

I: Black Folklore and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

The African cultural uniqueness in African setting, Black English Vernacular, sense of hybridity, African pastoral life, oral cultural tradition and the native cultural traits included in this novel confirm the assertion of the native Afro-American culture. The present research focuses on African American cultural tradition and struggle for their cultural identity in Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, perhaps the best example of her work where she presents as a folklorist. It is often acclaimed as her masterpiece due to its evocation of black sense and synthesis of ethnological reality, lively characterization and setting. This thesis focuses how Hurston incorporates, adapts, transforms, and comments on black folk life in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. This results Hurston's own life history along with the recordings of folksongs and folktales, and compare transcribed folk narrative texts with the plot and themes of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The history of black autonomy in the post-Civil War South is available for interdisciplinary connections or simply as a potent reminder of the vital relationship between place, tradition, history, and story. In short, the idea here is to understand, both as formal analysts of voice and style and as historians of literature, the crucial role of oral folklore in Hurston's written canon.

Janie, the protagonist of the novel, was born to Leafy when a white school teacher raped her. Janie's grandmother, Nanny sees Jannie kissing her neighbour at the age of sixteen and worries about her secure life, social status and identity. Therefore, Nanny talks to Janie about what it was like to be black who always should remain suppressed by white people. She also shares her feeling that she never had a voice of her own and never got chance to expose her ability. So she tells that

she wants Janie to have this voice that she never had. She arranges marriage with an old and ugly man, Logan Killicks. But as he regards her as a mule not as a human Janie doesn't satisfy with him. When she leaves Logan and marries Jody Starks she finds him also narrow minded who always wants to control Janie as a 'Trophy Wife'. Although Jody becomes popular leader he never allows Janie to take part in any social functions and ceremonies. Jody dies due to kidney failure. Finally, she finds a black man named Tea Cake. Cake is better than previous husbands as he was no dominating and but was entertaining. He also teaches her fishing, hunting and also allows her in every ceremony with him. Therefore, she realizes that she finds own cultural identity and freedom with Tea Cake.

Hurston not only wrote about the invisibility and double marginalization of blacks but also lived the quest of twentieth century and succeeded to pursue beauty, individuality, and affirmation of the time. So, this research studies Zora Neale Hurston as a folklorist, ethnographer, novelist and storyteller who is deeply rooted with the celebration of black culture in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Her writings and her life too are characterized by a spirit of humor, contradiction, and imagination (Wintz and Finkelman 86). In her masterpiece *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie, a black woman and the protagonist is in the quest of her own typical culture and tradition to victory the triumph of emancipation. Being black means being invisible and living on the margins of society in early 20th century. As a result of this invisibility, they are forced to leave the circle of power to the outskirts neglected from the mainstream society. They cannot control their bodies over their invisibility and their inherent potentiality which results protest and resist. As the blacks start protest against such domination and exploitation of whites over them either they oppose directly or indirectly. And in this novel rather than direct

opposition, Janie presents her resistance applying negligence and abandonment of the main stream. She, indeed, rejects white norms and rules to choose black's culture, tradition and social traits which at last emancipates her. Janie Crawford is born invisible, grows up invisible and is forced to be kept invisible and silence all through the novel. The same invisibility and seek of their rights and sound along with re-inscribed power frames the theme of the novel.

The location of her story within black-led communities suggests an appreciation for black self-reliance and autonomy. On her life trial, Janie flees with Tea Cake to the muck in order to feel and live with own culture and enjoys their pastoral black life. Her use of black dialect also provides an authentic portrayal of these black southern towns. The dialect of the people in her original town, Eatonville, and the Everglades, slightly varies in terms of its use and words. That demonstrates the black folk in these towns were unique and different. Black folk used different expressions, and spoke in slightly altered dialects from place to place. In this regard, Hurston seems artistic to illustrate difference in using language according to their class. For instance, Joe Starks, whom we presume had a higher degree of education, spoke in a different dialect than the townsfolk. But all in all it reflects the celebration and emergence of typical black dialect.

Since the publication of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching Gods*, several critics have expressed their views. Hurston and Oprah in their review assert:

Sure, Janie has love troubles - the first husband is unsexy and not rich enough, the second is self-important, and the third has gambling and drinking problems - but in general she triumphs, shrewdly collecting

position, money and wisdom from each man in succession. In spite of her circumstances, Janie stubbornly believes that she deserves to be rich, happy and sexually satisfied. Brazen self-love becomes her religion, and her primary eccentricity. (12)

Hurston and Oprah try to say that Janie is in search of material love. She is in search of money and position. Through her journey she gets knowledge how to fight against the whites to meet her eccentricity. Hurston in her review asserts:

The true point of contention is the painful lack of agency black women have, when both white men and black consider black women their property, and where even white women can, in jealous fits of rage, turn against their black sisters to blame the victim. (17)

In these lines, Hurston says that women have no agency. She is treated like property by the society. But Janie wants to fight against such forces and achieve the position that Nanny dreamt for her. Hurston further says that:

This is, unfortunately, the best-case scenario of how Janie can relate to a man — Tea Cake is the only man she actually loves, who actually sees her as a person rather than as a beautiful ornament. Indeed, even he sees her as a testament to his virility, even as he also does his best to love her. Other men are insincere, verbally abusive, conniving, possessive, or completely oblivious to her as a person rather than simply as a pretty wife, useful piece of property, or income source. (18)

She says that Janie's last husband Tea Cake is the only man who regards her as a human being. Due to such feelings of Tea Cake she too starts loving him. Though there are many research conducted in this novel, this research attempts to analyze it from cultural perspective. Richard Wright, one of the most prominent black writers and intellectuals of the late thirties commented on the novel as:

Zora Neale Hurston lacks an excuse. The sensory sweep of her novel carries no theme, no message no thought. In the main her novel is not addressed to the Negro, but to a white audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy. She exploits the phase of Negro life which is 'quaint', the phase which evokes piteous smile on the lips of the 'superior' race. (21)

Wright regarded the work as themeless and meaningless. He tells that she wrote it to bring pity and sympathy over blacks because Hurston portrayed her people as quaint and in doing so she exploited her own countrymen. Alice Walker said about the book *Their Eyes were Watching God*, "there is no book more important to me than this one" (32). Walker considers the work as the key document of black people. Janie Crawford, the female protagonist of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a black woman. To be black and to be a beautiful woman entails the extreme visibility in case of body in the society. So, Janie is under the oppressing gaze of the patriarchal society. But, she manages to gain the autonomy through strengthening her invisibility to emancipation hiding it from the disciplinary power structure. Therefore this study will discover the way Janie learns to free herself from the chains of suppressing society by changing the way she deals with it.

Zora Neale Hurston was born and raised in Eatonville, Florida, the first black incorporated town in the United States. Eatonville is the name of the fictional town in where Joe Stark stands himself as the Mayor. Hurston's mother died when she was only 13 years old. Like Janie, Hurston was raised by relatives after her mother's death. Although Janie doesn't seem to be Hurston's surrogate and this is not an autobiographical novel either. Two important things are fictionalized in this book. First, Janie is presented fatherless in the novel, whereas Hurston's father was the Mayor of Eatonville. He was an icon of great respect and influence in the town. But to show Janie's matrilineal descent of a slave owning culture Hurston purposefully made her fatherless in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In the novel we know that Janie is the unacknowledged granddaughter of "Marse Robert" (16). He is the slave master who owned Nanny before the Civil War. Janie gets birth as the consequence of her mother's rape by a school teacher (19). Janie represents the "horizon" of hope for Nanny in the novel that will ascend to the fulfillments promised by Emancipation. A second important difference between Janie and Hurston can be traced from the matter of learning. Janie is educated by her life experiences, and Janie does not travel North in the process of acquiring education. Instead, she travels further and further South to her own culture and tradition. Her thirst of knowledge is quenched only at the last of her life. Her educational mission is not resulted due to integration of white society but of comprehension to black society.

