In Spite of It All: A Reading of Alice Walker's "Everyday Use"

Perhaps the most resonant quality of quiltmaking is the promise of creating unity amongst disparate elements, of establishing connections in the midst of fragmentation. (Kelley 176)

Walker's peculiar sound, the specific mode through which her deepening of self-knowledge and self-love comes, seems to have much to do with her contrariness, her willingness at all turns to challenge the fashionable belief of the day . . . . (Christian 124)

Sam Whitsitt teaches English at the University of Bologna, at Forlì, in the Center for Translation Studies.

Since its publication in 1973 in the collection of stories *In Love and Trouble,* Alice Walker's short story "Everyday Use" has become very popular—probably the most anthologized of her stories (Winchell 80)—and it clearly merits such critical acclaim. In 1994, the story was honored by a critical edition published in the Rutgers University Press series "Women Writers: Texts and Contexts." Paralleling the success of Walker's story has been that of another cultural artefact, the quilt, which since the Sixties has undergone a rather spectacular revaluation, moving from the marginalized position it held as a symbol of gossipy women's sewing circles, to becoming by the Seventies the "central metaphor of American cultural identity" (Showalter 215). One of the intentions of the Rutgers critical edition is to indicate a link between these two success stories. As Barbara Christian writes in the first paragraph of her introduction, it is in "Everyday Use" (1973) and "in her classic essay 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens' (1974) that Walker first articulates the metaphor of quilting to represent the creative legacy that African Americans have inherited from their maternal ancestors" (3). While Walker was not the first to write about quilts, she was one of the first to write of the value of the quilt in the Afro-American experience, and she has certainly been one of the most influential writers in rearticulating the value of the quilt and in contributing to its success in the collective imagination at large.

If it seems clear that the popularity of the quilt owes much to writers like Walker, one needs to ask, in turn, whether Walker's story would enjoy its current status if the quilt itself had not become such a privileged symbol. And yet another way of formulating this kind of question would be to ask whether we are to read the quilt as a figure in a story, or whether the story is, as it were, a figure of the quilt. Is the quilt, in other words, to be seen as one sign of women's creative activity among many, or as the very ground of a specifically woman's world?

How such questions might be answered is largely dependent on whether another significant characteristic of Walker's work is

African American Review, Volume 34, Number 3
© 2000 Sam Whitsitt

taken into consideration. As the epigraph above from Barbara Christian notes, central to Walker's work is a certain kind of "contrariness," a "willingness at all turns to challenge the fashionable belief of the day." And if the symbolic value attributed to the quilt can be taken as a "fashionable belief of the day," we might have a dilemma, since the very story which surely contributed to the success of such a belief could likewise be questioning it, and this would produce a dilemma, as well, for those critics who want to ensure that Walker holds an honored place in the history of quilting and who likewise feel that any questioning of that history would be dishonoring it. If there were any hint that such contrary questioning were coming from Walker's work itself, then perhaps a critic would be tempted to avoid a close reading of her text in order to avoid risking having to deal with such a disruption.

This very dilemma seems to be reflected in the Rutgers critical edition. While the short story "Everyday Use" is clearly central to the edition entitled *Everyday Use*, the story is not clearly central to each of the six articles which make up the section "Critical Essays." While Mary Helen Washington goes on to offer in her three-page, 1994 postscript some of the most insightful comments which have been made on the story, her original article, written in 1979, to which she appends the postscript, makes no reference whatsoever to "Everyday Use." Thadious Davis makes only a glancing reference to the story in noting how a character in "Everyday Use" whom she does not name (Maggie) serves as a predecessor for Celie of *The Color Purple*. Barbara Christian, as editor of the edition, deals directly with the story in both her introduction and article, but neither exclusively nor extensively. The title of Margot Anne Kelley's article, "Sisters' Choices: Quilting Aesthetics in Contemporary African-American Women's Fiction" (1994), would inspire anyone to wager that she mentions "Everyday Use" at least once—only to lose, since she doesn't. Elaine Showalter, in "Common Threads" (1991), mentions the story, but her comments seem more like an obligatory one-page stop before moving on, and her comments draw on what is the only article in the edition dealing exclusively with Walker's story, that by Houston Baker and Charlotte Pierce-Baker entitled "Patches: Quilts and Community in Alice Walker's 'Everyday Use.' " My point is not that these articles are uninteresting, but that in an edition dedicated to Walker's short story "Everyday Use," few critics put the story to the everyday use of criticism. It seems that Walker's "patch" of a story doesn't really fit very well in most of the critics' "quilts." If Walker's story is included in an article, it typically is not so much treated in and of itself, but as a fragment in a larger framework. The composition of the edition reflects a kind of quilting in which it is not Walker's "piece" that receives a careful study of its textual fabric, but rather how that patch is pieced in and stitched to a larger whole.

It could of course be argued that what deflects the critics' attention away from the "patch" of a story is not the contrariness of the story, but rather that this edition simply reflects the sign of the times under which criticism tends to be written. The close reading of the text itself has been displaced by a reading which attempts to follow a series of threads leading outside the text: to author, biography, culture, politics, economies, and heritage. In this case, it is the heritage and culture of quilting among Southern, Afro-American women which figures largely, and Barbara Christian's introduction to the edition carefully situates both Walker and her story in that culture and its history.[1] But while in both her fiction and non-fiction Walker has courageously pointed to a set of specific historical, cultural, and political references outside and beyond her work, the question still remains of what the

relationship is between her art and these references.

Among some critics there is a tendency, which finds encouragement in Walker's writing itself, to claim a strong analogy between quilting and storytelling, which allows one in turn to see Walker's storytelling as metaphorically subsumable to quilting, which in this scenario "precedes" her story. The violence of the metaphor is that it tends to cover over the very differences that make it possible, and the quilt seems to lend itself to this metaphoric violence since its figure tends to be taken literally. If "the most resonant quality of [real] quiltmaking," as Kelley writes, "is the promise of creating unity amongst disparate elements," it is not difficult to understand how a metaphoric slide creates an identity between the disparate elements of quilting, writing, and a world of womanly activity. The quilt is a trope whose analogue (the quilt itself) provides the stitch that untropes the trope; it is a trope stitched to a reality, and the tightness of the stitching depends on the tightness of the identity of any group which claims the quilt as its sign. Even if today, as Showalter notes, the quilt has "transcended the stigma of its sources in women's culture" and become the "central metaphor of American cultural identity" (215), that generalizing drift away from a certain womanly specificity has not diminished its appeal as a kind of ground for certain groups, particularly women's. Quilting can still be taken as a woman's activity which makes use of a woman's material; it can yet be deemed a woman's social, economic, and political activity which also produces an object of beauty which, moreover, does not drift into the domain of pure art, or the "institutional theories of aesthetics" (Baker and Pierce-Baker 161); just as disparate pieces of cloth get stitched together, the quilt itself is stitched to the world that produces it. The quilt "represents" herstory, history, and tradition, binding women, and men, to the past and the past to the present. And it has been powerful in providing a ground for women, particularly women writers. Precisely because "the writing of fiction," as Mary Helen Washington notes, can still be perceived as "done under the shadow of men" (103), the metaphor of the quilt and its world can take women out of that shadow and ground them in an open place of their own.

