll of activism, illustrating how the characters endure alienation and trauma while sacrificing personal fulfillment for collective goals (Willis, 1991, p. 112). Anne-Marie Hunter adds that Walker examines the gendered and racial violence Black women face within activism, portraying the emotional costs of their sacrifices (Hunter, 2000, p. 98).

The novel critiques the limitations of both the feminist and Civil Rights movements, as noted by Laura R. Brown, who argues that Black women were relegated to secondary roles in the Civil Rights Movement while white feminist movements ignored their intersectional struggles (Brown, 1997, p. 72). Glynda Hull echoes this, calling for more inclusive approaches to these movements, as depicted through *Meridian*'s journey (Hull, 1999, p. 88). Cheryl A. Wall highlights *Meridian*'s dual quest for self-discovery and collective activism, emphasizing the tension between personal autonomy and social responsibility (Wall, 1990, p. 51).

Through *Meridian*, Walker critiques the exclusionary practices of social justice movements while exploring the psychological dimensions of activism. The novel remains relevant for its nuanced portrayal of intersectionality, emotional resilience, and the critical role of Black women in the fight for justice.

Analysis

The Battlefields of Identity: Race, Activism, and the Quest for Justice

In *Meridian*, Alice Walker examines the complexities of identity, particularly within the context of activism, where race, gender, and personal aspirations intersect. Through the protagonist's struggle, Walker presents identity as a fluid and evolving battlefield, shaped by the emotional and psychological costs of activism, the exclusionary practices of social movements, and the quest for justice. This nuanced portrayal of activism and identity highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the unique position of Black women in these movements.

One of the primary challenges faced by Black women in activism, as illustrated by *Meridian*, is the tension between individual desires and collective sacrifice. This is a dynamic explored in depth by scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000), who argues that Black women often navigate the contradictory expectations of both their communities and activist movements (Collins, Patricia Hill, 2000). Collins suggests that Black women are subjected to an additional layer of oppression, where their personal needs and voices are overlooked in the name of collective struggle. *Meridian*'s reflection—“nothing was ever really free, least of all my love” (Walker, 1976, p. 92)—illustrates this

duality, encapsulating the emotional cost of activism. Collins (2000) asserts that Black women must challenge this marginalization by asserting their voice and autonomy in movements that tend to prioritize collective over individual needs.

Furthermore, the character of Meridian is deeply embedded in a critique of the patriarchal structures within both the Civil Rights and feminist movements. bell hooks (2000) discusses how Black women often face a double oppression, both within their communities and within activist spaces, where they are expected to conform to roles defined by male-centered ideologies. Meridian's relationship with her former lover is emblematic of this struggle. She rejects the notion that her activism should be defined solely by the cause or by her relationships with men. As Walker (1976) writes, "He could not understand why I would not give my life entirely to the cause. He didn't see how the cause and I were both dying" (p. 103), this statement speaks to the central issue of Black women's autonomy within activist movements. hooks (2000) emphasizes the importance of dismantling patriarchal structures within activist movements to allow for the full expression of Black women's agency. Meridian's refusal to sacrifice herself for the sake of the cause reflects hooks' call for the intersection of feminism and social justice, where the liberation of Black women must be at the center of these movements.

In her evolving understanding of activism, Meridian moves toward a more holistic view of justice that does not dismiss the self in favor of the collective. This internal development resonates with Audre Lorde's (1984) concept of self-care as a political act. Lorde argues that Black women must engage in self-care to ensure their survival and to maintain their power in resistance to oppressive forces. Meridian's realization—"I do not belong to the past or the future. I belong to myself" (Walker, 1976, p. 206)—echoes Lorde's assertion that self-empowerment is not only necessary for personal well-being but is also an essential act of resistance. By asserting her individual identity, Meridian challenges the societal and movement-imposed definitions of her existence. Lorde (1984) underscores that Black women's resistance cannot be sustainable if they do not also recognize their own worth, needs, and desires.

Moreover, the tension between collective and individual justice is central to understanding the complexities of Black women's activism. In their work on intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and Collins (2000) discuss the ways in which social justice movements often fail to account for the intersectional nature of Black women's identities. Both race and gender intersect in ways that shape Black women's activism, creating a complex landscape where justice is not easily defined. Meridian's statement, "Justice is a long road; but it is also a narrow one" (Walker, 1976, p. 164), reflects her awareness of the personal sacrifices and compromises that come with activism. As Crenshaw (1991) and Collins (2000) argue, these internal conflicts reveal the need for justice frameworks that are inclusive of the unique struggles faced by Black women, recognizing the intersectionality of race, gender, and personal identity.