Hurston went to Harlem in New York City leaving Florida in 1925 as a writer, and became a leading figure in the Black Arts Movement. At the same time, she also enrolled at Barnard College, and later went to Columbia University and graduated in anthropology. In the 1920s she completed her graduation under Franz

Boas, one of the foremost figures of the time. Boas sent her back to Eatonville to collect and analyze the folktales she had grown up with. While doing her job there, Hurston found the racial uplift that effort American Africans to accommodate the cultural standards of the white majority. She rejected the idea in her research and therefore she also asserted her work as distinct from the work of fellow Harlem Renaissance Writers. Instead she celebrated the rural southern African-American communities as she found them. In addition Hurston refused to censor women's sexuality. It can be seen through the physical dimension of her main character, Janie's romance of her choice.

During the Harlem Renaissance, the awakening of black culture in America, African-American artists and writers as well started to take great pride in their heritage. They started to base most of their works on the situations and feelings of being black and African-American history at that time. The Renaissance was many things to many people as it raised study and understanding of all aspects of human life and culture. It is best described as a cultural phenomenon in which the high level of black artistic and cultural production demanded and received mainstream recognition. Racial solidarity was equated with social progress and the idea of blackness became a commodity in its own right. As a result, the New Negro Renaissance is considered the most widely discussed period of African American literary history. It is not only because of ongoing scholarly debates over its origins and end but also because of its fundamental importance to twentieth century thought and culture. The Renaissance coincided with the Jazz Age and its impact was keenly felt both on an individual and collective level within the African American. During the period, American cultural industries like music, film and theatre fully benefitted from the creativity and newly discovered contributions of African American's. The

individual and collective experience as well of African-Americans was glorified in their creations. Those black ceremonies embrace the speech and lifestyle of their own personal cultural phenomenon. It portrays the situation of poor Southern blacks as a distinct culture irrespective of white Americans without any attitude of condescension.

In relation to the natures of black men and women *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston focuses the ways which one's natures and activities are shaped by their individual and collective experiences in American black cultures. It also shows how their experiences build their self-knowledge set their connection with the world around them and evoke their relationships with others. As the novel of Renaissance period, it attributes every major artistic and literary form that we now associate with African American life and culture. During this artistic time frame the visibility and intensity of the period symbolized a major shift. In which black people could claim the authority to speak about and represent their experience. In this regard, particularly, this novel is concerned with a young black woman's quest for self-discovery beyond the false values imposed on her by the society. That society allows neither women nor black people to exist naturally and freely. Through her female protagonist, Janie Crawford, Hurston questions the status of black women and the roles available to them within African American cultures. She offers them an alternate frame of reference for their unique experiences within the world and an alternate path of self-determination and autonomy. The path crafts a mythic story of a seemingly ordinary black woman whose journey takes her beyond and the expected experiences. The journey ultimately gains her knowledge of her gender and of culture which is transformative and empowering.

In this regard, Hurston tells the story of these uneducated people and shows her connection to the African American artistic awakening without making them discarded as inferior people relating the-then socio cultural scenario. Although *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was a product of the artistic ideals of the Harlem Renaissance, after the actual movement was functionally over. Destroying much of the carefree creativity of Harlem, The Great Depression started in 1929 and complicated everything in general sense. The world of literature in the 30s was dominated by a style known as Social Realism. Implementing this tool, the novel was seen as a device to reveal social flaws in the country created by the complication and released a political message as well. Hurston's imaginative story was a product of an earlier time, and although fitting as a Harlem Renaissance work, it was actually out of place among the dominant literary works.

The literary movement known as the Harlem Renaissance produced a proliferation of Black prose and poetry during the 1920s and 1930s that demonstrated black writers' ability. It was a liberating response to the restrictive standards of the racial uplift agenda. Writers of Harlem Renaissance exposed the racist oppression in American society rather they didn't simply respond presenting positive representations of African Americans. It not only mastered the then traditional literary styles and devices, but also evolved distinctive black cultural aesthetic traits of the period. Participants in the Renaissance were motivated by themes of black uplift, racial pride and solidarity. They privileged and came to expect writing that promoted these themes. Some works didn't openly illuminate and challenge American racism. Those works which illustrated black inferiority or black folk culture as dark were criticized as irrelevant. In this regard this thesis demonstrates Neale Hurston's expanded nuance to Harlem Renaissance literature. In

which she artistically included voices and exploring themes which were often neglected by other works of this period.

Their Eyes Were Watching God is considered a pivotal work of the Harlem Renaissance however it appeared during the declining period of literary rebirth, in 1937. Although, this novel is the recording of a woman's self-discovery, self-acceptance and consistent struggle for independence which is set in rural black communities of Florida during the 1920s and 30s. Though it was likely influenced by Hurston's childhood in Eatonville, and her anthropological interests in rural Black folk culture, the novel doesn't have any autobiographical reflection. Two prominent black male writers, Richard Wright, and Sterling Brown, wrote scathing reviews about it. They said that Hurston constructed insulting and minstrel-like black characters that searched white approval and failed to provide social critique. In a 1937 *New Masses* review, Wright wrote:

Miss Hurston voluntarily continues in her novel the tradition which was forced upon the Negro in the theatre, that is, the minstrel technique that makes the "white folks" laugh . . . In the main, her novel is not addressed to the Negro, but to a white audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy. She exploits that phase of Negro life which is "quaint," the phase which evokes a piteous smile on the lips of the "superior race". (22-23).

He says that instead of focusing to the upliftment of the exploited and suppressed black folk society, she treated their fate as the means to fun. Her characters want to be sung and regulated by white rather than their self conscience and self esteem.

Similarly, Sterling Brown wrote:

It is folklore fiction at its best, which we gratefully accept as an overdue replacement for so much faulty local color fiction about Negroes. Miss Hurston's forte is the recording and the creation of folk-speech. Her devotion to these people has rewarded her; *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is chock-full of earthy and touching poetry Though inclined to violence and not strictly conventional, her people are not naive primitives. This is not the story of Miss Hurston's own people, as the foreword states, for the Negro novel is as unachievable as the Great American Novel. Living in an all-colored town, these people escape the worst pressures of class and caste." Having gotten rid of condescension, let us now get over implication! (409-10)

Male writers are too equally motivated like them by their own personal politics. Therefore, they may have suffered from literary blind spots. And apparently they fail to appreciate Hurston's unique literary contribution to black literature. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* differs from contemporary black novels of its time. It establishes unconventional narrative technique: the story is set in all-black community which is rich in black folklore, and it lacks any significant white presence. Hurston skillfully and abundantly uses the typical black southern dialect. She differently uses it according to the characters' education, place of birth, class status and the occasion. She also establishes her protagonist as an independent black woman who struggles against male-dominated world to meet her quest; the ultimate emancipation-the horizon of freedom. Janie finds herself capable of thinking and

challenging the male expectation and the then societal conventions that she perceived only through her self-discovery.

Contrary to the reviews of Wright and Brown, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is not a protest novel because it clearly addresses some major themes reflecting the rural black community in subtle ways that lacks in most of the contemporary texts. This is most apparent in how Hurston depicts the protagonist Janie Crawford. The story begins when Janie returns to Eatonville. Among the judgmental stares and gossip of the villagers, without any hesitation, Janie proceeds to her destination. Her best friend, Pheoby Watson mentions the town gossip surrounding her and insists Janie to respond. But she seems dismissive and indifferent: “Ah don’t mean to bother wid tellin’ ‘em nothin’, Pheoby. ‘Tain’t worth the trouble. You can tell ‘em what Ah say if you wants to” (*Their Eyes* 416). The remaining of the book proceeds when Janie recalls her childhood up to her last marriage. Hurston makes Janie the chief narrator to center the book and its characters on the perspective of a woman.

The theme of love and marriage take an important role in the novel. Janie Crawford throughout her life experiences three marriages, two of them dysfunctional, and all of them characterized by domestic violence. In each of them the male counterparts attempt to define, restrict and control her individuality whereas she refuses and abandons those rules to be acted upon her life. Janie reluctantly marries Logan Killicks as the advices of her grandmother to a significantly older and successful farmer. It is easy to recognize that Nanny arranged Janie’s marriage without Janie’s agreement. In this regards Hurston through the narrative of Nanny explains that it is the role of the slavery that shaped her perspective: “Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn’t for me to fulfill my

dreams of whut a woman oughta be and do. Dat's one of de hold-backs of slavery. But nothing can stop you from wishin' (559). Nanny through these lines wants to suggest Janie about the limited labour role designed for the women "De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see" (538). Logan behaves Janie as more of a farm hand and domestic worker than a wife. But Janie is not merely presented as the helpless victim because whenever right opportunity comes she plays the right steps. In Hurston's narrative when Janie meets Joe Starks, an ambitious man from Georgia she went off with him leaving Logan in his farm.