Moving out of the shadow of men, however, can lead to entanglements in the threads of women. In her article "The Needle or the Pen: The Literary Rediscovery of Women's Textile Work," Elaine Hedges shows how women writers prior to the mid-1900s sought to protect themselves and allay the fears of the male-dominated literary establishment by implying that what appeared to be writing was really only sewing—the pen was really only a needle. Today, many women writers who are neither forced to nor supposed to sew also invoke this metaphor. While the considerable power of the metaphor today is no doubt linked to an attempt to establish for women a ground of their own, this leads to a problem, which is also linked to the problem of grounding in general. The very identity and security a ground might give creates a problem for the writer insofar as writing is an activity which is transgressive, or contrary. For women writers prior to the mid-1900s, taking up the pen rather than the needle was a transgressive act which the metaphor of the needle facilitated. Today, however, this same metaphor runs the risk not only of being quite conservative but also of establishing a ground which can make a woman writer who does not "quilt" or use the metaphoric "needle" appear a transgressor or betrayer of that community. If the metaphor once helped women to get out of line, that same metaphor today runs the danger of working to keep women in line. To push the point, no one either yesterday or today seems to want to *think* of women as writing. Men wanted women literally to sew only figures; and many critics today,

both male and female, literally want women to sew figuratively—which is to say, they want women to write as if they were really sewing, and all the better if about literally sewn things—like quilts, for example. Alice Walker writes a short story in which quilts are an important figure, but today it would seem that the story itself is but a figure for quilts.

Both Elaine Hedges and Elaine Showalter acknowledge the critical significance of quilting, but have reservations about how the quilt as a figure is employed. Hedges asks "whether the needle doesn't at times move too magically to dispel conflict, to solve complex issues of gender and male power" (359), and Elaine Showalter convincingly argues that, "while quilting does have crucial meaning for American women's texts, it can't be taken as a transhistorical and essential form of female expression, but rather as a gendered practice that change[s] from one generation to the next . . ." (197-98). While there is much in Alice Walker's short story which allows for a reading which would see it as a story which grounds itself in the figure of the quilt, the figurality of the ground itself always threatens to undo its grounding. As Diana Fuss notes, with regard to Irigaray, while "two lips" seem to be ever so literal, it is also a metaphor for metonymy (66).

Walker, as an artist, tells a story in which she explores the limits of both art and the authentic.

In the highly politicized world of literary criticism, however, the space for the ungrounded, or the "wayward," to borrow Barbara Christian's term, is given little quarter. Identity politics and its polarizations, which seem to appear unproblematically alongside a discourse of difference, eclipse the space of a difference. What Fuss says of the use of metaphors borrowed from modern physics can also be said of how the quilt as a figure is often employed: "By locating difference *outside identity,* in the spaces *between* identities . . . the radicality of the poststructuralist view which locates differences *within* identities" comes to be ignored (103). When the Bakers write that "the sorority of quiltmakers, fragment weavers, holy patchers, possesses a sacred wisdom that it hands down from generation to generation of those who refuse the center for the ludic and unconfined spaces of the margins" (156), the ludic and unconfined space along the margins becomes carefully controlled to the limited extent that quilting takes place on holy ground; there is little space for the ludic at the heart of such a sorority when it comes down to the hand that hands something down and the hand that receives. That the Bakers close down differences within this identity and accentuate the difference between this identity and what does not belong to it becomes clear in their analysis of Dee, the wayward daughter, the figure who plays on the margins. That Dee does indeed *leave* at the end of the story does not coincide with the idea that Dee is being *excluded* from what Nancy Tuten calls "the establishment of a sisterhood between mother and daughter" (125), which is to say, the sisterhood between Mama and her daughter Maggie, but not the other daughter/sister, Dee. Both the Bakers and Tuten, as well as other critics, see Dee as being "narrated . . . out of the story altogether" (Tuten 127). What never seems to be noted is that what makes possible the sisterhood they value is *their* exclusion of a sister. The story out of which Dee gets narrated is not Walker's, but the critics' story of identity, which shuts down any room for a ludic play of differences. The aim of this article is to propose a reading which respects a play of difference, which keeps "things" like Dee, in play.

> Our mothers and grandmothers, some of them: moving to music not yet written. And they waited.
>
> They waited for a day when the unknown thing that was in them would be made known; but they guessed, somehow in their darkness, that on the day of their revelation they would be long dead. Therefore to Toomer they walked, and even ran, in slow motion. (Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" 40)

"Everyday Use" begins with women waiting: Mama Johnson and her daughter Maggie, waiting at home, in the deep rural South, a place they had never left, for a visit from Dee, the daughter who had not waited, the daughter who could not wait to leave home. "I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon" (23), says Mama. But Mama and Maggie are not just waiting for Dee. They are waiting for redemption. Mama tells us that she has dreamed of a certain kind of redemption. In her dream, Dee, the daughter who has style, wits, and a cold determination to "get out," has made it big in the world out there; she is on some kind of Johnny Carson talk show, and Mama, having arrived backstage in a "soft-seated limousine," is ushered in, met by the Johnny Carson-type host, told "what a fine girl" she has, and brought on stage to be joined with her daughter Dee, who "is embracing me with tears in her eyes." In the dream, Mama is "the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistening . . . [and] Johnny Carson has much to do to keep up with my quick and witty tongue " But Mama is well aware that she isn't like that at all, and that the dream "is a mistake" (24). That she sometimes dreams this dream speaks, however, not merely of "her desire to be respected by her daughter" (Tuten 126), and her misdirected wish to measure up to standards of a White world, of the "Other"; it speaks more significantly of that desire to know, no matter how misdirected, some "unknown thing" inside her. But unlike the women Walker describes in the quote that prefaces this section of the essay, Mama is not moving toward someone like Toomer: Only in her dream does she move out of her place; in real life, as it were, she is waiting for her daughter in her yard, which is "like an extended living room" (23). She is at home. And it is at home, for Walker, that the unknown thing is finally to be found.

