

Chapter 1

Introduction of Zora Neale Hurston and Her Work

The research entitled "Race and Gender in Black Life: Highlighting Conflict and Resistance in *Mules and Men* deals with the issue of how African-American framed world experience using folktales. It also attempts to show how they use conjuring or hoodoo as means of expressing spirituality which can be found in African-American appropriated aspects of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. Moreover, the thesis highlights the themes of slavery and freedom, issue of gender in an attempt to dramatize resistance on the part of the African-American through folk- tales.

The research hypothesizes that Hurston is more than a passive transcriber of folk-tales in *Mules and Men*. Going away from the culture, she depicts and trained as an anthropologist to analyze it. *Mules and Men* can be seen as a straight-forward, nonthreatening depiction of humorous and exotic side of black culture in rural south. Hurston does not offer openly anything about race, gender in black life. If one closely analyzes the text. She gives in covered form a complex analysis of race and gender in black life.

Zora Neale Hurston gives an important description of African-American folk culture. It is one of the first serious treatments of folk-tales. Hurston makes readers deeply look at the black story-telling tradition. Hurston functions as both inside and outside in relation to the world she examines. She carefully arranges her folk-tales and meticulously delineates the context in which they are narrated to reveal complex relationships between race and gender in black life. Underscoring the traditional subversive role of African-

American folklore, she highlights the continuing role folk-tales play in black people's struggles against economic and racial oppression. Hurston also details the function of folklore in conflicts between black men and black women. It shows both how men use folk-tales to reinforce and legitimate oppression of women and how women use them to fight against a subservient role and try to assert their power against men.

Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1891 in Eatonville Florida of South. She was also reared at Eatonville. She had child experience of black culture of South. She was a reputed novelist, folklorist and anthropologist. She has given a great contribution in the field of novel, folklore and anthropology. So, her fictional and factual account of black heritage remained unparalleled. She has written many books which includes *Dust Tracks on the Road*, *Their Eyes were watching God*; *Jonah's Ground Vine*; *Seraph on the Suwanee*; *Moses, Man of the Mountain and Every tongue Got to Confess*. Although Hurston is far better known for the publication of her feminist novel "Their Eyes were watching God". No understanding of her mind and her art or of her contribution to African American culture or to the study of folklore, can ignore the achievements of *Mules and Men*. Her inspirer anthropologist, Franz Boas has mentioned in the "preface" that almost certainly, there would have been no *Their Eyes were watching God* without the process of growth and maturation that resulted first from *Mules and Men*. The year Hurston died, the celebrated American Collector Alan Lomax appraised *Mules and Men* as "the most engaging, genuine, and skillfully written book in the field of folklore"

The volume, *Mules and Men* was published in 1935. It is about documenting African, American folklore which contains folktales and songs.

She has collected these materials herself going to the field. So, she functions herself as observer-participant. Hurston presents a blend of anthropology, fiction and autobiography in this text. The text is especially important because it is the first book of folklore published by an African-American person. Its features and introduction was written by Franz Boas, the 20th century-anthropologist. It was Franz Boas who influenced Hurston's interest in collecting these oral materials. It is an important contribution to the documentations of African-American tradition. Hurston provides her reader with a glimpse into a world they might not be familiar with. At the same time, the thesis introduces the commonality of human experiences. The text is divided into two parts. The first part records Hurston's experiences travelling around Florida where she has collected stories from rural blacks. While second part focuses on the author's experiences in Louisiana studying hoodoo, or conjuring. Hurston uses a unifying narrative technique to tell the stories that also provides a context for the tales and allows her to present a range of Southaven verbal art. She also uses this technique in her fiction to enrich the stories.

Hurston also talks about the reasons and enthusiasm for gathering folklore. She also talks about setting out her motivations and inventions. He explains the background that led her up the publication of the book. She notes that she was raised on folklore when she was growing up in Eatonville, Florida. Later in college, she studied anthropology. Her advisers Franz Boas, encouraged her and helped to obtain grant. She chose to collect stories in Eatonville because of its rich folklore tradition. She reflects on the stories, involving John (a Jack), animal figures and especially appropriation of

characters and the themes from the Bible. To her patron, she thanks Charlotte Osgood Mason for financing the trip in which she collects the folktales songs, stories, recipes, and rituals.

Hurston dedicated *Mules and Men* to Annie Nathan Meyer, the Barnard, Founder who had helped her gain admission to the college. Anthropologist of Columbia University, Franz Boas, wrote the volume's preface. He wrote an introduction to the volume. Hurston has repeatedly written in the introduction, "I was glad when somebody told me, you may go and collect Negro folk-lore." Hurston's position as narrator/mediator allows her to provide, contexts for tales, songs, and rituals.

It also illustrates the performative tire aspects of each entry, part one contains seventy tales and dividend into ten sub parts. The tales together are based on common social context, location, a subject matter. Part two contains seven sub parts that include conjure stories, information about the origins of Hoodoo. It also details about rituals learned under several conjurers and or Hoodoo doctors. The rituals are typically directed towards specific objectives such as ruling the man you love, keeping a husband faithful and exerting power over your enemies and perceived enemies. A glossary and an appendix containing four sections "Negros Songs with Music," Formulae of, Hoodoo Doctors, "Paraphernalia of Conjure," and "Prescriptions of Root Doctors Round out the Volume.

Different critics have given their critical views on the novel differently. Among them most black critics and some left-leaning white critics have expressed their view that Hurston was at best an accomodationist and at worst at opportunist and sellout. African American critics Alain Locke and Sterling

Brown wrote reviews that reacted to comparisons between Hurston's work and that of Joel Chandler, and also to white critics tendencies to celebrate what they saw as Hurston's authenticity and objectivity. Locke and Brown were concerned that Hurston's work distorted African American realities. For Locke, the concern was that her work confirmed racial stereotypes and undermined attempts by black America. Brown felt that Hurston's work lacked an element of bitter authentic. B.C. McNeil wrote in the, *Journal of Negro History* that Hurston's style of presenting folktale was unique and seemed to indicate that she was more of a novelist than a cultural historian. The contemporaneous consensus among white critics with some notable exceptions in Harold preece. Leslie Frazier, who wrote pointedly that Hurston lacked objectivity and wrote with a white critics in mind. He commented that the collection was revelatory and entertaining. Still, even Hurston's worst critics were forced to admit that she had accomplished in her writing a rare intimacy with the objects of her study. An intimacy and mode of medication that gave her work the uniqueness for which her work is today applauded.