Janie's married life with Joe started well in the town of Eatonville. But soon as Joe started to see Janie just as his possession it soured. He attempts to control her movements, friendships, and physical appearance as well. Like Logan, Joe behaved Janie merely as his personal laborer and he forced her to work in the town store that he established in the town. Just like her relation to Logan, Janie's marriage to Joe provided her all material security and physicality but no romantic love. Once again, Janie stands up to resist her: she not only denies those male gestures but also embarrasses him in response to one of his typical demeaning remarks about her. Later, Joe dies leaving Janie with property and money. Lastly, she chooses Vergible Woods, popular as his name "Tea Cake" as her husband. This is the only one in which Janie's husband accepts her for who she is. Seeing their healthy relationship, cooperation and balanced life it is clear that he views her as a peer rather than a mere possession or laborer. But Hurston even complicates this smooth relationship by demonstrating abuses and possessively agonizes over her attraction. While saving Janie from drowning during the hurricane, a rabid dog bites Teacake. This incident brings a bad luck for Tea Cake, as he becomes mad. Teacake,

later, attempts to shoot Janie in his madness which ironically compels her to shoot her one true love in order to save herself.

Janie denies her relationships with men or expectations of her time and neighbors and defines herself according to her own interest autonomously. So, this novel marks an important departure in conventional women's literature of its time. Pheoby, Janie's best friend, is inspired by Janie's story and vows to spend her life with her own husband Sam having more quality. Janie's resistance to patriarchy and Pheoby's determination to live in self-autonomy provide the themes of black self-sufficiency and the relevance of black folk culture of the time. Thus *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as it challenges the patriarchy and reaffirms new paradigm of cultural criticism is a model political works of the 1930s and 1940s.

This novel presents the concept of 'double consciousness' propounded by W.E.B. Dubois, as in the novel, she knows who she is and who she is not. Double consciousness is a byproduct of the white hegemony, in the sense that black are seemed to be aware in a double sense: on the one hand they are conscious of being American and not being American at the same time. In this regard the novel sketches the growth of the protagonist Janie from a naive girl to a mature woman. Janie captures this pivotal transition of her 'self' when she knows her reality "the young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place" (83). To some form of self-formation, this growth of the heroine has been the dominant critical approach to the novel. Therefore, interpretations of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* have focused on different aspects of Janie, like her psychological, emotional, physical, folkloric, feminist, linguistic, and spiritual self. And all to all in this novel she is in quest of Truth, Good and Beauty. The worldly experience is an essential

part for her living and her learning. This transcendental double consciousness grows her awareness that Nature and the Soul are two major factors for her emancipation.

As it reasserts the connection between black feminism and womanism, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* reflects the central concerns and aesthetics of Alice Walker. It also serves as one of the inspirational texts advancing an analysis of social hierarchies and chaos. In this regards, this research attempts to examine some of Hurston's political philosophy that celebrates Black life and culture independently of oppositional definitions and white externality. It also puts forth a strong intersectional critique which is often embedded in the material culture and physicality of the character's worlds. This analysis will utilize nature, bodies, and material culture to explore the way both a cultural perspective and intersectional critique. This advance reading of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* suggests new directions for cultural criticism of African women's work that resolves the debates concerning the appropriate theoretical construct.

Hurston wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in 1937 while she was in Haiti collecting folklore on Voodoo. A year later, she published *Tell My Horse*, which consists the findings from her expedition. The history of these publications suggests that Haiti is rich in Black folklore and every cultural aspect. Hurston's interest in Haitian Voodoo is acknowledged by most critics but their analyses of this belief system and its impact on her work don't extend beyond perfection all the time. Ellease Southerland's essay, "The Influence of Voodoo on the Fiction of Zora Neale Hurston," published in the 1979 collection; *Sturdy Black Bridges* is a notable exception about this issue. Southerland's article makes an important contribution to readings of Hurston's integration of folklore and fiction. The essay discusses the

appearance and significance of various "Voodoo" signs, symbols and rituals in Hurston's fiction. And in more specific terms, it identifies the use of voodoo symbolism in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as very early in the history of the novel's criticism. But Southerland does not cite her sources for the significance of various numbers and colors which appear repeatedly in Hurston's fiction. Therefore her analysis seems to be based on anecdotal evidence which ignores the cultural distinctions amongst Haitian, Louisiana and other kinds of voodoo and hoodoo. These aspects of the essay contribute to the failure, or refusal, of succeeding generations of literary critics to further examine the cultural influences further that Southerland found in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Some critics have categorized Hurston's study and incorporation of voodoo as an intriguing curiosity. Perhaps they consider her research and incorporation within the purview of anthropology. Such narrow parameters, leads the readers to a general inability to identify its real extent included in the novel. But she vividly used voodoo ethnography in her literature to enable and enhance the female empowerment and explore African-American cultural identity.

Hurston incorporates Voodoo as a blending of African and European religious beliefs and practices in portrayal of her characters. With the essence of voodoo its devotees achieve harmony with their respective individual natures and with the world in which they live. It is a religion that can be adapted through the integration of new symbolic materials to address the changing social and political circumstances of the cultures that practice it. It can be described as the adaptability and its historical and social relevance. In this regard *Their Eyes Were Watching God* reveals the unique experience of black people, especially of women. Hurston takes their typical black system of beliefs and practices replete with powerful female

deities, female leaders and female adherents. As a religion it reflects the desires and aspirations of its followers. Voodoo is an effective vehicle through which Hurston explores the role and status of black women within modern African American Culture. It functions as an alternate form of power for those that might otherwise feel powerless, and which privileges women's lives in ways other religious traditions do not. Through the integration of voodoo imagery and symbolism, Hurston provides an alternate path to empower and strengthen the women which can transform and transcend the socio-cultural structure and existential.

At the core to the religion lies the existence of *loa* or *mystères*, spirits or deities that personify the experiences, hopes, and aspirations of their devotees. Although it lacks unified social or ideological superstructure, voodoo consists basic beliefs and practices that characterize the religion throughout the world (Métraux 13). The followers take it as the remedy of ills, the satisfaction of needs, and source for hope and survival. In this regards, she crafts a mythic story of an ordinary black woman whose spiritual and tireless journey to self-discovery takes her beyond the common and expected experiences of her gender and her culture. Her courage to speak and to live by her own inner truths ultimately gains her knowledge and agency that is transformative and empowering. Through the characterization of Janie, Hurston offers a pass way to selfhood for black women. The path transcends the stereotypical representations of black women as sexual objects, mules and breeders to the broad way of freedom and life. She shapes an image of black womanhood which reflects self-expression, autonomy, imagination and creativity as fundamental and accepted aspects of existence. She succeeds to transform her protagonist into a heroic subject which resonates for African American women and ultimately for African American culture and history.

II: Assertion of the Native Afro-American Culture through Self-Celebration in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

One must have the understanding of the concept of cultural substructure to know the historical transformation of the texts and to define its relationship to power and knowledge. Edward Said in his *Orientalism* suggested several ways to counter the western domination and white externality. Direct rejection of the domination, building the hybrid identity for the strength and the self-celebration and self-efficacy of the native culture irrespective of the western culture are some notable ways. Among these strategies present novel incorporates the theme of self-celebration and self-discovery of the native African culture and reality as the resistance against the white hegemony and European externality. Zora Neale Hurston wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in seven weeks while she was in Port-au-Prince, Haiti doing her research about anthropology and studying as an initiate under the tutelage of Haiti's most well-known voodoo *hougans* (priests) and *mambos* (priestesses). In this regard, this novel highlights the connection between the construction of self and cognition. According to Patrick S. Bernard, "cognition is the inner essence of an individual that embodies the idea of "thinking, seeing, speaking, and knowing", but is often determined by one's exterior environment. Janie, the protagonist, uses her cognitive skills in order to find her identity and throughout the novel develops her cognition further. While Janie is living in a sexist society she continues to rise above her opposition specifically that of her three husbands.