In Walker's writing, redemption will take one away and bring one back, in a perhaps humbling but empowering way, to something close to home. This form of redemption takes place as an epiphany: You realize that what can save you isn't out there, but has been nearby all along, beside you, even in you, but never noticed, never heard, or never given a second thought. Walker's well-known essay "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" turns on the idea of epiphany. It is here that she mentions the oft-cited epiphanic moment in the Smithsonian Institution when she saw an exquisite quilt on exhibit "made by an anonymous Black woman in Alabama, a hundred years ago" (46). In her essay, however, as the title suggests, it is not the quilt itself, or not only the quilt, to which Walker attends, but rather her mother's quilts, flower gardens, storytelling, cooking, and the skilled and careful handling of everyday life, all of which represent a creative dimension that had been there all along, at home, nearby, but to which Walker had not given that second thought.

Epiphany is like a "second thought." There is a difference, a lapse, between the two moments. To give or have a second thought, as it were, there must have been a first, distanced in time and space, but which comes to be first only secondarily. And for this to occur, there must be a certain detour, a departure; one must leave home in

order to become aware of home, even though this departure holds no guarantee of a return. Epiphany would seem to necessitate this departure, this turning one's back on something. As Mama tells us as she waits for Dee, "I have deliberately turned my back on the house" (26), and on Maggie, too, her younger daughter, scarred by a fire which burned down the first house and which has left her ever since with "chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle" (27). But this turning away does not eclipse or erase a link to what one leaves behind. As one turns the gaze of expectation away from what is then left behind, there is something which snags. And Maggie is there, right behind Mama's back.

Dee, however, does not seem to be one who is snagged by anything. "She would always look anyone in the eye," even strange white men, and "hesitation was no part of her nature." Unlike Maggie, with her eyes on the ground, and unlike Mama, who looks up but cannot imagine "looking a strange white man in the eye" (25), Dee would never lower her eyes under the gaze of Whites. As Mama says, Dee "was determined to stare down any disaster. . . . Her eyelids would not flicker for minutes at a time"(26). And Dee made it out, and seems to have made it in the South of the Sixties where, if the gaze itself of the Whites wasn't successful in making a Black lower his or her eyes and get back in place, there was no hesitation in using whatever means necessary. But making it, for Dee, and no doubt many others, had a price. The force required to stare the white world down was equaled by the intensity of a gaze, which burned her links to her past. If Dee didn't actually start the fire which burned down their first house, the "look of concentration" (25) on her face as she watched it burn could have "stared" it down. And having burned that ground which she saw as suffocating, she sought a new ground in the burgeoning Islamic and Back-to-Africa movements of the time. When the flashy Dee finally does return, greeting her mother in Arabic and declaring that she no longer bears the name "Dee," but the African name "Wangero," and that "Dee," " 'She's dead' " (29)—it's as if there is not even a tombstone to mark the presence of her absence. Her return seems less a return than a passing by; she appears a curious visitor who has momentarily stopped off a road which began and ends elsewhere.

Yet Dee has returned. And Mama is mistaken about how Dee will react when she arrives. She believes that Dee still has an aversion for her home, and that when she sees the house, "she will want to tear it down" (27). But this is not what happens. She arrives, gets out of the car, approaches her mother and sister, but then stops short. While Dee's male friend attempts to hug Maggie, who shrinks back, Dee makes no physical contact; she touches no one and no thing. Not yet. She tells her mother just to stay put. Then she turns, goes back to the car, gets her camera, returns, and begins taking pictures: "She stoops down quickly and lines up picture after picture of me sitting there in front of the house with Maggie cowering behind me. She never takes a shot without making sure the house is included. When a cow comes nibbling around the edge of the yard she snaps it and me and Maggie *and* the house" (28-29). Then Dee goes back to the car, leaves the camera, and only then does she return, once again, this time to step into that world she has just framed, to greet her mother—not however with a dream-like hug, but with a kiss on the forehead.

Dee returns, but delays her arrival. Only after a series of photos, of carefully lined up frames, of pictures which do not include her, does she then include herself in the scene. It's as if before entering that scene Dee wants to make sure that she has a picture of herself not being in the picture. She wants to frame that world, define its borders, give it a wholeness which then allows her to handle it without being a part of it. This is what the Bakers call Dee's

"fashionably 'aesthetic' distance from southern expediencies," her " 'framed' experience." The Bakers speak contemptuously of Dee's "world of pretended wholeness," of "framed and institutionalized art"—her "Polaroid" world. In what seems to be an afterthought, however, they indirectly acknowledge that framing is not in itself pejorative, since even quilters need frames, and quilters too bring to their work a "completeness" (161). The Bakers do not ask how one differentiates between good and bad, or authentic and inauthentic frames; they seem to assume that, since quilting is authentic, the very authenticity of its frame unframes it—that the authentic frame of a quilter is not really a frame at all, and what one can call the narrative frame of the story cannot be a frame since Mama, who narrates the story, is incapable of framing: "The mother's cognition contains no categories for framed art" (163-64). The Bakers polarize this world into one of good and bad framing: "aesthetic" wholes, which are false and inauthentic, and represented by Dee; and wholes which emerge from "social activity," like quilting, which are authentic and true, unframed, and represented by Mama and Maggie. In this argument, the politics of identity and wholeness seem to tighten the threads, as it were, of the quilt of true community, and it is not surprising that Dee, a wayward daughter, gets hounded out of the picture. Patricia Kane sees Dee as the prodigal daughter who, in what for her is Walker's parody of the prodigal son story, gets just the opposite of a welcome; Nancy Tuten claims that Mama has a "distaste for Dee's egotism" (126), that Maggie has only "disgust with her sister," and that, "in the end, Dee's oppressive voice is mute, for Mama has narrated her out of the story altogether." The Bakers are more vitriolic: Dee is evil, a "serpent" in Mama's "calm pasture" (159); inauthentic ("Dee is not an example of the indigenous rapping and styling out of Afro-America" [160]); and a traitor ("Individualism and a flouting of convention in order to achieve 'aesthetic' success constitute acts of treachery in 'Everyday Use' " [163]). Dee, however, is not to be repressed.