Recent critical works on *Mules and Men* benefit from expanded knowledge of Hurston's own expository writing and her philosophy in general. In this era of cultural criticism, the critical report *Mules and Men* has gone high. It is taken as a subversively womanist text. It is also taken as a landmark ethnographic study of the Afro-American culture.

Most significantly critics note Hurston's dramatization of west African way of life relating to folk tales and religious practices. For example, Cheryl Wall refers to *Mules and Men* as "a widely recognized ... classic in Afro-American and American anthropology (661). But the focusses of her essay is

on female improvement. Writing three years later, Boxwell focus on Hurston's "ethnography" which brings to the fore the folk elements (605).

Keith Walters, however, shifts the focus towards the language of novel. The novelist, according to this write up, considers the nature of discourse [...]as an ethnography of communication in the form of a trickster tale" (343). Writing in the same year, Nicholl's gives an altogether different reading he focuses on "A study of working class resistance to launch a revisionary reading of the narrative frame" of the novel (467).

This thesis combines the resistance and folk culture to highlight the theme of race and gender in *Mules and Men*. The issue of slavery and freedom are dominant themes in most of the tales. Even though these tales were told decades after the civil war, the memories inflected by the terror of slavery and then, the following emancipation remained a lasting legacy at the time of Hurston's research. The evidence is the centrality of this theme to the various folk-tales that Hurston is told.

Most significantly many of these stories involve the legendary, folk hero John, John the Conqueror (Big John de Conquer), and present his antagonistic relationship with his master, frequently referred to as "Massa". In these stories, the slave John defies and defeats his master through both physical and intellectual ability.

It illustrates the idea that blacks are not inferior to whites. As such, character of John and his prevalence in these tales may reflect a wish fulfillment fantasy for the slaves who originally invented these tales. From this it becomes clear that while they may have been physically imprisoned by

their masters, their minds were free to create great fantasies or escapes a victory over their oppressor.

John is also a type of trickster who is in the African American oral tradition, is usually an oppressed individual who conquers the oppressor to become free or to be put on an equal social, economic, or even intellectual level. These tales are important for the African American community because “John’s tales symbolized hope and faith on one level include examples of the trickster character are best evidenced by the tales involving John and master. One of the first such stories recounted to Hurston’s in this collection is the one in which John is told to bring water for the master, but when he tries to bring, he sees a frog. He interprets to the master that he saw a “bogey man.” Thus, he cheats his master. Actually, he didn’t want go to bring the water but he was compelled to go to bring water by his master. So, the conflict and resistance between slave and master can be seen in many tales.

The role of gender also can be seen in this text. The significance of gender roles is seen both in Hurston’s first-person narrative and in the folktales themselves. There are many examples of the dynamics of male-female relationship throughout the book. In the communities she observes, women are often portrayed as having secondary status. By contrast, her tales often reveal how women find ways to achieve a sense of selfhood and identity. As Cheryl Wall notes in *women of the Harlem Renaissance, Mules and Men*” offers a subtle revelation of the ways in which women are relegated to subordinate role in the culture. The three most important depictions of women in this work are Hurston as narrator, Zora Searles as storyteller, and Marie Laveau as practitioner of hoodoo.

After Hurston arrives in Florida, she attends a “toe-party”, in which the roles men and women are strictly defined. In fact, the events represents the commodification of the black female body. Men decide the worth of a women looking at her toes alone. These men than “buy” the women. Women, in effect, become the property of the men. This shows the role of “gender” in the book. Hurston is among the women “purchased”. Clearly, as there is no form of expression at this event by which women have some power to commodify the men based on physical appearances. The male female relationship is not equal here while it is portrayed as alight hearted affair, the power of gender roles is nevertheless attested to.

Some of the stories that Hurston relates in *Mules and Men* also reveal the intense power relationship between men and women. Hurston also suggests the potential for females to acquire voice, since most of the storytellers are male. There is a suggestion that the male voice is privileged theme in Hurston’s recurrent novels such as *Jonah’s Gourd vine* and *Their Eyes were watching God*. However, we can find that women have important opportunities for reacting the men, they also have chance to punctuate the male-dominated discourse. When they do speak their voices are perhaps louder and clearer for being less present overall. In fact, the tales, the women tell are often self-consciously addressing male-female power divide itself. For example Mathilda, one of the female story tellers, tells a story about women having power, claiming that God bestowed to man more power. But women did not want to be suppressed and beaten by men. So, the women outwitted God. They also overpowered their husband through the use of manipulation ,cunning and trickery. The tripartite racial, class and gender oppression faced by black women in America also frames an important aspects of the stories here.

Chapter - II

Racism: A Methodological Overview

Race refers to one of the groups of populations constituting humanity. It is a socially constructed concept that divides human kind in major division in terms of distinctive characters. "In its origin use, race itself referred to origins in common stock. This could be family, religion or nation, but it applied equally to plant and animal life" (Gerzina 125). Generally, categorization of a group of race resulted from biological basis. In this sense, hereditary transmission of physical characteristics becomes the authentic base for the definition of race. This genetically a race may be defined as a group with gene frequencies differing from those of the other group in the human species.

But even this hereditary differences turns out to be quite minimum when it is compared to a vast number of genes common to all human being regardless of the race to which they belong. In this sense, all human beings belongs to the same species called *Homo sapiens*! But at present concept is arbitrary applied to chosen individual or fractions of populations by equating the biological criteria of the race with the mental characteristics such as intelligence, personality.

The concept of race developed since long back when conquests, invasions, migrations gave birth to a heterogeneous world population. But the term race became much more poignant during the colonial period when the people of different places come into contact with each other. Lots of attempts have been made by the scholars in order to classify human race since the 17th

century. J.F. Blumen Bach was the first anthropologist to divide mankind into five human races on the basis of skin colour: Caucasian or white, Mongolian or yellow, Ethiopian or black, American or red, and Malayan or brown (108). Later on during the 19th and early 20th century writers like J.A. Gobineau and H.S Chamberlain gave cultural and psychological values to race by stressing a attributing the so called superiority of their own kind of culture an nationality. This approach to race study is known as racism which culminated into vicious racial doctrines of Nazi Germany known as Anti-Semitism. At the same time, this approach to racism complicated the integration movement in the United States of America and the segregation policies in the Republic of South Africa.