Bernard shows this theme when Janie and Logan exchange words before Janie deserts him as the turning point for Janie and what makes her ready to leave him. Bernard further points out that Logan mistreats her and serves her the beginning

form of self-construction by treating her as an infant. It implants the emerging potentiality of her inner essence of self as she says “Ah wants things sweet wid mah marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think. Ah”(23). In a conversation with Jody, Janie defends 'womenfolk,' disagreeing with the sexist claim that God made men "different" because they turn "out so smart" (70). When she states that men "don't know half as much as you think you do," Jody interrupts her saying, 'you getting too moufy Janie. . . Go fetch me de checker-board and de checkers' (70-71) so that he and the other men could play (Bernard 9). The comment from Jody, Janie's second husband, attempts to suppress her voice and manipulate her thoughts. Rather than acting submissive to Jody, Janie for a brief moment contends with Jody by telling him how men misunderstand women. Jody fears that Janie's thinking will lead her to gain more knowledge and enhance the speaking nature to her mind. Eventually it leads Janie to achieve the power of knowledge to recognize and change the mistreatment, misinterpretation and unfairness that she has been receiving. Bernard proposes this idea to represent society's assumption that women are of limited cognition sketching Jody's relationship with Janie. This assumption positions women in subservient roles that limit their ways of thinking, speaking, and seeing.

Bernard also focuses how her relationship with Tea Cake influenced her cognition along the description of Janie's relationship with Jody and Logan, He takes forth the idea that Janie's construction of selfhood blossoms when Tea Cake, her third husband, allows her to participate in experiences unimaginable to her. While Logan Killicks gives her no opportunity of expressing her and Jody overpowers her expressive inner; Tea Cake allows her construction of self cognition. Therefore Bernard's main point is that self-construction is always influenced by cognition. It

means knowing, thinking, seeing and speaking are the most important factors of self in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

In "The Hierarchy Itself: Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and the Sacrifice of Narrative Authority," Ryan Simmons argues that Hurston presented a strong voice to question the model of authority that uproots an oppressive system with other systems and offered an alternative. By the models of authority, Simmons means the narrative voice of the author and Janie's as well that leads the journey beyond expectation. In this regards, Hurston reflected the different ideologies of Booker T. Washington and W. E. Du Bois through the sketch of characters like Logan Killicks and Joe ("Jody") Starks. Washington believed blacks must begin at the bottom and work up gradually to achieve positions of power and responsibility on the basis that whites allow them economic progress, educational opportunity and justice in the courts before they could demand equal citizenship. Like Washington, Logan models the path of "gradual progress" that would not threaten the white-dominated sphere of power and Hurston presents his practices as an exchange between liberty and modest prosperity but Joe reflects the model of assertion of dignity and less compromise as advocated by Du Bois. According to Du Bois, Blacks should have the same rights as white citizens and they should not have to sacrifice their constitutional rights in order to achieve a status that was already guaranteed. However, the issue shown by Joe's eventual isolation from the community dialogue and Janie's overpowering of him through a usurpation of authority, Hurston shows that the weakness with Joe's approach is that it mirrors that of white suppression.

Their Eyes Were Watching God, best can be describe as an American southern literature through its inclusion of rural southern setting, its focus on the relationships between man and nature, the dynamics of human relationship and the hero's quest for independence. Eatonville and Everglades are the two most significant setting in this novel. Eatonville is the first all-black incorporated city in America. Later Janie migrates with Tea Cake to 'the muck', the place typically set only for blacks. She longs to be a part of this vibrant social life, which at its best offers her warmth, safety, connection and interaction. Janie constantly interacts with the community people around her, and it helps to expose her quest for freedom and independency .At the muck, Janie and Tea Cake along with other blacks, share and celebrate their typical rural cultural traditions-picking the beans, playing, eating and feasting in some ceremonies. When Tea Cake, Janie and Motor Boat seek shelter from the storm, the narrator notes that they "sat in company with the others in other shanties" (152). It doesn't mean that they are sharing the same room but all of muck people are suffered by the hurricane and shared a communal bond, against the overwhelming impersonal force of the disaster. This portrayal shows Hurston's deep interest and emphasize on the Black life and culture.

As the title, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* suggests Hurston closely deals around the relationship of man, nature and Gods. The natural world reveals the limitations of human power which never can master the supremacy of God. Regulated by the nature or the supreme power of god, everyone in the world must survive on the will of the nature. In this novel, Jody attempts to achieve fulfillment through the exercise of power when he tries to control everything and everyone by the exercise of his authority and his money. He labours at his best under the illusion that he can control the world around him but as the disease sets in, he starts to lose his illusion

and feels the limit of human power and this results loss of his authority and ultimately he dies. Even Tea Cake, is filled with hubris as the hurricane whips up. He is certain that he can survive the storm through his mastery of the muck but he too is forced to flee the hurricane and struggles to survive the ensuing floods.

It was inevitable that she should accept any inconsistency and cruelty from her deity as all good worshippers do from theirs. All gods who receive homage are cruel. All gods dispense suffering without reason. Otherwise they wouldn't be worshipped. Through indiscriminate suffering men know fear and fear is the most divine emotion. It is the stones for altars and the beginning of wisdom.(168)

Jody's power oriented approach towards achieving fulfillment, and Tea Cake's mastery over natural phenomenon both failed but only the supremacy of the god revived. Hurston in this way excavates the scope of one's power and the greatness of God. All the characters are compelled to watch the God his divine grace which Hurston encloses with the typical believes of the blacks.

The inclusion of nature and natural symbols also is connected with the black myth and culture. Black symbolism mainly resolves around natural symbols and imageries, mythical representation of deities, nature God—Sun, Water and Air and ghostly bodies. The sun, the water and the air are regarded as the basic sources for every life and in black culture and ceremonies they take the god's position. Pheoby praises the God's power and supremacy of nature taking it as the supreme.

If it was nature, nobody wouldn't have tuh look out for babies touchin' stoves, would dey? Cause dey just naturally wouldn't touch it. But dey she will. So it's caution." "Naw it ain't, it's nature, cause nature makes

caution. It's de strongest thing dat god ever mad, now. Fact is it's de onliest thing God every made. He made nature and nature made everything else.

Therefore, as the main sources and inspiration of their life they pray them as their nature God, whom they depend their life either to exercise in power: a leading or lead. They pray them for their better life as their traditional root of cultural and religious creed that remains near to the embodiment of voodoo. Presentation of hurricane and flood is fearful exposition of natural forces. On the one hand black excel to their struggling life and on the other it also lessons them how to fight against such forces to lead them towards succession -their ultimate goal of emancipation.

'The pear tree' and 'horizon' stand for beauty and pleasure, as the embodiment of nature and the beautiful side of human life. Implementing the imagery of 'the pear tree' and 'horizon', Hurston wants to show Janie's pure vision and search for 'horizon' of her life. Janie seeks 'horizon' -goal of her life, independent free life through the love, understanding and co-operation. To meet this goal everywhere she denies and neglects the white mainstream rather than going on protest and brawl. But the hurricane represents the destructive fury of the nature as such it functions as the opposite of the pear tree and horizon. It is simply a force of pure destruction, lacking consciousness and conscience which makes the characters wonder what sort of world they live in. Janie, Tea Cake and other characters wonder how they can possibly survive in a world filled with such chaos and pain.

Hurston also implies racism in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* operating as a culturally constructed phenomenon and it affects anyone, white or black, as a free floating forces. Hurston's this perspective is undoubtedly influenced by Franz Boas,

who argued that “ideas of race are culturally constructed and if anything the skin colour indicates little about innate differences”. In other words racism is cultural force that individuals can either struggle against or yield to rather than a mindset rooted in demonstrable facts. Mrs. Turner, a black woman with white features, wants to be close to Janie only because she looks a bit white who acts and wants to be a white. Being herself black, she sees difference between black and white wants to discriminate. Similarly, Janie, as her attempt to save herself shots Tea Cake and presented in the court. The jury found her not guilty since the murder was accidental and justifiable. She is scorned by her black friends but comforted by white woman who shows the racist world view of the southern society, where blacks are taken as inferior and white as superior race. Therefore the issue of racism operates in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* just like the hurricane which is an environmental force to challenge Janie in her quest to achieve harmony with the world around.