There are several compelling arguments for why the reader must attend to Dee more carefully. In an interview in 1974, a year after "Everyday Use" was published, Walker expanded on a poem she had written entitled "The Girl Who Died #2." It is about a girl who attended the same college as did Walker and who committed suicide. "I learned, " writes Walker, "from the dead girl's rather guilty-sounding 'brothers and sisters' that she had been hounded constantly because she was so 'incorrect' she thought she could be a black hippie. To top that, they tried to make her feel like a traitor because she refused to limit her interest to black men" (81). It takes no great leap to see that the Bakers' reading of Dee is not dissimilar to how the "brothers and sisters" read this girl, and it seems likewise clear that Walker has little sympathy for identity politics whose logic turns the contrary and the wayward into traitors. The stakes are, of course, raised as soon as one makes a link between Walker and the wayward, a link she herself does not shy away from. When referring to Dee, Walker calls her an *"autonomous person,"* and she tells us that she, like Dee, has an "African name . . . and I love it and use it when I want to, and I love my Kenyan gowns and my Ugandan gowns—the whole bit—it's part of me" (Washington 102). Moreover, the name Dee is given, "Wangero," is the same name Walker herself was given when she went to Africa (Christian 13).

Mary Helen Washington doesn't hesitate to make several acute observations: "Walker is most closely aligned in the story with the 'bad daughter,' Dee . . . the one who goes out in the world and returns with African clothes and an African name. Like Dee, Walker leaves the community, appropriating the oral tradition in order to turn it into a written artefact, which will no longer

be available for 'everyday use' by its originators. . . . The story ends with Mama choosing Maggie and rejecting Dee, but Dee, who represents Walker herself as an artist who returns home, at least imaginatively, in order to collect the material for her art, certainly cannot be repressed." Washington cites Susan Willis in noting that, "when the black writer takes the materials of folk culture and subjects them to fiction[,] . . . she is engaged in 'an enterprise fraught with contradiction' " (102). Looking at what happens to Dee in the hands of the critics, we can add that she or he risks being branded as a traitor and excluded, or shunned. Of course, as Diana Fuss continually and convincingly argues in her book *Essentially Speaking,* it is infinitely wiser to keep chaos in play rather than attempt to eliminate it, which is what happens when Dee is muted and driven out as a traitor.

Dee must be kept within the picture, and there are structural and thematic reasons related to the question of framing for doing so. It is not problematic that Dee "frames" her experience; what *is* important is what it tells us about her, and what is revealed when we compare her framing to other frames in the story—most importantly, the narrative frames of both Mama and Walker herself. That Dee constructs a whole from which she excludes herself is no doubt Dee's way of maintaining a relation to a world that she does not want to be a part of. Dee has not returned to fill a place held for her while she was absent. What Dee doesn't want to see, cannot afford to see, refuses to see, is a link between herself and that place she came from. She is not a part of that whole. She does not stand in a metaphoric, or synechdochal, relation to that whole. Her framing of a whole before entering that frame seems, then, to be a way to deny a metaphoric relationship of herself as a part of that whole, yet maintain a relationship with it as a whole—as if the frame around a whole compensates for her absence within it, or as part of it. Had Dee seen herself as part of that whole, her relationship with those parts of that whole she eventually does take—the churn handle and churn lid, and the quilts she wants to take but can't—would have been metaphorically justified. The four-term metaphor which would have authorized this acquisition goes: The churn handle stands to the churn/home as Dee stands to home; therefore, Dee and the churn handle have a familiar, analogical link. It is because Dee refuses to see herself as a part of that whole that her relationship to the churn handle comes to be metonymic, which is what then allows the reading which sees Dee as turning those parts of the whole into mere things, or aestheticized objects. A less severe judgment of Dee would leave open the possibility of seeing that between Dee and those "things" she lays her hands on is a different metaphoric relationship. One could say that what Dee sees in these parts of a whole is that they, like her, are not, nor have they ever been, recognized for what they are worth. When Dee claims that her sister Maggie "can't appreciate these quilts" (33), she is also claiming that Maggie cannot appreciate her; she is talking about herself and the inability of those at home to appreciate the daughter who, as a part of that whole, went away, changed, returned, and cannot find/does not want to find a reflection of herself in that whole. Dee's violent, metaphoric claim, then, is that her right to those parts of the whole comes from the whole's failure to appreciate the parts. Dee is both right and wrong; and, in that particularly ironic mode of Walker's world, she will, "in spite of herself" (131), which is how Barbara Christian so aptly captures the ironic doubleness which characterizes so many of Walker's characters, be the very agent that gets the whole, which is to say Mama and Maggie, to come to a revaluation of those parts.[2]

Dee returns, but constructs a frame around a picture in which there is no

risk of her appearing. She makes a picture of her not being in the picture. Mama, however, is in the picture—but it is Dee's picture of her; and getting out of Dee's frame around her, getting out of being framed by others, as it were, will be the drama of the way Mama narrates the story. What is unusual about what Nancy Tuten calls Walker's "unusual narrative structure" (126) is its double nature. The story is told by Mama, in the first person, but in two different tenses: It begins in the present tense, only to subtly shift to the past tense about midway through the story. As Tuten notes, Mama changes to the past tense right after Dee has announced that "Dee" is dead. Tuten writes, ". . . when Dee goes so far as to disown her family identity, Mama reaches a watershed," and drawing on Marianne Hirsch's article ("Clytemnestra's Children: Writing (Out) the Mother's Anger"), Tuten goes on to note how Mama, who has previously been unable to express her anger at Dee, has now been pushed too far—or far enough so that Mama is finally "able to objectify the situation, to distance herself from it." Tuten continues, "The use of present-tense verbs in the first half of the story suggests less narrative authority: if Mama is telling the events as they happen, she is merely reacting. By shifting to the past tense, Walker strengthens Mama's voice, giving her more control" (127).

If framing a narrative allows Mama to gain more control, which also results in her "increasing emotional distance from Dee" (128), we can consider more acutely what is at stake in Dee's emotions, since she feels a need to frame the "story" from the outset. It would seem that Dee's emotions are indeed much more precarious than are those of Mama, who, beginning without a frame, as it were, risks from the outset. A significant difference between Mama and Dee is that Mama has this capacity to risk. I agree with Hirsch when she mentions Mama's "ability to take pleasure in her daughter's difference without conceding any of her own choices and values," and her ability to maintain a distance from Dee "without visibly rejecting her" (203). While critics often point to Dee's aggressiveness, which intrudes into the pastoral calm of Mama's home, by quoting Mama's comment that the dress Dee wears is "so loud it hurts my eyes," they fail to note that Mama says shortly after, "I like it" (28). Mama has held a place for "Dee," and if "Dee" is no longer there, she will try to accommodate "Wangero." But in trying to find a place for Dee/Wangero, a figure of both presence and absence, it is Mama who is slowly being displaced.