The traditional notion of race failed to prove its claim on behalf of blood theory when modern genetics came with the idea that heredity is transmitted through discrete genes instead of the blood. Thus, the sets of genes given by the same parents to different children are different and 'consequently, pure races do not exist and cannot exist in man or in any other sexually reproducing species (Dobzhansky 109).

The study and practice of race is not the present phenomenon. It was also prevalent in the writing of the classical Greek and Ancient Hebrew societies. They distinguished themselves with "Others" on basis of appearances, customs, traditions, language, attitude, religion, physical surrounding or location. During the 5th century B.C. the Greek writer Hypocrites tried to establish the superiority of the people of his own race arguing that "barren soils of Greece had forced the Greeks to become tougher and more independent" (Appiah 275). Likewise, in the Hellenic world the

black "Ethiopians" and blonde "Scythians" were regarded inferior to the Greeks. But in the writing of Pre-Socratic sophists and Homer racial characteristics was defined on the basis of an individual quality of a person instead of colour. The treatment given to the blacks whether in the past or at present is based on preconceived prejudice.

The discovery of new world i.e. America by Christopher Columbus brought lots of changes in the perception of the people of the new land. "This accident of the history of the perception of human differences produced the race concept as it is now generally held" (Brace 116). Thus, the race took a new perception out of the artificial circumstances as created by colonization. During the Elizabethan period, Negro was defined as "black, ugly, cruel, sexual, rampant and barely human" (Salgado xiii). Likewise, during the Victorian era many racialists were of the opinion that human beings can be divided into several "races" on the basis of biological, moral and intellectual characteristics. Appiach states this notion of the racialists like this:

We could divide human beings into smaller number of groups, called 'races', in such a way that all the members of these races shared certain fundamental, biologically heritable, moral and intellectual characteristics with each other that they did not share with members of any other race. (276)

During the Eighteenth and nineteenth century lots of social, economic, and political change took place in the global scenario. The term "race" was used to define the people on the basis of their physical characteristics. The study of racial doctrines and ideologies took new mode during post-enlightenment period and reached its high point during the nineteenth and early twentieth

century's and it was defined according to the idea that races embodied a package of fixed physical and mental traits. (Bulmer and Solomos)

Reflection on Racism and its Consequences

Racism is a belief system a set of implicit assumption about the superiority of one's own race or ethnic group other than that of one's own. Racism can be defined as discrimination made by a group of people on the basis of race, colour, and religion where discrimination is the product of prejudice and stereotypical mode of thoughts or assumption mainly based on race or colour. Racism is also defined focusing on the generally transmitted traits and its connection to social characteristics. It encompasses beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and practices that define people on racial divisions. It assumes the fact that the difference are products of biological traits and, therefore, unchangeable. In short, racism is the belief system and discrimination in practices.

Racism is a broader term with encompasses the elements of history, culture, and ethnicity. It involves the superiority of one group, ethnicity or its cultural practices over the other because the entitled inferior a group lacks the sets of criteria as prescribed by the privileged group. In course of social dealings, racism, exists both in conscious and unconscious level. But to the core its effect is very much disastrous a damaging both to the victims and the perpetrators if it is practiced in an unhealthy manner. In fact, it is a false notion to associate the genetic traits to social characteristics. Therefore, Gerzina has rightly said that "racism at individual level involves a misguided personal belief that on entire racial group is deficient a superior because of a set of moral, intellectual, a culture traits that are thought to be indicated by the

groups biological origin" (426).

Racism takes new shape due to interference of different social, political and cultural institution in course of time and instead of following a notion of singularity, it encompasses diverse scholarly ideas which has been shaped and determined by several power politics. Racist ideologies and practice have distinct meanings bounded by historical circumstances and determined in struggle" (Gilroy 248).

Ideas of indoctrination i.e. blacks are inferior and the discrimination or the feeling of superiority over "other" on the basis of colour and shape of skin, eye, hair, lips etc. are the dominant tendency of racism\ . Racism, after all, begins at personal level. This individual racism takes the form of institutional racism which ultimately culminates into the cultural racism. Actually dispensation at personal level forms at the collective level. It provides stamp of legality. At social level, it becomes mind set but when it becomes system or institutionalized it is very much difficult to change.

Racial characteristics, at present, are taken as defining features of certain group of peoples. But such mode of defining lacks any scientific groups for its justification. Such stereotypical pattern of behavior lacks transcendental racial features. Both in past and present black are discriminated and declared as an inferior race on the basis of colour. Ever since the pre-Christian era to the, present the very black colour is associated with ugliness, despair, evil and death whereas the whiteness is associated with beauty, goodness, virtue and innocence. The racist white try their best to dehumanize Negrow by labeling as a link between monkey and men i.e. white people and their approval goes something like the nation of New Testament that "we are

the chosen people look at the colour of our skin. The others are black yellow: that is because of their sins" (Fanon 30). Thus, they try to justify racism in the name of religion by saying that Jesus Christ is white in colour therefore whites are naturally superior in society and nearer to the God. This concept of black as an inferior being foregrounded to the unjust and bigotries and behavior that led to the blacks as scripturally ordained status of perpetual servitude.

Origin and Meaning of Gender Roles

A gender role is a set of perceived behavioral norms associated particularly with males and females in a given social group or system. It can be form of labor by gender. Gender is component of the gender/sex system, which refers to "the set of arrangement, by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed needs are satisfied" (Reiter 1975:159). All society, to a certain effect, has a gender/sex system, although the components an working of this system vary markedly from society to society. Peoples gender role may be defined as the kind of activities that society determines to be appropriate for individual possessing their kind of external genitalia.

Gender roles have long been a predominant of the "nature versus nurture" debate. Traditional theories of gender usually assume that one's gender identity, and also one's gender role, is a natural given. For example it is often claimed that women are naturally fit to look after children. The idea that differences in gender role originate in differences in biology has found support in parts of the specific community. Nineteenth century anthropology sometimes used descriptions of the imagined life of Paleolithic hunting and gathering societies for evolutionary explanation of gender differences. For

example, those accounts maintain that the need to take care offspring may have limited the female freedom to hunt and assume positions of power. More recently, sociobiology and evolutionary psychology have explained those differences in social roles by treating them as adaptation. Supporting the view that gender role as adaption, Alex comfort in *sex in society* (1963). Explains:

The 'gender role' which as individual adopts 'manly' or 'womanly' according to the standards of his culture, is oddly enough almost wholly learned, and little if at all built in, in fact, the gender role learned by the age of two years is for most individual almost irreversible, even if runs counter to the physical sex of the subject. (42)

Here comfort uses gender roles to index the wide variation in styles of behavior between societies, but it also suggests that within them the degree of choice is fairly limited. By making aware of these cultural difference, comfort hoped to demystify human sexuality and so help to release them from what he believed were unnecessary and irrational sexual taboos. At the same time, however, his more guarded emphasis upon the irreversibility of gender roles seems tell against the promise of any easily accessible path to sexual liberation.