Different to any male partners, Hurston exposes Tea Cake as an only medium to achieve self-autonomy in Janie’s journey. He represents an independence from reliance on communal confirmation with Janie and community as well. He serves as a mirror for Janie to discover her narrative power that ultimately handed her the redefinition of their gender. He supports her in every step and allows her to discover every innate power and skills. In relation to the author's narrative power, Tea Cake is the essence of a good reader, one that is accessible to the transformative message of the text. Whatever they do and however they present shows the ultimate exercise of their independency and exercise of freedom at the muck. Language is the understanding and sharpening of one's identity while communication comes second. In Hurston's innovative narrative, she is attempting to fulfill the "ideal narrative", which is one that nurtures and changes both the reader and the author. Using her

unique narrative technique she exposes the theme of spiritual journey of Janie towards its fulfillment.

One of the strategies of the self celebration implied here in this novel is the exploration of the self and of the nature of people. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston explores the natures of black women and black men which are shaped by their individual and collective experiences within American and African American cultures. She also explains how their experiences enhance their self-knowledge, their connection with the world around them and their relationships with others. More specifically, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is concerned with a young black woman's quest for self-discovery and spiritual fulfillment beyond the false values and exploitative social substructure of the society. The society allows neither women nor black people to exist naturally and freely. For the fulfillment of the quest blacks live through different struggles and sufferings. Their spirit and motif of life shapes their journey towards the horizon. The black believes on mysterious forces and powers that govern the world and the life of those who reside in it. Through their set of beliefs the life is ranged towards some artistic forms that function in conjunction in those imageries and symbolisms.

As the strategy to counter the phallogocentric worldview of western metaphysics, Hurston uses the voodoo culture in this text. Employing voodoo as an inter-text for her novel, she explored a system of beliefs and practices full with powerful female deities, female leaders and female disciples. As a religion it reflects the desires and aspirations of its followers. Voodoo functions as an alternate form of power for people to strengthen them to build their self-efficacy and determination towards the goal. It privileges women's life in different than

other religious tradition which explores the role and status of black women.

Hurston provides an alternate path for those women through integration of voodoo which is an effective vehicle to cast their search.

At the level of spirituality Janie resembles two aspects of voodoo loa: the *rada* and the *petro*. The *petro* and the *rada* contrast most with one another because *petro* are the hot or aggressive and restless- whereas the *rada* are cool or calm and peaceful. The *rada loa* are considered “high and pure”. They are gentle gods who do only good things for people. Janie got this quality as a tireless quester and sufferer who completes her journey of threshold in her total consciousness and patience. *Petro loa* are more implacable and violent than *rada* and they may exercise violence of “red-eyes” and sometimes it can also be evil and even cannibal. Despite this fact, they can also be made to do good things blending with the essence of the *rada*. Coolness overall is valued and so is the ability and inclination to protect oneself and one’s own if necessary. Love and support within the family of the voodoo society is the proper balance of two contrary forces that seem to be the most important considerations. Generosity in giving to the community and to the poor is also an important value. One’s blessings come through the community and one should be willing to give back.

The figuration of *petro loa* entered the religion during a time when slave owners sexually exploit their female slaves and separate their families as well. In her *rada* and *loa* manifestations, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, she represents the ideality of love, the purity of motherhood and women’s innate strength, patience and creativity. Janie collected her self-discovery, re-definition of female self and several foot drops to her journey throughout her life. Mainly her treatment in the-then

patriarchal society and male's dominating and defined corridor shaped her success.

The real identity and status of women can be traced when Jody shares his mind set of a woman with the townspeople of Eatonville.

Thank yuh fuh you compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin'
 'bout no speech makin'. Ah never married her fuh nothin' lak dat.
 She's uh woman and her place is in de home.(40-1)

In this regards, their ability to endure and survive through adverse circumstances and their determination to fight for what is most dear to them are remarkable points to celebrate. Hurston explores a more complex subjectivity for African American women that they must face beyond that of sexually-exploited slave and tragic mulatta through the character of Janie. She inscribes a new model of African American female selves as a heroic African American 'Everywoman'. Janie masters her world and claims her place as a fully-integrated, autonomous and creative self.

She wants to legalize an authentic African spiritual path and establish its viability as a medium of empowerment for those who are suffering being powerless. She also challenges the predominant myths and stereotypes that perpetuate the condition and treatment of women within American culture in general and black women in particular. She re-defines existing archetypal patterns of the African American female socio-cultural experience, loosening the constraints under which black women exist.

Hurston presents folklore of south and non-Christian spirituality. Hurston uses imagery and symbolism from both voodoo and black American folklore to adapt and transform the conventions of the paradigm and to situate the text within a

tradition that is identifiably African American and female. In this regards Hurston creates a modern American myth grounding its root in the African diasporic tradition. The tradition transcends what is expected and accepted as historically and culturally plausible for black women within the prevailing social order. She wants to establish a tradition through which black women can achieve selfhood and individual independency that integrates both their public and private selves. She creates a tradition that reflects agency and authority over their own lives and their own stories and let them to live in liberty.

Their Eyes Were Watching God is Janie's story of her journey to selfhood from her innocence recounted in her own mature voice that she autonomously achieved by her own tireless struggle. The details is framed and aided by a third-person omniscient narrator. Hurston does so because Janie alone cannot possess the folk wisdom and knowledge of the black experience and also cannot represent the minds and speech of all of the characters from a timeless perspective. Her individual experiences as a black woman reflects in Janie's direct discourse and for the representation of entire folk wisdom and variety of African American cultural traits and believes. Hurston establishes a third person omniscient character. The distinctive blending of spiritual and folk imagery and symbolism with her new narrative technique functions to show "past and fictional present as present time". It contributes to the mythic status of Janie's story.

When the novel begins Janie returns to Eatonville after achieving her quest and narrates what she did to Pheoby Watson, her best friend. Eatonville is the place from where she stated her journey where she establishes an immediate connection

between African-Haitian and African-American southern cultures in her initial description of the residents of Eatonville:

It was time for sitting on porches beside the road. It was the time to hear things and talk. These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. (1)

The description of the townspeople as “tongueless, earless, eyeless restores the body’s vital signs, allowing the body to move and act, but leaves the victim with no memory, no willpower, unable to speak or hear, and with “dead eyes” that stare anything without recognition. In this description Hurston links the experiences of African diasporic people living in American societies and indicates the dehumanizing effects of slavery created by the white externality. She wants to sketch the clear picture of the blacks of the town and their suffering trapped in being human and not being able to utilize their essence of being. She also hints the prolonged concept of slavery in poor southern African American communities after the Reconstruction era as well. In her description, Hurston also indicates the reformatory qualities of the community which can be restored as per the desire of the people. Once they are removed from the authority of “the bossman” and are safely settled within their own community, the townspeople repossess their strength and humanity. In this way Hurston is ultimately concerned with individual and collective self possession and self-expression.

Janie, when returns to Eatonville wearing overalls, with her long hair swinging in a braid down her back becomes the chief concern. She plays a significant role to reinforce the social archetype. The townspeople comment upon her return on the basis of their societal conscience that Hurston narrates as they perceive it.

The men noticed her firm buttocks like she had grapefruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume; then her pugnacious breasts trying to bore holes in her shirt. They, the men, were saving with the mind what they lost with the eye. The women took the faded shirt and muddy overalls and laid them away for remembrance. It was a weapon against her strength. (2)

Janie is the product of her mother's rape by her white schoolteacher "a beautiful woman of lush appearance [with] firm, full breasts and other perfect female attributes" (384). In fact, Hurston's description of Janie exposes the situation of the victory of the blacks over the white domination and exploitation. Janie challenges and in fact shoes her recent emancipation and independency that she got through her long struggling life.

Janie at the moment plays two roles: she stirs the lust of the men and evokes the envy of the women in the community. Zora Neale Hurston created a character like Janie and makes her return to Eatonville to complete her unfulfilled passion and to show the potentiality of black women and what else black women can do if they get chance. As the celebration of her African American culture, perhaps Janie sits on her porch telling jokes and laughing and playing games. She knows things that

nobody had ever told her through her unique experience, for instance, the words of the trees and the wind; the Nature. She often speaks to falling seeds and says, 'Ah hope you fall on soft ground,' as if she hears seeds saying that to each other as they passed. Hurston indicates *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that Janie has succeeded to integrate all aspects of black womanhood from her journey up to her return. This indication reveals when she shares the adventures of her life through which she has achieved this integration with Phoeby.