While a certain distance may result from anger, it seems more important to take into account what Mama says when she does shift to the past tense. After Dee indicates that she no longer bears the name of "Dee," Mama responds with, " 'What happened to "Dee"? *I wanted to know*' " (29; emphasis mine). It's not so evident that Mama expresses anger here (something like anger, or perhaps frustration, comes later in the story), but it is evident that she expresses her desire "to know," and when the narrative shifts to the past tense, we are being told that Mama knows that she wants to know. If the narrative had remained in the present tense, as in " 'What happened to "Dee"? I want to know,' " it would imply that Mama is not only "merely reacting" (Tuten 127) but remaining in the immediacy of the present, where there is no distance for knowing that one knows; it would not be a recognition of what one is doing, but only the doing. It's as if there would be the claim that the linguistic representation of feeling and desire is not only identical to that feeling, but that there is no difference between representation and presentation. It is, however, precisely such a claim which seems to be at stake in the use of the present tense.

We can say that the story begins with the claim that it is not a story. Hearing Mama speak in the first person, in the present, about the present, suggests that there is no aesthetic

frame, no fictionalization. It's as if, in order to hear this story, we must be there with Mama, in her presence and present tense, listening to her voice. We are as close to Mama and her voice as she is to her world. We are not only close to home, whose proximity might lead us to think that we are in the realm of the authentic, but too close. While such an immediacy might tempt us to feel we are near truth, it is that kind of truth that is so true that we would never give it a second thought. The shift to the past tense, however, shifts this non-story into a story, into something moving toward art and representation. To shift from "I want to know" to "I wanted to know," is moving from speech to reported speech, and between the first moment and the second there is a temporal/spatial distance. When Mama shifts to the past tense, she is no longer inside, immediately stitched into that world; she is in a narrating "present" which is not identical to the moment she is writing about. A frame begins to emerge, with Mama outside, yet inside, separated by a critical difference. At this moment, in the space marked by the shift to the past tense, a spatio-temporal dimension opens up which makes possible reflection, knowledge, representation, epiphany, manipulation, and power. And it is in such a space that we can begin to see how Mama, Dee, and Walker are linked.

In this story, unlike in Toomer's fiction, it is not the women who run to the artist, offering to the artist their stories, or stories they don't know are stories, but the artist, who in the figure of Dee, has come to the women who have stayed at home. What does the artist do with this world? It seems that the artist can take a story away, either by stealing it or by carrying it away in the name of giving voice to those who have never had a voice, or the artist can really try to give a voice to those who are at home. But if the artist, rather than taking a story away, attempts to get those at home to tell their own stories, or take their stories back, the artist would cease to be an artist. He or she would have shifted from art to a form of socio-political activity. This is one of the contradictions Susan Willis mentions: What does it really mean to give voice to someone, or some group of people? How can the artist avoid, in the name of speaking for a people, even if they are his or her "own" people, silencing them? Barbara Christian writes that "Toomer's women are silent, their sense of themselves and their condition interpreted by a male narrator" (9). But does the situation change with a woman narrator? Doesn't a problem of silencing remain as long as there is a narrator—one who speaks for and in the place of someone else? Moreover, who are the readers of the fiction whose subject are the people down home? The blunt fact, as Washington notes, is that the story of "Everyday Use," which is claimed by many to give voice to people in and outside of the story, circulates in a market far beyond them. They never hear their voices being heard.

This problem is very much at the heart of "Everyday Use." Part of what makes Walker such a powerful writer is her willingness to face such enormous problems straight on and, like Dee, not blink. And one of her attempts to work with this enterprise so fraught with contradictions is the narrative strategy she develops in "Everyday Use." One way into the problem is to begin with a narration that appears not to narrate at all. This is the significance of the present tense with which the story begins. This is Mama's voice and thoughts with no narrative frame. It is not the artist giving voice to Mama, but Mama's voice. It is not the artist telling the story of those at home, but those at home telling their own stories in their own words. This is what some would call authenticity; this is what some would call the true voice of true art; and this is what the Bakers hear: Mama represents that authentic art which is not "defined by social institutions such as museums, book reviews, and art dealers" (161). But what they don't

attend to is the subtle, quiet, perhaps even reluctant, perhaps even guilty shift to the past tense, which is finally the mark, no matter how subtle, of the museum, book reviews, and art dealers. More importantly, however, is that this shift to the past tense is likewise the subtle mark of empowerment and control; for the possibility to frame, to represent one's own world, empowers. And while this may also be taken as the mark of a loss, one must ask—a loss for whom? The problem with those who desire to keep the voice "authentic" is that, to do so, they end up insisting that the voice stay at home, in its place, or her place, as happens to Mama when the Bakers say that she has "no categories for framed art" (163-64). Because Mama cannot frame her art, she must rely on those who, in the name of her best interest of course, will either tell it for her, or tell others that she isn't really doing what it seems she's doing. If she appears to be "writing," she's really only sewing. No matter how sacred the Bakers make the "sorority of quiltmakers," the "holy patchers" (156), that very appeal to sacredness would keep Mama in her place.

But Mama herself is a wayward artist. She drifts away from the present, not into a dream this time of distant fantasies far from home, but into a past tense, a narrative frame which creates distance at the same time that it makes possible a closeness, a coming home. This shift to the past tense allows for a present, as if the present, to be present, must be re-presented, re-proposed. It is likewise the condition necessary for a second thought. Mama's "epiphanic moment of recognition" (Baker and Pierce-Baker 161) is a re-cognition, made possible by the spatio-temporal difference that opens up with her wandering out from the present tense of home, out of that immediacy. These are not oppositional structures; or, rather, they are not the bipolar oppositions which work within a logic or politics of identity. What Barbara Christian has called Walker's "contrariness," and her creation of characters who act in spite of themselves, involves a doubling of each of the terms; and such a doubling opens up "differences *within* identities" (Fuss 103), within what for identity politics would be the two mutually exclusive terms of an opposition. But the past tense is not opposed to the present. If the past tense indicates distance and control, it is also the moment when distances collapse and control is lost. It is in the past tense that Mama has her epiphanic moment, wherein "something hit me in the top of my head and ran down to the soles of my feet," which in turn propels her to do something "I never had done before: hugged Maggie to me . . ." (34). But if the story ends with the embrace of this new intimacy between a mother and daughter, present to one another as never before, it is given in the past tense, and the story ends in that tense. And this leads one to reconsider the presentness of the present tense in which the story begins.