Due to the influence of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist works and Michel foucault's reflections on sexuality, the idea that gender was unrelated to sex gained ground during the 1980s. This view claims that the person born with male genitals could be of feminine gender. In 1987, R.W. Connell did extensive research on whether there are any connections between biology and gender role and concluded that there were none. Most scientists reject

Connell's research because concrete evidence exists proving the effects of hormones on behavior. However, hormone levels vary, and disorders can cause intersex status. Simon Baron-Cohen, a bridge university professor of psychology and psychiatry has said that. "The female brain is predominantly hard-wired of empathy, while male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems." Some researchers, such as Bruce Lipton, believe that neural synapses in early childhood are formed due to the environment of the child, so if parents were to treat the child as to his or her assigned gender, then the brain would develop for that gender role and thus would be 'Hard-Wired'.

Dr. Sandra L. Bem, a psychologist who developed the gender scheme theory to explain how individuals come to use gender as an organizing category in all aspects of their life. In 1971, she created the Bem sex Role Inventory to make how well you fit in to your traditional gender role by characterizing your personality as masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated. She believed that through gender, schematic processing a person spontaneously sorts attributes and behaviours into masculine and feminine categories. According to interactionist approach too, "gender roles are not fixed and they can influence all kinds of behavior, such as choice of clothing, choice of works and personal relationships, but are constantly negotiated between individuals ((Qtd in stark-153). Therefore an individual processes information and regulate their behavior based on whatever definitions of femininity and masculinity their culture provides.

The current trend in Western societies toward men and women sharing similar occupations, responsibilities and jobs suggests that the sex one is born

with does not directly determine one's abilities. While there are differences in average capabilities of various kinds between the sexes, the capabilities of some members of one sex will fall within the range of capabilities needed for task conventionality assigned to the other sex.

Gender roles first began in the Mesopotamian region at about the same time as civilization (around 8000 B.C.). Originally, in the Paleolithic Era, men and women were treated equally. These nomadic family groups did not have any work wealth simply because their prey migrated regularly. In fact, women contributed over 70% of daily food. However, in the Neolithic Era, men and women discovered agriculture and could gain wealth over their fellow men. In these early, societies, men took the role as judge, which was a task that was considered "an arena of public concern under male control" (Nagle 2006). Women, however, were in charge of the family and household. To help them, women had their children, servants, and slaves.

The roles of women were fluctuated in the course of time. Originally, in Egyptian and Greek societies, women had a "high degree of freedom and were often able to function on much the same level as men " (Nagle 2006). They had the power to own their own property or to dispose it off. Moreover, they were also involved in politics and religion as well. But, as the Roman civilization came into being, the role of women was somewhat narrowed and their power transfigured to men because of the influence of Christianity and Christianity took women as mere objects of reproduction and help mate to man in procreation. St Aquinas believed that women are a "misbegotten men". And hence, in Christian communities females were undermined and males were emphasized. In the Bible, women is presented as inferior to man because

women was taken out of man" and the women was also the first to sin by eating the forbidden apple. The lord said to the women. "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16)

It is clearly show that the status or roles of women were turned or made active to passive. As the time dept on changing so did their roles and position. Hence, the roles of man or women were turned into a cultural representation.

Rodney stark talking about modern gender roles in his book *Sociology Teeth Edition*, says that gender is obvious in society. The gender (role) occurs with children's playing materials and their nicknames.

Every society has a number of gender roles and takes measures to insure that their children know their place within society and their ender. Little boys, for example, are seen with blue blankets and are given toy guns and tunks to play with Girls, on the other hand, have pink blankets and their toys usually consists of dolls and plastics cooking items. (112)

Even with the nicknames, gender is obvious in society. Boys tend to be called Butch or something similar girls have nicknames more along the lines of Sweetie, Honey, as sugar. This is just one of the methods that parents use to insure that their children will be different (Stark 2007). In some societies, men are supposed to be aggressive and dominant, while women are gentle and submissive. Men go out and earn a living, while women stay at home and take care of the children. In some societies, Stark says, "It is rare for women to have equal political rights [...] in 60 percent of these societies; women have no political rights' (114)

Traditional Gender Roles

Traditional Gender roles are the activities that the patriarchal society determines to be appropriate for individual possessing their kind of external genitalia." Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive; whereas women as emotional weak, nurturing and submissive." (Qtd in Tyson, critical theory 83). By taking these roles for guaranteed the patriarchy tries to legitimate, maintain and justify the male monopoly of positions of economic, political and social power and keeps women powerless by denying them. The educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political and social power. Hence, traditional gender roles are established on the ideology of patriarchy, taking the external genitalia in consideration.

Patriarchy by definition is "sexiest" which means it promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men. Thus inborn inferiority of women is called biological essentialism because it is based on biological differences between the sexes that are considered part of our unchanging essence as men and women. Feminists don't deny the biological difference between men and women, in fact they celebrate those differences. But they don't agree that such variations as physical size shape, and body chemistry make men, naturally superior than women. For instance men are more courageous, better leaders, more intelligent or more logical. Feminism therefore distinguishes the word sex which refers to our biological constitution as female or male and the world gender, which refers to our cultural programming as feminine or masculine which are categories created by society rather than nature Tyson quotes in *Critical Theory Today* as,' patriarchy continually exerts forces that

undermines women's self confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof that women are naturally and therefore correctly, self-effacing and submissive" (85).