In conclusion, Walker's portrayal of Meridian reveals the intricate dynamics of Black activism, highlighting the struggles of Black women to navigate the tensions between collective movements and individual identity. By incorporating the perspectives of scholars such as Collins, hooks, Lorde, and Crenshaw, we deepen our understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of activism for Black women. Meridian's journey toward self-realization and her assertion of personal agency serve as a powerful critique of the exclusionary practices within activist movements and highlight the need for a more inclusive and intersectional approach to justice. In *Meridian*, identity is not simply defined by external struggles but is continuously negotiated through internal reconciliation, emphasizing the importance of selfhood in the pursuit of justice.

Feminist Frontlines: Reclaiming Voice and Agency

In Alice Walker's *Meridian*, the protagonist's journey of reclaiming voice and agency within the intersecting realms of race, gender, and activism is a powerful exploration of the unique struggles Black women face in social movements. This analysis of the text can be deepened by considering scholarly perspectives that engage with themes of voice, agency, and identity within feminist and activist frameworks. These perspectives shed light on the complexity of Meridian's personal and political journey, enriching the arguments presented in the novel.

Meridian's struggle to reclaim her voice and her sense of self is emblematic of the larger struggle Black women face in resisting both racial and gendered oppression within activism. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) points out in her seminal work on intersectionality, Black women often experience oppression in ways that cannot be understood by examining race or gender in isolation. Crenshaw argues that the intersection of race and gender creates a unique set of challenges for Black women, and these challenges are often ignored by both mainstream feminism and the Civil Rights Movement (Crenshaw, 1991). In *Meridian*, Walker vividly illustrates this intersectionality, particularly in the protagonist's realization that her personal liberation cannot be fully realized until both her race and gender are recognized within the larger movements. This resonates with Crenshaw's assertion that Black women must be included in both feminist and racial justice struggles if true liberation is to occur (Morrison, Toni, 1993).

Meridian's rejection of the notion that she must sacrifice her voice and identity for the collective cause is also a critique of the gendered dynamics within activist movements. bell hooks (2000) discusses the ways in which Black women's voices are marginalized within both the Civil Rights and feminist movements, often relegated to the background in favor of male-dominated leadership. In her work, hooks emphasizes the importance of reclaiming one's voice as an act of self-love and resistance against systems of oppression. Meridian's refusal to be subordinated to the patriarchal frameworks of activism aligns with hooks' call for women of color to assert their agency within social movements and demand a space for their voices to be heard. When Meridian asserts, "I can't save anyone else if I don't know how to save myself" (Walker, 1976, p. 128), she encapsulates this feminist principle of self-empowerment and resistance to the erasure of Black women's needs and experiences within the broader struggle for justice (Morrison, Toni, 1993).

The tensions Meridian experiences within both the Civil Rights and feminist movements highlight a fundamental critique of these movements' exclusionary tendencies. Audre Lorde (1984) elaborates on this in *Sister Outsider*, where she discusses the limitations of mainstream feminism, particularly its failure to address the specific needs of Black women. Lorde criticizes the tendency of white feminism to ignore the racial struggles of Black women, urging a more inclusive feminist praxis that acknowledges the intersectionality of oppression. Meridian's navigation of these movements reflects Lorde's argument that Black women must forge their own path to freedom, one that centers their experiences and recognizes the complexities of their identities. As Meridian reflects, "We were told that we were free, but we were not free. I had to find my own way of being free" (Walker, 1976, p. 154), she critiques the notion that liberation can be achieved through external movements that fail to recognize the specific struggles of Black women.

Moreover, the role of sisterhood in *Meridian* is critical to the protagonist's reclamation of her voice and agency. As Walker demonstrates through the relationships between women in the novel, solidarity among women of color provides a space where their voices can be heard and their experiences validated. The concept of solidarity is echoed in the work of Black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000), who highlights the significance of "collective action" among Black women as a means of resisting both racial and gendered oppression. Meridian's declaration, "It is only with other women that I am made whole" (Walker, 1976, p. 210), mirrors Collins' argument that Black women's empowerment often arises from collective solidarity rather than from individual struggle alone. Through this sisterhood, Meridian gains the strength to reclaim her voice and assert her agency, both within her personal life and within the broader context of activism.