Fractured by dreams, by absences, by violent scars which mark Maggie's body and the memories of both Maggie and her mother, the present is not quite present. While the name "Dee/Wangero," most obviously indicates what appears to be an opposition, with "Wangero" insisting that "Dee" no longer exists, we see that both are "present," and traced each by the other. We can say the same about the relationship between the present/past, burnt house/new house, Mama in the present/Mama in the past, Maggie in the past/Maggie in the present, and framed/unframed narrative. One might say that what is being noted here is simply Walker's emphasis on change. All of the main characters, in fact, do change in the course of the story. More significant, however, is that Walker's contrariness provides delicate attention to the spatio-temporal dimension within "identities," which is what makes change possible and allows her characters to act in spite of themselves, in spite of their best and worst intentions. And this analysis can

be extended to the question of what it means to give voice to those whose voice has not been heard.

Walker recognizes that art, or the artist, cannot do it—not that the answer would be to become a political activist who would with the best intentions go to the people and try to get them to have a voice. It might require, as in "Everyday Use," something of an anti-artist, or someone like Dee, whose insensitive intrusion, who *in spite of herself*, brings Mama to claim a voice. But when Mama takes over her own story, as symbolized in her refusal to let Dee take the quilts away, Mama herself becomes an artist. She will frame her story, and that frame, which marks a boundary of her being both inside and outside the frame, is the mark which marks the end of the "authentic" voice from "inside" yet makes possible having a voice of her "own." Walker does not allow Mama to remain in the present, in a world which is deemed more authentic just to the extent that she is seen as having no cognitive faculty for framed art. To have left Mama in the present tense would have left Walker in the position of an artist denying her own art, and would have suggested that Walker might be claiming that she is truly letting another speak in his or her own unframed voice, or that she is an artist who can genuinely speak for the other in the other's voice, with no frame, no distance, no loss. By having Mama shift to the past tense, however, Walker will have it appear that Mama cannot present herself without re-presenting herself.

Walker, as an artist, tells a story in which she explores the limits of both art and the authentic. She plays with the problem by knowing that art cannot simply or purely give voice to the voiceless, and that if the voiceless are to have a voice, and in particular their own, they can only have it through art's appropriation. It is not the artist who returns who can give voice to the voiceless, but art can give voice to how the voiceless come to have a voice; the fiction of "Everyday Use," in which Mama comes to have a voice, is an art which would on the one hand deny the role of the artist, but only insofar as the one who comes to have a voice becomes an artist. And once the voiceless give voice to themselves, they too are implicated in the very problem Walker articulates: To have a voice, to be able to represent one's own, means that one has drifted just that far away, as subtle as a shift from the present to the past tense, from one's own. Representation, in order to be representation, drifts away, must drift away, from one's own, which also translates the idea of "own" and "owning" into a different register that here can perhaps best be conceptualized in economic terms:

> . . . many African-American quilters employ large, often abstract designs. In the earliest days of the Freedom Quilting Bee in Alabama, this design preference contributed to the group's success. Francis Xavier Walter, a priest involved in the civil rights movement, bought quilts from women in Gee's Bend and its environs, sent them to New York to be auctioned, and gave the money to the women to support themselves and to re-invest into quilting—thus beginning one of the most successful, longest enduring quilting collectives in the nation. (Kelley 172)

As Elaine Showalter writes in her article "Common Threads," the quilt itself has drifted away from being specifically tied to woman's culture: "The patchwork quilt came to replace the melting-pot as the central metaphor of American cultural identity. In a very unusual pattern, it transcended the stigma of its sources in women's culture and has been remade as a universal sign of American identity" (215). That the quilt drifted away from its ties to a particular origin attests to its power to function as a sign that circulates in an economy. Ironically, the marketing success of the quilt no doubt has much to do with its being seen as a commodity that denies that it is a com-

modity—which is to say, the quilt represents those values of things which do not circulate, do not wander, do not get traded or sold but, rather, stay at home. One might surely have misgivings about this commodification of the quilt, but then we have to ask whether our misgivings are linked to a kind of romantic, idealized desire of hearth and home which always keeps things and people at home and in their place. We overlook the empowerment of women when they send such items as quilts out on the market, as did the Freedom Quilting Bee group, or when women writers send out their stories, far from the home they write about.

The climax of the story, when Mama snatches the quilts out of Dee's arms and plops them in Maggie's lap, is most often read as saving the quilts from drifting away and circulating out there in an economy too far from home; in Maggie's arms, the quilts will be kept at home. When Dee threatens to take the quilts away and hang them on her wall, critics see Dee as representing " 'institutionalized theories of aesthetics' " (212), as Showalter notes, quoting the Bakers. A polarization is established: Maggie and her mother represent " 'everyday use' " (Showalter 212) and keeping things at home, whereas Dee represents a false aesthetics which put things out of use, out of place, and out of the home. Maggie, writes Showalter, "understands the quilt as a process rather than as commodity" (212), and Dee sees the quilt as a "thing" which could conceivably circulate as a commodity. Functional use is opposed to no use and the uselessness of that class of people who like to have art hanging around, as it were. But there seems to be some confusion as to how this climactic scene of the quilts has been interpreted.

Before "rifling" through the "trunk at the foot of [Mama's] bed" (32) and getting out the quilts, Dee has already removed all the items of everyday use that she will lay her hands on. The quilts she gets out of Mama's trunk are quite clearly in a trunk, which is to say not in everyday use. These quilts, which had been pieced by Mama's mother, and then quilted by her and her sister, had been tucked away, put in reserve, and not because they were being temporarily stored for the summer. When a horrified Dee claims that, if the quilts are given to Maggie, she would use and consequently ruin them, Mama responds, " 'I reckon she would.... God knows I been saving 'em for long enough *with nobody using 'em*' " (33; emphasis mine). Nor is it the case that they had gone unused because they had been overlooked, or considered of little value. As Patricia Mainardi notes, " 'The women who made quilts knew and valued what they were doing: frequently quilts were signed and dated by the maker, listed in her will with specific instructions as to who should inherit them, and treated with all the care that a fine piece of art deserves' " (qtd. in Showalter 200-01). The quilts in Mama's house had been placed in reserve because they held a certain value. That Mama had promised them to Maggie "for when she marries" (33), as a kind of wedding present or dowry, attests to their recognized value, and this value is being protected precisely in their not being put to everyday use. The contrast, then, is not one between use and disuse, between putting the quilts to daily use as opposed to putting them out of use by hanging them on a wall. That Dee wants to hang the quilts on a wall is not the issue. The quilts by Harriet Powers hanging on the wall of the Smithsonian Institution did not go unappreciated by Alice Walker; perhaps they even got there through the hands of someone like Dee.