Traditional gender roles are deconstructive for men as well as women because they dictate that men are supposed to be strong (physically and emotionally), they are not supposed to cry because crying is considered as sign of weakness, a sign that one has been overpowered by one's emotions. Failure to provide adequate economic support for one's family is considered in most humiliating failure of a man because it means that he failed at what is considered his biological role as provider. Similarly, it is considered unmanly for men to show fear a pain express their sympathy for other men. Expressing sympathy for other men is especially taboo because only the most mute and stoic form of male bonding are free of homosexual overtones. Men are not permitted to fail at anything they try because failure in any domain implies failure in one's manhood Tayson says:

The patriarchal concept of femininity which is linked to frailty, modesty and timidity-disempowers women in the real world: it is not feminine to succeed in business, to be extremely intelligent to earn, big bucks, to have strong opinions, to have healthy appetite (for anything), or to assert one's rights (87)

Patriarchal ideology suggests that these are only identities of women. If she accepts her traditional gender role and obeys the patriarchal roles, she is a good girl; if she doesn't, she is a 'bad girl; But it is patriarchy that will do defining because both roles are projection of patriarchal male desire. For example, the desire to own "valuable" woman suited to be wives and mothers,

the desire to control women's sexuality so that men's sexuality cannot be threatened in anyway and the desire to dominate in all financial matters. According to patriarchal ideology "bad girls violate patriarchal sexual norms in some way they are sexually forward in apperence or behavior, or they have multiple sexual partners "(89). Likewise, "good girl is rewarded for 'good' behavior by being placed on a pedestal by patriarchal culture. To her are attributed all the virtues associated with patriarchal femininity and domesticity: She is modest, unassuming self-sacrificing, and nurturing' (89). Woman has no needs of her own, for she is completely satisfied by serving her family. She may be sad about the problem of others, and. She frequently worries about those in her care but she is never angry. Tyson further expresses his view that "patriarchal gender roles have not been eliminated by modern woman's entrance into the male -dominated workplace, even if some of those woman now hold what used to be traditionally males jobs" (90)

Chapter III

Race: Conflict and Resistance in *Mules and Men*

We can find the issue of race throughout the book. In the tales told by different participants, we can find the issue of race. In the story, we can find mostly two characters who conflicts each other and makes resistance by them. During visiting with different working people in different places by Nora Neale Hurston, she finds the conflict and resistance hidden inside them. Though Hurston doesn't mention about this anywhere but readers find these things in different stages in her visit to the people.

Most significantly, many of these stories involves the legendary folk hero John, or John the conqueror (Big John de conquer) and present his antagonistic relationship with his master, frequently referred to as "Mass." In these stories, the slave John defies and defeats his master through both physical and intellectual ability, illustrating the idea that blacks are not inferior to whites. As such, the character of John and his prevalence in these tales may reflect a wish-fulfillment fantasy for the slaves who originally concocted these tales: While they may have been physically imprisoned by their masters, their minds were free to create great fantasies of escape as victory over their oppressors.

John is also a type of a trickster figure, which, in the African-American oral tradition, is usually an oppressed individual, who conquers the oppressor to become free, or to be put on an equal social, economic, or even intellectual level. (In many cases, specifically the animal parables, the trickster figure is represented by an animal.) These tales remain important for the African-

American community because John's trickster tales symbolized hope and faith on one level, but inspired, motivated, and provided a role model for the downtrodden on another plane" (Hemingway 41). Indeed, examples of the trickster character are best evidenced by the tales involving John and the master. One of the first such stories recounted to Hurston in this collection is the one in which John is told to collect the water for the master. But John doesn't want to go at the time. But he is compelled to go to bring the water. When he tries to retrieve the water 'He sees a frog. But John interpret the frog as a "bogey man". From this story, we can learn that if slaves are compelled to do against their will. Though they don't resist directly but indirectly with their mental ability they make resistance. John makes such a story about frog as a "bogey man,". The story seems a real one but it is an imaginative one that, is the product of his resistance.

In Julius's tales about his fortune-telling abilities, John continuously outwits his master, even if the master shows initial suspicion, managing first to convince the master to kill his own grandmother and toss himself in the river and ultimately to kill the master, effectively freeing himself to kill the master 'effectively freeing himself. His master's oppressiveness is no match ultimately for John's mental capacities. In such a tale, we find the conflict between the oppressor and oppressed and oppressed makes resistance against oppression through mental capabilities. The idea of John as a fortune-teller is recurrent in this collection, more generally, in the African-American literary tradition. Joe Wiley's story in which John guesses, unintentionally, that there is raccoon hidden under an object leads to complication. He throws a party, it is then his master who gets the upper hand, catching him and deciding to hang

him. While in the first case John has won against his master unintentionally, when it really comes time to prove his mettle, he wins against his master, spooking him with the match trick arranged with his friend. The result, again a wish fulfillment fantasy, is freedom for the slaves. So, here as elsewhere, the result in many of these stories is emancipation, either for John or for all blacks. In another liberation tale told by Wiley, John is liberated and moves to Canada after he "rescues" his master's kids from drowning, even though it was John, who makes the master think they will drown in the first place. Thus, John becomes an important symbol of emancipation.

Other stories about John and Massa abound, all reading the complexity of their relationship, both using the other's tactics and achieving suspense by doing so. Many other tales continue with the same theme, such as Good black's story about John and work, or Cliff's tale about the master tricking John, for once, by pretending to be God. Even in this later story, we can see John's speedy departure as a bold attempt to do the seemingly impossible: to outrun God. These John and Massa stories are meant to be amusing to the people who hear them, and they are meant both to pass the time and to inspire the listeners.

Overall, as a major character in *Mules and Men*, John de Conquer symbolizes, freedom, liberation, and emancipation. He refuses to see himself as a slave, and he uses his physical strength and mental capabilities to survive his condition. He frequently battles with the master, other slaves, and animals to show that he reigns supreme. On occasion, he loses battles, but the most part he succeeds. He represents the hope for freedom of black people in America. In *Mules and Men*, the storytellers removed from slavery, still

chronicle his exploits. It should also be noted that this cultural hero is known as Jack in some of the other tales and as Hurston explains in the glossary, the two are in fact interchangeable.

In part II of *Mules and Men*, John plays a less pivotal role, but his influence can still be seen. In the encounter between Hurston and Dr Duke she learns that this conjurer values the John de conquer root because it contains the essence of John, the folk hero. This root will give people special power and directly connects with his spirit. In another sense, this later reference also suggests John's immortality and how the legacy of his story has been passed down through the generations.

His master, by contrast, symbolizes white power, authority, and control. While he may have power over the other blacks, he consistently loses in his encounters with John. Throughout these stories his little of "master is ironic because John, in all respects except legally, is the master over this white man. The master, both serious and comic, functions as a stock character seen often in abolitionist literature. He is greedy, egotistical, and racist, but also vulnerable and at times easily overcome. John's challenge to the white ideology of privilege and control was still, well after the abolition of slavery, a potent metaphor for the struggles that would yet remain between blacks and whites.