Ultimately, *Meridian* offers a powerful critique of both the Civil Rights and feminist movements, emphasizing the necessity for Black women to reclaim their voices and define their own paths to liberation. The novel's portrayal of Meridian's journey reflects a broader feminist agenda that challenges the marginalization of Black women within both racial and gender justice movements. By incorporating scholarly perspectives such as those of Crenshaw, hooks, Lorde, and Collins, we see that Meridian's struggle for agency is not an isolated experience but part of a larger, ongoing movement to ensure that Black women's voices are heard and their struggles recognized in the fight for justice.

Sacred Serpents and Sojourner Trees: Symbols of Healing and Transformation

In *Meridian*, Alice Walker employs potent natural symbols—the serpent and the sojourner tree—to explore themes of personal and collective healing, transformation, and resilience. These symbols enrich the novel's exploration of the struggles faced by Black women, particularly in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, while offering a broader meditation on spiritual and emotional growth. Scholars have drawn attention to the layered significance of these symbols, emphasizing their cultural, psychological, and political dimensions.

The serpent in *Meridian* serves as a multifaceted symbol of danger and renewal, representing the painful yet essential process of personal transformation. In one key moment, Walker describes Meridian's visceral connection to the serpent: "It was as though the serpent had entered my body, wrapping around my heart and mind, squeezing until I had to let go of the lies I had been told about myself" (Walker, 1976, p. 132). This act of shedding false narratives mirrors the serpent's ability to shed its skin, symbolizing a renewal process rooted in confronting one's inner struggles.

The symbolism of the serpent extends beyond Meridian's personal journey to reflect the larger need for societal transformation. In a moment of introspection, Meridian observes, "I have learned that the serpent is not my enemy. It is the force that demands I move forward, that I evolve" (Walker, 1976, p. 157). This reflection underscores the idea that transformation often arises from grappling with discomfort and fear, pushing individuals to grow in unexpected ways. Deborah McDowell (1981) interprets the serpent as a representation of the dualities Meridian faces—fear and renewal, oppression and liberation. These dualities parallel Meridian's role within the Civil Rights Movement, where she must confront external injustices while reconciling her internal conflicts (McDowell, 1981, p. 110). Walker's portrayal of the serpent ultimately positions it as both a personal and political symbol, reflecting the cyclical nature of growth and change.

The Sojourner Tree: Strength and Connection

The sojourner tree in *Meridian* is a recurring symbol of endurance, stability, and connection. It serves as a metaphor for Meridian's resilience in the face of personal and societal challenges. In a moment of self-reflection, she observes, "The tree seemed to stand for something far greater than itself. Its roots were deep, its branches wide, as if it carried the strength of those who came before me" (Walker, 1976, p. 162). The tree symbolizes the interconnectedness of history, identity, and community, reminding Meridian—and readers—of the strength derived from embracing one's roots.

Walker uses the sojourner tree to highlight the resilience of Black women, who, like the tree, must withstand life's storms while remaining rooted in their communities. Meridian reflects on its significance, saying, "The tree is alive because of the storms it has endured. Its roots hold tight to the soil, and its branches still reach for the light" (Walker, 1976, p. 170). This dual image of stability and growth reinforces the importance of enduring hardship while striving toward transformation. The sojourner tree symbolizes the collective strength of Black women in social movements, noting its role as a "beacon of resilience and resistance" (Wall, 1990, p. 53). This aligns with Meridian's realization that "we are like the tree, standing not alone but as part of a forest, our roots entwined beneath the earth" (Walker, 1976, p. 184). By intertwining personal and communal strength, the tree becomes a symbol of healing and solidarity in the face of oppression.

Personal and Collective Healing as Cyclical Processes

Alice Walker presents healing as a cyclical process in *Meridian*, intertwining personal growth with collective transformation. This is evident in Meridian's reflection: "Healing does not mean forgetting. It means holding the pain close, learning from it, and finding a way to use it to grow" (Walker, 1976, p. 145). The cyclical nature of healing mirrors the serpent's shedding of skin and the tree's seasonal renewal, emphasizing the non-linear journey of overcoming trauma and reclaiming identity.