Janie started telling her story to Phoeby indicating as her initial conscious life that began at the age of sixteen when she saw a bee pollinate a bloom on the pear tree as it experiences her sexual awakening. She identifies herself with the pear tree leans over the gate post and waiting for “a bee to her bloom” (31). Hurston uses the metaphor of the blossoming pear tree and the horizon to frame and unify Janie’s quest throughout her life struggle. The organic imagery of pear tree symbolizes Janie’s emerging awareness of herself as a woman and her unpossessive mutually affirming passionate love. Hurston elevates Janie’s sexual awakening breaking the social stereotypes imposed on black women. Incorporating these images, rather than deviating she legalized passion and sexual desire as natural aspects of black womanhood. “The horizon symbolizes the basic life experiences to achieve a complete awareness of self along with meaningful participation in the cultures and traditions of the black community” (Hemingway 239). Therefore these images symbolize the inner and outer aspects of life, respectively. The pear tree stands for Janie’s spiritual need and horizon reflects her dream of material sophistication. And the successful integration of the pear tree vision and the horizon signifies the Janie’s quest of complete selfhood.

Her quest to the horizon and the pear tree vision is indefinitely deferred by Nanny's view that establishes the difference between the 'real' world of the then African American society and Janie's vision of her life. Nanny immediately sees Janie as 'a women' when she kisses a neighbour boy over the front gate (12). Nanny remembers herself as a former slave and the time she bore Janie's mother when she was raped by her master. And Nanny embodies society's conventional notions of black women as "mules," "work oxes," and "brood sows" (15). She tells Janie:

You know honey, us colored folks is branches without roots and that makes things come round in queer ways. You in particular. Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a women oughta be and to do... Ah wanted to peach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but they wasn't, no pulpit for me.(15)

However, Nanny's life experiences enable her to testify only to her racial and sexual oppression as a black woman. Nanny wants to see Janie safe in her life, and she defines safety as the life that provides material stability and social status as closely as the white middle-class. Consequently, she has arranged her marriage with Logan Killicks, a white widower much older than Janie who owns sixty acres of land (22).

At this point Nanny seems to be suffered and suppressed by the white domination and her exploited mentality so her vision is victimized. But Janie being unable to express her own desires melds Nanny's vision with her own. She shares her idea with Nanny that the legal union of marriage is called love: "Husbands and wives loved each other and that was what marriage meant" (20). However, living

with Killicks on the back road, Janie couldn't experience her 'pear tree vision'. She only isolates herself from the larger community, and Killicks wants to turn her into the 'mule' for which Nanny really wanted to prevent her. Consequently, Janie realizes that the institution of marriage does not guarantee the love she dreamt; and with this realization, "she became a woman" (24). It is the first significant lesson of Janie's adult life where she got complete maturity. This is the initial realization which extends her towards spiritual quest of fulfillment.

Janie turns her attention to the horizon when she is disappointed from her relation with Logan. She meets Joe Starks, a stylishly dressed enticing man from the city who is traveling through town on his way to Eatonville, Florida as he plans of being "a big voice" (28) there. As an independent step, Janie left Logan in his field working, to complete her journey to the horizon. Janie is initially skeptical of Joe because "he doesn't represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees;" however, he does "speak for far horizon . . . for change and chance" (28). The expectation of fulfilling her dream of the horizon renews Janie's hope for fulfillment of her dream of romantic love, and she flees to Eatonville with Joe.

In her marriage to Joe, Janie prefers sweetened drinks and sweet food (27) different than any other women. In fact Janie unlike any other kept women who doesn't like to work and avoids the menial labour to represent her success to her dream. As the wife of the storekeeper, postmaster and mayor of Eatonville, Janie has material comforts and enjoys a social status that sets her above and apart from the common townspeople. In this respect, Nanny's vision of material stability and respectability to Janie is perpetuated. And this issue also is refusal of the dogma made for the black women by the white patriarchy. Janie denies the social construct

and leaps to equal of those whites who enjoy their life in comfort and high material sophistication but the women especially black should follow their norms and values. Avoiding menial labour she desires to taste the physical advancement and luxury which reflects her journey towards the horizon.

But soon, Joe isolates her from the community, forbids her to engage in the daily store porch conversations with other townsfolk, and he even deprives her to attend any of the town's rituals and traditions. He tells that as the wife of Eatonville's "big voice," Janie should be satisfied to sit silently and submissively on her social throne. Joe wants to see Janie only as a "trophy wife" who always to be worn for her husband. But Janie has got potentiality and vigorous desire to meet her dream. The potential power of Janie's voice is indicated when she publicly compliments Joe on the way he handles a community dispute. Then one of the men comments: "Yo' wife is uh born orator, Starks. Us never knowed dat befo'. She put jus' de right words tuh our thoughts" (55). Janie's voice has the potential to build and affirm the community, while Joe's "big voice" seeks submission and imposes divisiveness. Janie initially submits Joe's control, allowing him to place her on a pedestal to transform Joe into a "bee for her bloom" (31). However, she soon realizes that she has equated marriage with her pear tree vision and that her ideal horizon has been impaired again.

Janie discovers that she has "no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man" (68) when Joe continues to control Janie's freedom of expression. The revival of the pear tree imagery indicates the progress of Janie's developing self. Her twenty years of marriage lessons her with the ability to find much more about the differences between women and men. She also becomes aware of how these

differences negatively influence the status of women due to their relationships within the community where they live. She shows an outward approval and obedience to Joe but she nurtures and protects her innermost self as it was. This sense of her awareness with several happenings resembles the concept of 'double consciousness.' She realizes that "she was saving up feelings for some man she had never seen. She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them" (67).

Here comes the new stage in Janie's self-discovery when Joe orders Janie to tie her hair up in a head rag so that she seems less attractive to the town's men. Joe's this characteristic model shows male's domination and the status of female of the time. This incident also enhances for female to resist and fight against such forces. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* it indicates the beginning of Janie's struggle against Joe which shows a serious point of controversy for Janie's individuality and self. She becomes conscious on her defense against the male dominated social roles collecting her strength to endure and to overcome adversity and the self confidence. This power helps to stand up for her, which is compartmentalizing her inner and outer aspects.

Janie's awareness and increasing confidence is reflected in an incident when Janie makes a mistake measuring a quantity of tobacco in the store. Joe uses the incident as a right chance to attack her womanhood in a way he hasn't before: "A woman stay round uh store till she get old as Methuselah and still can't cut a little thing like a plug of tobacco! Don't stand dere rollin' yo' pop eyes at me wid yo' rump hangin' nearly to yo' knees" (74). With this hearing, Janie's bitterness and resentment boil over; and for the first time she stands in the middle of the store in

front of all of the men and responds: “Naw, Ah ain’t no young gal no mo’ But Ah’m a woman every inch of me, and Ah know it. . . .Talkin’ ‘bout *me* lookin’ old! When you pull down yo’ britches, you look lak de change of life” (74-75).

Janie’s attack on Joe indicates her increasing confidence and awareness of her femaleness. This challenge to Joe publicly exposes his degrading masculine authority, which goes to the very core of his being. In this regard she speaks herself down from the pedestal upon which he has set her as an outward sign of his status and power. As a result, their relationship as a husband and wife starts to freeze. Joe’s loses his psychic state which contributes his falling health, kidney failure and finally that leads to his death.

Fulfilling her responsibility, Janie takes stock herself after Joe’s death. She also confronts those social conventions and ceremonies that Joe has restricted to participate. She finally rejects Joe’s and Nanny’s value system over spiritual freedom and romantic love. She reflects the imitation of white success over the celebration of the lives of black folk. Hurston narrates:

She had been getting ready for her great journey to the horizons in search of people; But she had been run off down a back road after things. . . . Nanny had taken the biggest thing God ever made, the horizon . . . and pinched it into such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter’s neck tight enough to choke her. She hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love.
(85)

With Joe's death, Janie becomes an active agent to lend her life on her own will. Finally, it is Verigible Woods, common as "Tea Cake", who will facilitate Janie's physical journey and around whom all of the imagery of the novel comes together.