Zora Neale Hurston arrives at Polk County where black labours work. She goes there to collect folk-tales with the back working class people. In her visit, she experiences black's conflict and resistance but they express their feeling in absence of their master though Hurston doesn't mention anywhere in the text. David G. Nicholls has mentioned his book commentary referring

to Robin Kelley's article:

Beneath the veil of consent lies a hidden history of unorganized, everyday conflict ways by African-American working people. Once we explore in greater detail those daily conflict and the social and cultural spaces where ordinary people felt free to articulate their opposition, we can begin to ask questions that will enable us to rewrite the political history of Jim crow South to incorporate such actions and actors (76).

Nicholls refers that Kelley's article discusses forms of resistance as they occurred at home at work, at play, and in the public at large so as to force a reconsideration of how action in daily life contributed to political change in the South.

Hurston has herself experienced "the hidden transcript" of everyday resistance. When she herself was an outsider she experienced resistance from black people in this way:

Hurston encounters resistance from the workers on the job when she first arrives. In these early scenes at the lumber camp, her narrative persona is present as a clumsy "I" who can't quite fit in: She drives a fancy car, she wears expensive clothing and the workers suspect that she is a detective. She explains what she had to do to become part of the "inner circle:' I had first to convince the 'job' that I was not an enemy in the person of the law; and, second I had to prove that I was their kind' (65).

As she gains their trust, her narrative persona shifts more easily between first-and third-person. Finally, when she follows the men on the job, her narrative persona practically disappears: instead, she situates her transcribed tales in relation to condition in the camp. Hurston learns to overcome resistance by fitting in, and her studied invisibility enables her to display folklore's power as a discourse of dissent.

The major event leading to her acceptance in the camp is her contribution to a group performance of John "Henry," a track laying ballad. The ballad dramatizes a competition between John Henry, who is an excellent pike driver, who is an excellent spike driver, and the steam drill his boss has procured to replace him. John keeps up with the drill for an hour, until he collapses of a heart attack. The song is a parable of the manual laborer's plight under the industrial organization of work: "I'll hammer my fool self to death" (56). John Henry sings repeatedly. By contributing verses to the performance, Hurston demonstrates that she shares a cultural language with the workers on the job. The form of the ballad allows her to occupy the same subject position as an other when she sings her piece, while the refrain allows all of the singers to come together as one. "John Henry" exemplifies the living language of dissent folk songs provide as she notes in her glossary, the song's syncopation fits the rhythm of spike-driving, and this suggests that the song's origin is as a work song. In the context of the work place, the song has operated as an articulation of beleaguered resistance to the hard work of laying down track. But Hurston does not sing the song with railroad workers: The context for this performance is a pay-day party, a social event that celebrates the receipt of wages. Here, the song serves as a reminders of workers' alienation under

capitalism and of the event present threat of replacement by machines, while John Henry's story also serves to contrast with works; attitude on the job: John Henry dies in his attempt to best the machine, While the workers in the camp find ways to avoid labor.

Hurston determines to join the Swamp-gang on the job one day in order to gather more tales. As she narrates her discovers on this day, Hurston lays out the relation between work and leisure in the camp while she also shows how the workers employ folk-lore in order to interpret this relation. Hurston's study of the work day begins at dawn; she shows hoe the camp is transformed its silent "dawn gray" (66) into a frenzy of activity motivated by the fear of repercussion from the boss: "grab your dinner-bucket and hit the grit. Don't keep the straw-boss waiting"(67). The unusual circumstances of this day allow Hurston to record a number of comments and tales about the meanness of bosses. This morning the straw boss, whom Hurston identifies as a poor white section boss on the railroad, keeps the workers waiting as their appointed meeting spot. This unusual delay allows the workers the opportunity to express their resentment for their supervisors even as they speculate on the cause of the delay: One worker cynically observes that it must be something terrible when white folks get slow about putting us work' "(68). Another speculates that the boss is sick, but theory is rejected: "Man he is too ugly. If a spell of sickness ever tried to slip up on him. He'd skeer it into three weeks 'Spasm' "(68). The gang continues to complete for the most disparaging tale about a boss. Hurston brings together stories from disparate geographical origins to show how conversation among the migrant workers accumulate into an argument for the meanness of bosses.

One workers tells of a boss from "Middle Georgy" "Who" was so mean that when the boiler burst and blowed some of men up in the air, he docked for de time they was off de job "(69). While worker Tush Hawg attests to a boss on the east coast who "was so mean and times was so hard till he laid off de hands of his watch" (69). In this section, Hurston does not enter the action a participate in the tale telling; She is a omniscient observer whose reaction to the tales is subsumed in such approving phrases as "Everybody, Hurston's portrait of the beginning of the work day shows the pastoral workers' camp transformed into the site of contestation between black workers and their white bosses. In the context Hurston develops here, the competitive practice of woofing among the workers serves to build a collective discourse of resentment for the straw-boss in this and in other working camps across the south.

Hurston takes an indirect approach to race stems from her dependence on white figures who exerted considerable control over her work. She had her own anthropological views to express in *Mules and Men* as well. What she discovered when she looked at her culture through the spyglass of anthropology was that the folktales she had always heard were not merely amusing stories even relics of slavery, but living forces, strategies used in her own day for dealing with power inequalities. As she emphasized in characteristics of Negro Expressions." Negro folklore is not of the past but testimony to the power of her own contemporaries to do battle in a world of inequality (Hurston 1983:56). Aware of the social significance of Black folktales, Hurston uses her "spyglass" in *Mules and Men* relating tales to analyze the culture in which they operate.

Faced with the dilemma of how to present her analysis in a way that could bypass the censoring eye of her mentors and in sympathetic white readers, Hurston adopted a strategy of masking social conflict and critical commentary with humor. The persona she creates is crucial to this project. By presenting herself as a lovable "darker" One who thanks white folks for "allowing" her to collect folklore and who praises the magnanimity of her patron Mrs. Mason, She appear a narrator with no racial complains or even awareness. Pouring on the "charm of loveable personality" commented on by Boas in this preface (Hurston 1935:X) and by reviewers, Hurston paints herself as an uncle Remus figure pleased to entertain the white world with her tales. Making no controversial statements and, in fact, offering little explicit analysis, She plays an extremely non-threatening role: loveable, entertaining, and intellectually mute.