The problem of Dee's relation to the quilts can be thought of in economic terms. When Dee first appears with the quilts in arm, she asks her mother, " 'Can I have these *old* quilts?' " (32; emphasis mine), and when Mama says that they have already been promised to Maggie, Dee claims that they are "*priceless*" (33). In both cases, Dee has put the quilts not out of everyday use,

but out of the economic order altogether. The quilts are either useless, like rags, and therefore something that can be tossed aside, outside of the economy of the home; or priceless, which is to say, outside of any economic system inasmuch as something without a price cannot circulate. That which is priceless generally "circulates" in two ways: by theft or by gift. These two modes are similar in that no price is involved, at least not immediately (a thief can pay with time or life; the recipient of a gift can pay whenever the never absent strings get tugged); the item "passed on," since it does not have to be represented in terms of something other than itself, as in a price, has that value of appearing to be even more itself; and the stolen or bequeathed thing does not get represented by something other, but represents itself, which, of course, *can* include, but doesn't have to, other symbolic values it may possess. The major difference between a gift and a theft is that of handing something down as opposed to underhandedly taking something away; in giving, the act itself creates links, whereas in taking all links are denied. And if the gift assumes an economic dimension, it is because the gift indebts the receiver. In this sense Dee is like a thief. While she wants "things" of the home, she does not want to feel any obligation, any link, any indebtedness. So in an underhanded way—denigrating the quilts, then claiming they are priceless—she seeks to steal them away. But what Dee also does is to denigrate in a more general sense the economic order of Mama's home and its system of values. What brings about the climactic moment in the story, however, which comes just before Mama's epiphanic moment, and contributes to her having that second thought, is Mama's own collusion with Dee in denigrating her own economic order.

When Dee hears that Mama had promised the quilts to Maggie, she explodes, " 'Maggie can't appreciate these quilts! . . . She'd probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use.' " Mama responds: " 'I reckon she would. . . . God knows I been saving 'em for long enough with nobody using 'em. I hope she will!' " (33). When Dee accuses Maggie of being too backward to know the difference between things of value and of no value, she indirectly also includes Mama. And Mama's retort is in spite of, or spites, both herself and Maggie. It's as close as Mama comes to anger, and it seems that Mama is thrown off guard by Dee's comment. Indeed, what Dee does and says is enough to throw anyone off guard. She gets the quilts out of a trunk where they have been set aside, removed from everyday use, saved because of a certain value, and then accuses Maggie, and indirectly Mama, of being too backward to set them aside, save them, or know the value they have. Mama is not left without words, but she is left without the "right" words. She goes along with Dee's accusation that Maggie just might be backward enough to put the quilts to everyday use (" 'I reckon she would' "), and in agreeing with Dee, she not only turns on Maggie, but also on herself and a system of values which she herself doesn't yet quite know how to value. It seems that it is in this turn away, however, this siding briefly and in spite of herself with Dee, that Mama moves away just far enough to be able to return, just far enough to be able to have her epiphany. It's as if Mama is not just talking at this moment, but hearing herself talk. So when Dee goes on to claim that, if an ignorant Maggie puts the quilts to everyday use they would be " 'in rags' " in " 'five years,' " which is no doubt true, Mama comes back with: " 'She can always make some more. . . . Maggie *knows how to* quilt' " (33; emphasis mine). Mama raises the issue of knowing, and because of that knowledge of knowing how, the possibility to not be tied to a sign, or a metaphor, because one knows how to make a sign, a representation. Through knowing that one controls the means of production, one is released from being

tied to a particular thing. And Mama is coming to know this, and she knows that Maggie knows.

While Dee, as happens in theft, keeps pointing to the value of " 'these quilts, *these* quilts!' " (33), as she says, Mama understands that it is not at all a question of *these* quilts, but the ability to make others. And when, following close on this moment, Maggie says that Dee can have the quilts because, " 'I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts' " (34), it is not just Mama's guilt for having sided with Dee against Maggie, her having "turned" on Maggie, that brings Mama to her epiphany which immediately follows Maggie's statement, but a recognition of an eco-nomos whose strength lies in not being bound to "*these* quilts."[3] To take the quilts out of Dee's hands and to put them into Maggie's is not putting the quilts to everyday use, nor is it putting them back *in their place*. Rather, they are being re-placed, not only as potentially replaceable, but placed in an economy where they can be used, saved, or even exchanged—where they can circulate. To return the quilts into the hands of a Maggie who does not need them in order to remember, and who can make more, is to remark not only their use value, or their exchange value, but the question of value itself. They can, in fact, at this point, even hang on a wall, be sold to the Smithsonian museum, be used as a dowry, or be auctioned in New York. For at this point, at this epiphanic moment, what has been realized is not the value of the quilts' representative dimension—which Mama and Maggie know already—but the power of representation. It is not a problem that Dee would have the quilts, even hang them on the wall—though it would be better if they were hung on a museum's wall perhaps; the problem is that Dee, by stealing them away, would take them out of an economy. A critical step is missed. The quilts might leave the home, but how they do so is significant. They must move through and out of the hands of Mama and Maggie. Of course Mama "sees" this only because they have passed into Dee's hands. It is as if Mama, like Walker herself, has an epiphany in seeing the quilts out of place. Mama, however, unlike Walker, snatches the quilts off the museum's wall—which is to say, out of Dee's hands—not because they might not eventually go there, but because they got there in the wrong way. Putting the quilts in Maggie's lap is not to bring them back home to be used at home, even if they could be used that way too. Rather, they are put in a place, which allows them to circulate. But what has re-marked the sign of the quilt as something that can circulate is its having passed through Dee's hands. In spite of herself, Dee provokes the question of value, of economy, of representation.