Walker connects Meridian's personal healing to the broader struggles of the Civil Rights Movement. As Meridian contemplates her role in the movement, she notes, "I cannot separate my healing from the healing of my people. Our pain is shared, and so must be our growth" (Walker, 1976, p. 172). This acknowledgment of shared experiences underscores the interconnectedness of individual and collective liberation. bell hooks (2000) expands on this idea, asserting that liberation requires addressing both personal wounds and systemic injustices, as healing is essential for sustained

activism (hooks, 2000, p. 87). Valerie Boyd (1996) similarly highlights Walker's critique of movements that fail to address the unique challenges faced by Black women, arguing that the novel calls for a more inclusive approach to healing (Boyd, 1996, p. 71). Meridian's reflection—"True freedom comes only when we learn to heal ourselves while fighting for the freedom of others" (Walker, 1976, p. 198)—reinforces the inseparable nature of personal and collective transformation.

By employing symbols like the serpent and the sojourner tree, Walker offers a vision of healing as a cyclical, shared process that transcends individual struggles. The novel's focus on resilience and interconnectedness serves as both a critique of historical movements and a call to reimagine activism as a space where personal and collective liberation coexist.

Discussion

Alice Walker's *Meridian* intricately examines themes of race, gender, identity, and activism through the protagonist Meridian Hill, whose journey reflects both personal and collective struggles for justice. The novel highlights the tension between personal identity and political involvement, as Meridian grapples with the limitations imposed by the Civil Rights and feminist movements, which often marginalized Black women (hooks, 2000, p. 37). This paradox of liberation underscores the necessity of including Black women's voices in social movements to achieve true justice.

Resilience emerges as a key theme, depicted not merely as endurance but as active resistance and transformation. Walker redefines resilience as the capacity for growth and self-reclamation, challenging conventional notions of success within social movements (Willis, 1991, p. 115). Similarly, the novel explores ambiguity, as Meridian's contradictions and uncertainties embody the complexities of navigating intersecting identities in a society that seeks to simplify them (Brown, 1997, p. 74).

Symbols like the serpent and the sojourner tree deepen the narrative's exploration of healing and transformation. The serpent represents renewal through confronting one's past, while the tree signifies the balance of personal roots and collective growth (Wall, 1990, p. 53). Healing in the novel is cyclical, intertwining personal and collective processes, suggesting that societal liberation cannot occur without space for individual healing and empowerment (Hunter, 2000, p. 101).

Ultimately, *Meridian* critiques the exclusionary practices of historical movements while envisioning a future of inclusive and self-aware activism, where personal and collective liberation are inseparable. Walker's work calls for reimagining activism to fully embrace the complexities of identity and the voices of marginalized individuals.

Conclusion

Alice Walker's *Meridian* presents a nuanced and multifaceted exploration of identity, resilience, and the complexities of social activism, particularly through the lens of Black womanhood. Through the character of Meridian Hill, Walker crafts a powerful narrative that interrogates the intersections of race, gender, and personal transformation. The novel is not only a portrayal of one woman's struggle but also a broader reflection on the challenges faced by marginalized individuals within larger social movements, especially in the context of the Civil Rights and feminist movements.

The themes of resilience and ambiguity are central to *Meridian*, as Meridian navigates the tensions between her individual desires and her commitment to collective causes. While her journey is marked by moments of disillusionment and struggle, it is also one of profound growth and self-realization. Meridian's resilience is not merely about surviving hardship, but about confronting her past, reclaiming her voice, and redefining her place within both the personal and political spheres. Her character embodies the contradictions and complexities of activism, reflecting how Black women often find themselves on the margins of movements that purport to fight for justice but fail to fully address their needs.

Through the use of symbolic imagery, such as the serpent and the sojourner tree, Walker highlights the transformative and cyclical nature of healing. These symbols emphasize the importance of confronting trauma, reconnecting with one's roots, and embracing the process of growth, both individually and collectively. Meridian offers a vision of healing that is not linear or simplistic, but rather one that acknowledges the messiness and challenges of personal and social transformation.

Ultimately, *Meridian* is a call for greater inclusivity within social justice movements, urging a

deeper recognition of the specific struggles and needs of Black women. The novel challenges readers to reconsider the nature of activism and healing, proposing that true liberation cannot be achieved unless it is rooted in the lived experiences of all individuals. Meridian's journey exemplifies the possibility of personal growth amidst adversity, offering a vision of hope that is rooted in both individual and collective resilience.

As Meridian continues to resonate with contemporary discussions about race, gender, and activism, it remains a powerful text for those seeking to understand the complexities of identity and the ongoing struggle for justice. Walker's portrayal of Meridian Hill stands as a testament to the strength of the human spirit, the importance of healing, and the transformative power of reclaiming one's voice in the face of oppression.

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