Hurston reminds us in *Mules and Men*, however, that black humor is richly multifaceted reflecting a wide range of emotions: "The brother in back puts a laugh in every vacant place in his mind. His laugh has a hundred meanings. It may mean a amusement, anger, grief, bewilderment, chagrin, curiosity, simple pleasure or any other of the known or undefined emotions" (1935:67-38) Much of the humor in *Mules and Men* reflects this complexity rather than the primitive simplicity and carefree gaiety seen by reviewers.

Hurston also hints at the complex amiguity of folktale themselves in discussing the Black person's strategy for deflecting the problem of while cultural analysis. *The Negrow*, in of his open-faced laughter, his seeming acquiescence, is particularly evasive. You see we are polite people and we do

not say to our questioner. “Get out of here” we smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person because, knowing s50 about us, he doesn’t know what he is missing. The Indian resists curiosity by a stony silence. The Negro offers a feather-bed-resistance. That is we let, the probe enter but t never comes out. It get’s smothered under a lot of laughter and pleasantries.

The theory behind our tactics: “The white man is always trying to know into somebody else’s business. All rights, I’ll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but sho can’t read my6 mind. I’ll put this play, toy in his hand and he will seize it and go away. Then I’ll say my say and sing my song.” (Hurstun 1935:4-5)

While Huston make these comments to convince readers that they are reading the unvarnished truth in and men that she is initiating them into the black world. Her remarks provide an interesting comment on her strategy in the work. She uses “feather-bead-tactics” in her rendition of Black folktale, placing her” lovable personality” and the seemingly simple. Humorous stories of her informants as a “play toy” in the hands of her white readers.

As Hemingway suggests in his introduction (Hemingway 1978: xiii), Hurton’s “cultural massages” in *Mules and Men* are “coded” ones, similar to black proverbial expressions a “By-words”, which as one man explains “all got a got a hidden meaning” (Hurstun 1935:134). She conveys her controversial cultural messages not by explicitly analyzing folktales but by embedding them in social contexts that underscore issues of race and gender. Undoubtedly aware that that context of Joel chandler, Harris’s tales, hand defused the racial conflict and black resistance in them. Hurston embeds her

tales in situations that highlight this function of black folklore. Her mode of presentation in *mules and men* is thus crucial. As Boas notes in his preface, it was novel one, “by giving the Negro’s reaction to every day events,” by placing tales in the intimate setting in the social life of the Negro (Hurstun 1935:x), Hurston is able to convey her commentary without asking permission or offending her mentors.

The “between-story conversations and business,” the context in which tales are narrated, are central in *Mules and Men*, for they show how vital and socially meaningful folklore is in lives of her rural black contemporaries. While Hurston’s collection reproduces a wide variety of folktales, the types told by her informants arise, out of their immediate social situations. One set of tales, those told at the sawmill in Polk County (Chapters four and five), provides an important commentary on the situations of Black workers in the south. Hurston set up this work scene to emphasize white a domination and control of these men’s lives. Arriving at work to find no straw boss, the men think they will be given a day off but are disappointed when the foreman orders them on to the mill to see if they are needed there (1935:75). Telling tales all the way, they walk the long distance to the mill, only to be summarily dismissed by the mill boss (1935:100). Like mules, the men are moved from one work location to the next, never informed of the white boss’s plans.

Frustrated by this dehumanizing situation, the men often use, traditional tales in this section to critique white power figures and to reassert their own humanity. After general speculation that the boss is absent due to illness, one man sneers, “Man, he’s to ugly. If a spell of sickness ever tried to slip up on him, he’d skeer it into a three weeks’ ‘Spasm’” (1935:73). This last

comment lead into a series of exaggeration stories, in which the workers try to top one another's stories about men, who are so ugly. "As a later series of exaggeration stories told while fishing shows (1935:106), this traditional genre is often a form of fun-filled verbal play engaged in for its own sake. In a work context, however, it is used specifically to lampoon a white power figure. Similarly, they deal with their frustration and anger when the foreman announces that they must report to the mill through another series of exaggeration tales about mean men, initiated by one man's comment." Ain't dat a mean man? No work in the swamp and still he won't let use knock off. "The tales that follow details one straw boss" so mean dat when the boiler burst and blowed some of the men up in the air, he docked em for de time they was off job and a read boss so mean "till he laid off de hands his watch" (1935:75).

Gender in *Mules and Men*

Significance of gender roles is seen both in Hurston's first-person narrative and in the folktales themselves. Many examples relating to the dynamics of male female relationships are seen throughout the book. In the communities she observes, women are often portrayed as having secondary status. By contrast, her tales often reveal how women find ways to achieve a sense of selfhood and identity. As Cheryl Wall notes in *women of the Harlem Renaissance* *Mules and Men* offers a subtle revelation of the ways in which women are relegated to subordinate roles in the culture Hurston otherwise celebrates and the means by which these women gain access to creative expression and power" (159-160). The three most important depictions of

women in this are Hurston as narrator, big sweet as storyteller, and Marie Laveau as practitioner of hoodoo (160).

After Hurston arrives in Florida, she attends a “toe-party,” in which the roles of men and women are strictly defined. In fact the event represents the commodification of the black female body as men are to decide the worth of a woman based on the look her toes alone, these men then “buy” the women-woman, in effect, become the property of men. Hurston is among the women “purchased”. Clearly, as there is no form of expression at this even by which women have the some power to commodity the men based on physical appearances, the male-female relationship here is an unequal one, while it is portrayed as a lighthearted affair, the power of gender roles in nevertheless attested.

Some of the stories that Hurston relates in *Mules and Men* real the intense power relationship between men and women as well. Hurston also suggests the potential for females to acquire voice, since most of the storytellers are male, there is a suggestion that the male voice is privileged – a theme recurrent in Hurston’s novels such as *Johah’s Gourd vine* and *Their Eyes were watching God*. However, women have important opportunities for reaching to these men. To punctuate the male-dominated discourse, and when they do speak their voices are perhaps louder and clear for being less present overall. And, in fact, the tales the women tell are often self consciously addressing the male-female power divide itself. For example, Mathilda, one of the few female storytellers, related a story about women having power, claiming that Godes bstowed more power on men, but that women outwitted

God, and overpowered their husbands through the use of manipulation, cunning and trickery.