Barbara Christian's insight that Walker's characters often act in spite of themselves is critical. All the characters involved in this scene act in spite of themselves and others, but "in spite" seems to lead to insight. Maggie spites herself by offering to give up the quilts, but in doing so announces her freedom, through knowledge and memory, from the sign of that memory. Mama spites herself and Maggie by agreeing that they would probably be ignorant enough to ruin things of value, only to be led to see that their knowledge of quilting is where value lies. Dee, in trying to steal the quilts away, ends up losing them in spite of herself, but is also brought closer to home. And it is no doubt because of this appreciation of how sightless blundering can lead to insight that Walker does not reject Dee. If Mama, in her epiphanic moment, hugs Maggie for the first time, it must be noted that, before leaving, Dee, likewise, does something that we can assume she had never done before: If Dee, just before leaving, stings the family once again by telling them that they don't understand their heritage, she also "turn[s] to Maggie," and "kiss[es] her" (34). If Dee's desire has been rebuffed, she has been brought closer through that very distance. It is not

only the "doubleness of the narrative voice" which is "key" to what Hirsch calls the story's "unusual and seemingly incongruous quality" (207), but a doubleness that works throughout the fabric of the story. Even Hirsch, whose reading is admirable in its attentiveness to this doubleness, limits that reading when it comes to both the quilt and to Dee. How one defines Dee is how one defines the quilt, and not to see a doubleness in Dee is not to see a doubleness in the quilt itself. So when Hirsch has Maggie "planning to use the quilts on her bed" (202-03), she slips into a polarization she elsewhere attempts to avoid, and it is not surprising then that, with regard to the climatic scene, Hirsch writes that "mother chooses Maggie and *rejects Dee*" (204; emphasis mine). To keep a doubleness in play, we would have to think that neither is Dee rejected nor does Maggie plan to use the quilts on her bed. As soon as we see the quilts as freed, as it were, from their use value only, which ends up keeping not only the quilts but everything else at home and in its place, Dee can no longer be seen as rejected from that home. Just to the extent that the quilts are seen in both their use and exchange value, seen as items that can leave home, Dee touches home.

Of course one might feel inclined to recall that the title of the story is, after all, "Everyday Use," which would seem to indicate that the idea here is that Maggie and Mama really ought to keep these quilts at home and on their beds. But I think it would be well to note that Walker, too, writes in spite of herself, and one of her remarkable powers is not to let the insights gained through blindness reject or repress that blindness—in spite of what some might consider are the better interests for her self and her writings.

Notes

1. ". . . before the rise of Cultural Studies," Christian writes, "Walker celebrates the creative legacy, symbolized by the quilt that women like her mother had bestowed on her and other contemporary black women writers" (4), and with the publication of Walker's first collection of short stories, *In Love and Trouble*, in which "Everyday Use" first appeared, we have "perhaps for the first time in contemporary United States literary history, a writer [who] feature[s] a variety of *Southern* black women's perspectives" (9).

2. This is the theme of Walker's poem "For My Sister Molly Who in the Fifties," written in 1972, the same period in which "Everyday Use" was being written, and by an Alice Walker who, like her sister Molly, had left home, changed, and returned. If Walker's sister Molly was "A light / A thousand watts / Bright and also blinding" (53), and if Dee, as Mama puts it, "burned us with a lot of knowledge we didn't necessarily need to know" (26), that is because those at home had no means to deflect or reflect that light, on the one hand, and because that light, on the other, becomes all the more intense in trying to find itself reflected—as if in not being reflected by those whose acknowledgment is desperately desired, the light might extinguish itself. Such a light, of course, blinds not only those at home, but the one who returns, too. Not to appreciate Dee's return is to dismiss the drama of what it means to return home which, as Hirsch notes, was a "vital" issue for that whole generation of black writers of which Walker is a part (201).

3. The association of *quilt* with *guilt* is not simple wordplay. Walker's generation in some ways marks a break between two "worlds." The quilt, which was handed down to Walker's world, was likewise handed over an abyss. Sons and daughters who no longer knew how to quilt, or were even interested in knowing, were given quilts with a double injunction: Put them to use but don't use them up (since you can't make any more). The impossibility of following that advice often led to packing the quilts away, guiltily. The subsequent expansion of the quilt market in the Seventies, which is to say their increased availability, no doubt contributed much to easing many people's conscience: If we use them up, we can always buy more. The commodification of this "non-commodity" has probably allowed many to feel more at home.

Works Cited

Baker, Houston A., Jr., and Charlotte Pierce-Baker. "Patches: Quilts and Community in Alice Walker's *Everyday Use*." Christian, ed., *Everyday* 149-65.

Bauer, Margaret D. "Alice Walker: Another Southern Writer Criticizing Codes Not Put To 'Everyday Use.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 29 (Spring 1992): 143-51.

Christian, Barbara. "Alice Walker: The Black Woman Artist as Wayward." Christian, ed., *Everyday* 123-47.

—. "Introduction." Christian, ed., *Everyday* 3-17.

Christian, Barbara, ed. *Everyday Use.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994.

Davis, Thadious M. "Alice Walker's Celebration of Self in Southern Generations." Christian, ed., *Everyday* 105-21.

Fuss, Diana. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference.* New York: Routledge, 1989.

Hedges, Elaine. "The Needle or the Pen: The Literary Rediscovery of Women's Textile Work." *Traditions and the Talents of Women.* Ed. Florence Howe. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991. 339-63.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Clytemnestra's Children: Writing (Out) the Mother's Anger." *Alice Walker: Modern Critical Views.* Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1989. 195-213.

Kane, Patricia. "The Prodigal Daughter in Alice Walker's *Everyday Use*." *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 15 (Mar. 1985): 7.

Kelley, Margot Anne. "Sisters' Choices: Quilting Aesthetics in Contemporary African-American Women's Fiction." Christian, ed., *Everyday* 167-94.

Showalter, Elaine. "Common Threads." Christian, ed., *Everyday* 195-224.

Tuten, Nancy. "Alice Walker's *Everyday Use*." *Explicator* 51 (Winter 1993): 125-28.

Walker, Alice. "Everyday Use." 1973. Christian, ed., *Everyday* 23-35.

—. "For My Sister Molly Who in the Fifties." 1972. Christian, ed., *Everyday* 51-54.

—. "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens." 1974. Christian, ed., *Everyday* 39-49.

Washington, Mary Helen. "An Essay on Alice Walker." Christian, ed., *Everyday* 85-104.

Winchell, Donna Haisty. *Alice Walker.* New York: Twayne, 1992.

Professor in the Program of African-American Studies

The Program in African-American Studies, an Interdisciplinary Program in the School of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine, invites applications for a position up to the level of Professor, beginning July 1, 2001. We are interested in candidates with qualifications in modern African-American history, philosophy, the Black Atlantic, or critical race studies. We welcome candidates with demonstrated interests in post-colonial theories, diaspora studies, and/or class relations.

Application deadline is November 15, 2000.

Send a curriculum vitae, statement of teaching and research interests, a sample portfolio of recent publications, and names of three references to:

Chair, Search Committee
Program in African-American Studies
University of California, Irvine
300A Murray Krieger Hall
Irvine, CA 92697-6850

UCI is an equal opportunity employer committed to excellence through diversity.