Tea Cake embodies the organic union of Janie's pear tree vision as he is "a bee to a blossom—a pear tree blossom in the spring" (102). Tea Cake bears the character of an ideal lover for Janie, who will bring 'things sweet' (23) in her relationship. His name 'Tea Cake' itself indicates that Janie's desire is satisfied in her union with him. Tea Cake "seems to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps" (99). Tea Cake functions as the catalyst that helps to drive Janie towards her goal. Tea Cake not only played a supporting role in Janie's life like other men but also played a crucial role in her development. It can be seen after Tea Cake's death at the end of the novel; Janie remains strong and hopeful instead of searching any other male partners.

When she meets Tea Cake Janie has already begun to develop a strong, proud sense of self, but Tea Cake accelerates her spiritual growth. Ever since her moment under the pear tree, Janie has known that she will find what she is searching for only through love. In Tea Cake she finds a creative and vivacious personality who enjoys probing the world around the world and respects her need of development-as he also speaks for the 'horizon'. His last name 'Woods' connects him with the symbolism of the tree and the nature. Thus he symbolizes the spirits of the fields, the woods and the general outdoors. Whereas Logan treats her like a farm animal and Jody silences her, Tea Cake converses and always inspires her. Instead

of stifling her personality he encourages that introduces her to new experiences and skills of black culture.

Janie and Tea Cake's relationship symbolizes the melding of African American southern folklore and Haitian voodoo. Tea Cake tells Janie that his sleep has been troubled by dreams of touching her long thick hair. Janie begins wearing the colour blue because Tea Cake loves her in blue. In voodoo blue colour is regarded as the colour of the God: Damballah-the sky God, Agwe-the sea God and Ogoun- the God of fire and iron. This colour manifestation in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* flashes the indispensable link of black society with the voodoo and its colour symbolism. Since Janie has already begun to develop self discovery when she met Tea Cake, he helps her to her better understand. By teaching her how to shoot a gun ironically he provides her with the tools that ultimately kill him. Hurston demonstrates that Tea cake's function in the novel is not to make Janie dependent on him for happiness but to help her find happiness and security within herself. Tea Cake represents the fulfillment of the dream and her ultimate quest of her life that Janie has always had. She relates their relationship to the pear tree. Hurston narrates:

It was so crazy digging worms by lamp light and setting out for Lake Sabelia after midnight that she felt like a child breaking rules. That's what made Janie like it.(98)

Tea Cake takes Janie dancing and to the movies; he teaches her to fish, to hunt, to play checkers and to drive. So, Tea Cake leads Janie into the real touch with the world. Within the context of the quest paradigm, Tea Cake is Janie's mentor and helper. He not only helps Janie to gain confidence and insight but also accompanies on her every struggling journey as an equal partner of the life trials. Tea Cake also,

facilitates Janie's "crossing of the threshold" from the ordinary or everyday world (Eatonville) into the "world of adventure," when they move to the muck on Everglades.

Janie's long of pear tree vision is actualized in her marriage to Tea Cake, and their delightful union flourishes on the muck. Janie tells Pheoby that she told Tea Cake "Ah wants to utilize mahself all over" (107) before leaving to Eatonville. From this narration we know that there are still some aspects of Janie's identity that must be developed to achieve the level of her agency and autonomy. Janie begins to embrace these aspects of her self when she moves with Tea Cake to the muck with its "rich black earth" (125). The description of the workers who settle on the muck reflects Hurston's introduction to the working-class folk identity. Janie immerses herself in the life of the folk and becomes an accepted participant in the community for which she was waiting for long duration of time. While Joe required her silence and submission, Janie and Tea Cake play the contrary roles. They work side-by-side as companions and co-workers on the muck, picking beans. Janie learns to shoot and becomes better than Tea Cake. She develops her story telling skills through her discussion and sharing with the community people and adds her voice to the others on the muck. Their house becomes the center of the community where the blacks on the muck share their feelings and emotions and celebrate different cultural ceremonies as to reflect their independency.

The muck represents the poor, working-class folk that Hurston loved so much where Janie and Tea Cake accomplish what Hurston herself aims: a redefinition of the black community that acknowledges privileges and celebrates the unique gifts of all of its members. This act of communal re-creation is artistically

present through their relation with the people there. Janie and Tea Cake befriend with the Bahamans or “Saws” who work on the muck and perform their drum rituals and fire dances in secret. As to continue their typical cultural practice Janie and Tea Cake don’t ask the “Saws” to quit their practices and traditions. Janie and Tea Cake don’t think it is possible to get their power in challenging other’s freedom and power. Instead to flourish the nature, culture and their ownness they supported them to conduct the rituals. They assimilate the Bahamans and their unique cultural expressions into the community which they have created on the muck.

However, their delightful life on the muck cannot last long, Janie must ultimately confront same societal and natural forces that proscribe her journey to selfhood. Ironically, while Tea Cake facilitates Janie’s quest of self discovery he ultimately problematizes its successful completion. This context resembles the fact that all that is good and noble about love as well as all that is unattainable or painful about it in some level. Overflowing of love, life or any other is beyond the capacity of men to keep. This aspect of the mythology manifests when Tea Cake discovers that Mrs. Turner plans to fix Janie’s relation with her brother. Janie remains passive about Mrs. Turner’s plans. However, to show Mrs. Turner and the people on the muck “who is boss”, Tea Cake thinks his male insecurities and slaps Janie (141).

This incident is the first sign of the end of Janie and Tea Cake’s union and it sets the events in motion that will culminate in the supreme touchstone of Janie’s quest. Tea Cake’s actions indicate an outward show of his possession, which is needed to place him same as Joe Starks, while Janie comes to her ageless wisdom of life or death crisis. Janie’s treatment at Starks brings her to voice and self-awareness, and she seems satisfied to subordinate her life to Tea Cake’s because she

was indeed in search of a man like him who caress and care for her. Similarly, in *Their Eyes Were Watching* Janie couldn't control herself about her relationship with Tea Cake. Hurston realizes if Janie wants to recover herself she has to continue her journey without Tea Cake. In this case, Hurston falls in dilemma how she could set on the path to self-realization, autonomy and independence preserving the gaining of her 'perfect' union with Tea Cake, which is the integral aspect of her identity. Janie doesn't want to leave him because she has achieved the ultimate treasure of womanhood that a woman expects from a good husband in her marriage to Tea Cake. In this regard Hurston incorporates their typical black culture and belief on supernatural forces to set Janie back on the path of self-actualization.

Inclusion of supernatural and spiritual forces are reflected when Tea Cake physically abuse Janie feeling his male insecurities and interruption to the heavenly world of the muck. This also indicates offence to the sensitive temperaments of the loa. Métraux states: "In Haiti the sensitivity of the *loa* is as raw as that of the men. The least little thing offends them. . . . They even object to imprudent words spoken by their devotees in an access of rage" (98). Hurston demonstrates the severity of Tea Cake's offense in the presence of the petro loa who makes her angry presence through the presence of the great flood. As the inclusion and interpretation of their traditional cultural representation in relation to the religious preferences the rage of supernatural and spiritual forces is manifested in the hurricane that severely attacks the muck. Tea Cake's offensive treatment and the symbolic connection of the hurricane to their cultural, ritual beliefs with mythical ghost figures in relation to natural imageries symbolize the cultural incorporation of voodoo.

The Native Americans, The Bahamans and all of the animals leave the muck for high ground to save them from the hurricane. This shows Tea Cake's transgressions and decline of his fate. But ignoring nature's sign Tea Cake and Janie choose to follow the example of the white landowners, who "oughta know if it's dangerous," and remain on the muck to make seven and eight dollars a day picking beans (146, 148). Janie was in complete harmony with nature to such an extent that she understood the language of the trees and the wind (23). As a young and innocent girl, who lacks their own rationality and her instincts she supports Tea Cake's decision to remain on the muck. Janie's this decision indicates that she is in total out of control from her inner self but in total influence of Tea Cake. Tea Cake and his friends' behaviour as of the boss man indicate their interest in white authority, privileging the materialistic values of the ordinary world. In this case, they upset the delicate balance between the material and spiritual (natural) worlds which was at the muck before. That delicacy of the behaviours and construction of the community reflects the uniqueness of black cultural combination.