The tripartite racial, class, and gender oppression faced by black women in America also frames an important aspect of the stories here, for examples, Jim Allen's story about the black woman who opened a box containing work speak directly to the black woman's experience. During slavery and after, particularly in the south, women worked as laborers in many fields, and, the contrast between the work of white women and that of black women only highlights this fact. These tales also focus on black men and issues of masculinity, serving as a counterpoint to women's issues but also thereby calling attention to the difference between the male female experience. Jim Presley's story about the black man and the white man opening boundless of work is an example. The black man does physical labour while the white man engages in intellectual pursuits. The story tries to explain the work inequalities between blacks and whites as being as arbitrary as opening a bundle.

Hurston characterizes the people in this work in such a way to challenge gender roles and stereotypes. Big sweet, a woman defies traditional ideas of women being passive, submissive and unassertive. A strong, powerful woman, she does not express her fear in the face of others, and she serves as a protector of Hurston, confronting those (Particularly Lucky) who would give her trouble as an outsider. The juxtaposition of the words in Big sweet's name illustrates her complex position. Big in stature and power, she also possesses charismas and charm, and two work in tandem to create the personality that she exudes in the work.

If one pays careful attention to the movement of Hurston's text, from Eatonville where women's voices are dominated and the tales most often given voice by men-cast women in unfavorable and inferior light, to the New Orleans area where no particular value is attached to gender among Hoodoo doctors and conjurers a much more specific objective becomes apparent. Hurston or uses *Mules and Men* to demonstrate that the greater the distance from the pre-Christian, Afrocentric, system of belief represented via Hoodoo, the more narrow the vision women have themselves and their lives. In Eatonville, men routinely give, voice to unflattering and sexist stories and comments about the nature of women. On the rare occasion that a woman is allowed to speak at length, her story does nothing to undermine sexist and unflattering representations of women. For example, Mathilda Moseley's tale "Why women Always Take Advantage of Men", begins with men and women as equals until God grants the man his request for more strength. Being, turned down by God for a similar request, the woman must obtain her power from Satan. Female subjectivity and power are thus associated with the ultimate symbol of evil. Moving away from Eatonville, Zora Encounters Big Sweet and the lumber camp community. Big Sweet serves as an alternative to standard representation of women as weak or inferior, indeed, she defines gender expectations. She is widely respected (and sometimes feared) by men and women alike. And the fact that she will not allow her voice to be subjugated to those of men means that she recognizes, herself as a subject and actor in the world. She is second to no one, even the white quarters boss she stands up to in one episode, her significance is sealed when she saves Zora's life. Her story and the episodes involving her are well positioned to follow the

Eatonville episodes in “Folktales” and lead up to “Hoodoo”. Structuring the volume in this way allows for a reading that takes the reader from the rigidly gendered space of Eatonville and the androgynous adventures of Big sweet, to the realms of Hoodoo where the genders are balanced in terms of power and where the most revered and powerful of all Hoodoo doctors is a woman who has been dead for decades.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

The concept of race is narrowly defined as political construct which is formed in the course of history. It is a racist mentality to believe white as superior to the blacks either in physical or mental level. The redness of lips, style, colours and length of hair, bodily shapes and size, sexual desire, and fertility are still the socially constructed standards of beauty. In fact, all these concepts are the products of social prejudices. Ashley Montagu regards the idea of the race as man's most dangerous myth. He says that racism is a method of making one comfortable and ease tension. By declaring the theorizing that we are racially better than others we make a comfort zone to dominate and exercise power over the others.

After a close analysis of the text, the research has come to the conclusion that when one is suppressed in the name of race and gender etc. There arises conflict between suppresser and suppressed. The suppressed starts to resist against suppression. So, the research has found many folktales and others reference about conflict between white as master and black as servant. Black resists against white suppression and domination. In many cases, black characters have proved themselves superior than white. For example, John is a type of trickster figure 'which' in the African-American tradition is usually as opposed individual who conquers the oppresser to become, or to be put on an equal even intellectual level. One of such stories recounted to Hurston in this collection is the one in which john is told to collect water by his master. But John does not like to go. But his master can't understand his desire. He is compelled to collect water. He goes at last. When

he tries to bring back water, he see a frog. He interprets the frog as "a bogey man" when he returns home, he is asked to cause of not bringing water. He says the story in such a way with his mental capacity that makes his master believe. In this way, John has conflict with his master in may tales. He resists his master with his mental capacity. When Hurston goes to the Sawmill in Polk country to collect to collect folk-tales. She has interaction with blackworkers. After analyzing the scenes it becomes clear that the attitude of workers towards their white boss.

Arriving at work to find no straw boss, the men think they will be given a day off but are disappointed when the foreman orders them on the mill only to be summarily dismissed by the mill boss. Like mules, men are moved from one work location to the next, never informed of the white boss's plans. So, workers resist against their master indirectly when they are out of work. They scold their master with different abusive words like 'ugly', 'mean' etc. Though, Hurston has never mentioned racial matter. But from analysis of the reference and text, the research has found conflict and resistance in *Mules and Men*.

The research has also found the role of gender in black life in Hurston's *Mules and Men*. It highlights the roles of gender in black life by analyzing folk-tales and Hurston's interaction with black people for collecting folk-tales. Traditionally men and women are categorized on the basis of their sex. Taking sex in consideration, people are given certain roles. According to social convention, males are considered, to be physically strong, active, and independent. They are supposed to perform outer activities, whereas females are considered weak, passive and dependent and whose task is to follow their husband. Though black women is treated as property of black man in "Toe

Party" where Hurston also goes and participates. In this case, woman doesn't resist. But other in many cases woman is not ready to accept the male domination and tradition roles as weak, passive and dependent and to follow husband. For example, one of the female story-tellers relates a story about man and about power. In the story, at the beginning, both man and woman have equal power but later man becomes successful to grant more power than woman from God. Man starts to beat woman to follow. In response, woman also goes to grant more power than man. Woman also becomes successful to get the key of kitchen to control the man and deprive them sexual intercourse. So, by analyzing such tales, the research shows the conflict and resistance between man and women. Both of them try to keep themselves higher position by telling folk-tales. Both man and women stand as opposition on the folk-tale contest and say such folk-tales that could keep their position higher against each-other. Therefore, from the analysis of the folk-tales and attitude of them towards each-other, it becomes clear that there is conflict and resistance in the life of black people. So, the research has successfully found conflict and resistance in *Mules and Men* neglecting traditional gender roles.

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