When the hurricane calms, Janie, Tea Cake and their friends are forced to accept the benevolence of a power, and an authority, they got greater than white landowners. In this regard Hurston sketches the concept of god that acts as the supreme power and authority in the nature that she describes in a group sitting in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. As the wheels of the nature, the lake crashes through the dikes and begins to flood the muck. As Janie and Tea Cake try to make their way to safety, Janie is threatened by a rabid dog. Tea Cake comes to her rescue, and the dog bites him. This stage brings the supreme trial for Janie's quest. As Tea Cake is 'possessed' by the rabid dog and subsequently contracts rabies, Tea Cake seems 'mad' and starts disturbing the celebration of love, life and community

on the muck. He is physically manifested into a 'strange thing' when his illness progresses (173). According to Métraux, madness is nearly always a supernatural punishment (99), which would seem to confirm Tea Cake's illness as the consequence of his rage. When Janie realizes the depth of Tea Cake's illness, she conforms herself about his death. Once again Janie waits for the God's presence when she comes to her greatest fear of losing him but all in vain. This hopelessness of Janie indicates that she will have to struggle on her own inner strength to complete her trial.

The first sign of her emerging self-awareness of her safety is her concern for her when she knows that Tea Cake has placed a pistol under his pillow. She not only removes three bullets from the chamber for making three blank shots but also places a rifle where she can easily reach it as the natural instincts. Janie's presupposition comes true. In a rabies induced bit of violence Tea Cake aims his pistol to her and attempts three blank shots. At the fourth time, Janie grabs her rifle and shoots Tea Cake through his heart for her self defense.

In this supreme ordeal she has been squeezed between two compulsions to take as a self-sacrificing wife and as an autonomous person protecting her own life. Janie proves her autonomy and agency by choosing her life over Tea Cake's, because his death is the inescapable consequence of circumstances beyond any powers. Janie also holds her capacity and desire for unconditional love and acceptance. When, Tea Cake dies leaving Janie alone many men want to attract her on the muck. But, she desires no more partners, as her quest is over. Since she has completed her quest and has acquired self-autonomy and independency through her life with three husbands, she leaves the muck to return to Eatonville. She takes a

packet of seeds as the memory of Tea Cake to remember the mock on the one hand and to feel Tea Cake's nearness with her. The seeds also symbolize the knowledge and experience that Janie has acquired in several ordeals of her life. Just as the flowers that grow from the seeds will bloom and die and bloom again in the cycle of nature, Tea Cake will live in spirit and be constantly reborn for ages through Janie's memory and imagination. Janie returns to Eatonville as a complete woman who personifies the melding of black gentry and black folk cultures. She has nine hundred dollars in the bank, property and social status. She also possesses a great respect and loyalty to the lives and unique experiences of the black working-class folks. As she returns to Eatonville, on the one hand, she is the embodiment of the sensuality, grace, beauty and potentiality and on the other she is the representative of industriousness, self-expression and autonomy. This is the reward for a successful quest of Janie when she crosses the threshold of adventure and returns to the ordinary world after completion of her destination.

Janie shares about the two most significant aspects of life with Pheoby: love and self-determination that she learnt of her life, when she returned back from her journey to self discovery. In regards to love, Janie tells Pheoby, "love ain't somethin' lak uh grindstone dat's duh same thing everywhere and do the same thing tuh everything it touch. Love is lak the sea. . . . It takes its shape from de shore it meets, and it's different with every shore" (182). She means to say that love varies its definition, touch and influences according the person. So it gives different experiences to them: sometimes it enjoys and pleasures and sometimes may give pain and sufferings. Her lesson about the importance of self-determination is, "you got tuh go there tuh know there. Yo' papa and yo' mama and nobody else can't tell yuh and show yuh. . . . Everybody's got tuh . . . go tuh God, and they got tuh find

out about livin' fuh theyselves" (183). Self determination in this regard is totally a interpersonal aspect of self understanding and discovery of one's own rather than the gift of the God. For it everyone must crawl to the God themselves crossing every barriers and obstacles. Pheoby's response, "Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus' listenin' tuh you" (183), confirms the importance of storytelling to the growth and empowerment of women and the community. It reinforces Janie's inner growth of her self and her potential power to redefine and to expand the collective consciousness of the community.

In postmodernism the issue of the ethnicity in general has been raised to counter every kind of dominations. The voices of the margins are raised to counter such hegemony. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* the black folk culture is incorporated in its full extent to challenge the western domination. Since the Puritanism and British colonialism started, the Blacks did not receive their identity rather they are excluded from the mainstream in every respect. The century long domination in the forms of color discrimination and racial injustice is still underway. To counter kinds of domination and exploitation, some of the voices are also raised by many Black thinkers in different ways like Helene Cixious, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Martin Luther King and Ameri Baraka. These thinkers advocated the direct challenge against the domination from the whites and spoke in favour of the revolution. However, the evocation and celebration of the native culture is also a very effective way to counter such hegemony. And second method has been taken as the best way to challenge the white externality by the Black scholars. Applying the same technique Hurston develops a form of challenge to the western domination incorporating the celebration of the native culture.

III: Countering Euro-Centrism in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Hurston demonstrates the legitimacy and value of using language, imagery, symbolism, and legends that are deeply rooted in ancient African tradition in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as a tool to resist against the whites. She celebrates re-inscribed modern black African American life and the universal human condition using its issues and concerns in this novel. In this regard, this novel consists a transcendent story of love, creation, survival and self-discovery and importance of native culture. Voodoo as a catalyst stands in the novel and reinforces the value of self-expression and the necessity for self-determination which plays an integral role in shaping and telling on it. Voodoo is believed to have played an integral role in the revolution in which Haiti won its independence from France. Consequently, the integration of voodoo imagery and symbolism throughout *Their Eyes Were Watching God* reflects Hurston's belief that self-determination and self-discovery is the only way to liberate and emancipate the African Americans. It doesn't show their rivalry emulation and capitulation to European values and standards of thought and behavior, but it shows their understanding, adaptation and continuation of a body of beliefs and practices. Such adaption, celebration and exploration carry African diasporic people towards the successful resistance. Implementing these tools they fight against to the social, political and economic forces that threaten and to subjugate blacks and their life.

Another unique aspect of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is its location. The entire story is set in all-black southern towns where black people, their experiences and cultural festivities lead the story forward. Janie's second husband Joe Starks actually establishes a new black town of Eatonville, Florida and

convinces the people to make him its mayor. Hurston's location of the story within black-led communities suggests an appreciation for black self-reliance and autonomy. Rather than direct encounter with the whites and their cultural power-structure they discover their innate self and creativity. The themes of black self-reliance and autonomy are ironically shown by both Richard Wright and Alain Locke. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* precisely provides an authentic portrayal of these black southern towns through Hurston's use of black dialect and native culture.. The dialect of the people in her original town, Eatonville, and the Everglades, slightly varies. This variation demonstrates uniqueness of typical southern societies and different characteristics of the black folks in these towns. From place to place, black folk used different expressions, and spoke in slightly altered dialects. Hurston also illustrates class differences in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. For instance the townsfolk spoke in a different dialect than Joe Starks, whom we suppose had a higher degree of education and his dialectical standards.

Through the characterization of Janie as the embodiment of the voodoo *loa*: petro and rada, as her innate strength entangled to her spirituality. Hurston offers an alternate path to selfhood for black women. That characterization transcends the stereotypical representations of black women that only see them merely as sexual objects, mules and breeders who are destined only to their tragic ends. She shapes an image of black womanhood in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* which reflects self-expression, autonomy, imagination and creativity as fundamental and accepted aspects of existence. In this regards Hurston brings her protagonist into a heroic existence and that impacts ultimately for African American culture through the issue of black women.

In this way, Hurston succeeds in actualizing the improbable with her seamless integration of Voodoo. She crafts a mythic story of a seemingly ordinary black woman who goes in the journey of self-discovery. The journey takes her beyond the common and expected experiences of an ordinary black woman, her gender and her culture. Hurston succeeds to actualize the improbable mission of her protagonist who at last meets its goal of independency and self-autonomy. Janie's courage and to live by her own inner truths marched her to the dream of the horizon. She ultimately gains her knowledge and agency utilizing her unique individual experience, determination, self-discovery and quest of individualism. Her knowledge that she got through her life and the subjective agency always remained transformative and empowering.

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