



Perspectives of Harlem Renaissance in Zora Hurston's novel Their Eyes were Watching God

Ali Kareem Sameer

Ministry of Education in Iraq-Anbar
Education Directorate

Corresponding Author: Ali Kareem Sameer

E-mail: theexpatriatero@gmail.com

Article Citation: Sameer, A. K. (2021). Perspectives of Harlem Renaissance in Zora Hurston's novel Their Eyes were Watching God, *Journal of English Literature and Cultural Studies*, 2(3): 29–38.

Received Date: September 17, 2021

Accepted Date: December 10, 2021

Online Date: December 18, 2021

Publisher: Kare Publishing

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E-ISSN: 2667-6214



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ABSTRACT

Zora Neale Hurston as an active member of the Harlem Renaissance, discussed the perspectives of women independence, self-expression, gender evenness and gender role in her novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God". This study focuses on some excerpts from the novel to analyze the role of Janie Crawford, the heroin of the novel who impersonates the heroin and narrator of the novel as well. In addition, the paper also discusses how Hurston characterized Janie to be her mouthpiece in the novel to speak for women in the United States for not to be submissive and humiliated for men. The paper analyzes the novel by using the hypothesis of being Hurston both as a member of the Harlem Renaissance and as a feminist. One of the most important results of the study is; it will reread Hurston's novel from two points of view; one as a feminist defender and the other as a member of Harlem Renaissance. The implication of this study is that it will answer the questions: how did Hurston characterized her heroin Janie to be the female voice of the African American women? And how did Hurston reflect the perspectives of Harlem Renaissance in her novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God"?

Keywords: African-American, Female voice, Feminist, Harlem Renaissance, independence, Janie Crawford.

Introduction

Harlem Renaissance was a movement in the 1920s that observed African-American workmanship, music, society and writing. This period denoted a critical movement in America, in light of the fact that it was unprecedented for the United States that, the way of life of African-American be viewed as important, or as Langston Hughes stated in the collection of memoirs "The Big Sea", "when the Negro was in vogue" (Rampersad 2002, p135). However, this renaissance was essential to African-Americans because it was the proof of an unmistakable social legacy. Harlem, situated in Manhattan, New York City, was at that point politically noteworthy to African-Americans because it was the center for the Harlem Renaissance where many black artists share and exhibit their literary theories and ideas. Zora Neal Hurston was one of those artists, who attempted to ensure her identity as a black independent artist. She reflected the perspectives of Harlem Renaissance in her novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God" through the characterization of her heroin Janie who suffered several traumas because she was a passionate woman. Janie is the voice of Hurston in the novel and she raises her search for identity and self-expression. Hurston is like the other female artists of the Harlem Renaissance such as Nella Larsen, attempts to depict the cultural instability and social prejudice of the American society through her novel.

Hurston tried to adjust the life of her female characters in "Their Eyes Were Watching God" to the rigid rules of the American society concerning the traditional house wife and the dominant world of men. Nanny and Janie are the two female characters of the novel who were the victims of the world of men (Lieberman 2013, p 7). Nanny as a former slave also suffers a lot because of the racism and she convinced her granddaughter Janie to marry in order to protect herself and gain social status. While Janie tried to find authentic love and good man who respect her as an independent girl not like a toy for sex. She is unlike Nanny, strived for her independence and freedom till the end of the novel when she killed her husband Tea Cake to protect herself from him and gained mutual respect of people (Lieberman 2013, p8). Through the character of Janie, Hurston discussed sexism and gave lesson for black women to be confident and achieve self-expression and not to be submissive for men.

The objective of this study is to discuss the views of The Harlem Renaissance in Hurston's novel and how she discussed certain issues like the independence of black women by making Janie as both the heroine and narrator of the novel. In addition, Hurston uses the character of Janie as her mouthpiece in the novel to display and assist the goals of the Harlem Renaissance about women that Hurston and other female artists attempted to assure through their works.

Literature Review

Many critics and writers have clarified the significance of the Harlem Renaissance to refer to the racial events that give the spark of the movement to light up as well as to clarify. Those writers do not investigate the main difference between the perspectives of Zora Hurston and those of the pioneers of the Harlem Renaissance, as well as her novels that reflect the goals and views of this renaissance during the time. Here, there is a need to mention some previous literary works that assert the significance of the Harlem Renaissance and its influence on Zora Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. So, this subject has been the field of interest of so many writers so that there is a need to mention some previous works that will be a background for the current paper. The researcher has inspected and selectively gathered the following articles in order not to repeat the findings of them.

First of all, in his study (1958), Robert Bone asserts the role of this movement in changing the district of Harlem from a place of struggle and oppression into a place of love and amusement through the joyous works of the Harlem Renaissance that depict the daily life of the black people in this district. Similarly, in his essay "Reading Harlem Renaissance" (2004), David Lewis gives a clear description of the Harlem Renaissance as social, cultural and artistic development of the middle-class writers of the black community in the United States. In this essay, Lewis explores the new works in the fields of music, poetry, fiction and drama, but he does not focus on the literary part of the Harlem Renaissance in Langston Hughes's poetry.

Secondly, in her study "Museum Harlem Is Nowhere" (2011) Sharifa Rhodes-Pitt assures the historical significance of Harlem which is regarded to be the center of Harlem Renaissance or as she calls it "the Mecca of the Refugees" or "the spiritual capital of Black America" (Rhodes-Pitt, 2011:54). Furthermore, Harold Bloom's book "Harlem Renaissance" (2004) simplifies that black artists of the Harlem Renaissance begun to rethink about their community and themselves as a group and as a part of America. Additionally, George Hutchinson's book "The Cambridge Companion to Harlem Renaissance" (2007) and his essay "Harlem Renaissance" in the Encyclopedia Britannica (2015) document a brilliant survey about Harlem Renaissance and the most prominent writers of this movement. Hutchinson shows how the popularity of black music jazz and blues enhances the rise of the movement in America. Hutchinson simplifies how the term "Negro Renaissance" is used alternatively with Harlem Renaissance to assure how it comes as an outcome of the cultural circles of the writers, philosophers and defenders of black race against the white supremacy. Hutchinson does not focus on the internal struggles that those works create in the minds of black individuals.

Furthermore, in his study (1994) Arthur Huff Fauset reveals that one of the reasons behind the emergence of this movement was the religious factor. Fauset states that many black individuals were attracted to the religious cult groups in the North of America or because of the psychological change from the rural cities of the South to the modern life of the North. Besides, the economist Gunnar Myrdal (1994) claims that one of the reasons for the rise of this movement was the high rates of deaths of black individuals who were the victims of the lynching acts. Myrdal assures that white people believed that lynching was necessary to protect the white women from the sexual advances, but the real reason was that any black individual claimed his civil right was lynched under the pretext that he tried to rape a white woman.

Apart from this, Thomas Cassidy (2011) shows the role of Paul Laurence Dunbar as a spiritual source for the Harlem Renaissance. Cassidy clarifies that Dunbar mirrored the black experience and the reality of their agony and anguish. Similarly, in their studies Amrita Singh (1976) and Carry Wintz (1996) explain that Dunbar represented the historical connection between black writers of twentieth century and black generation of the nineteenth century. Similarly, Christopher Beach's book "The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth Century American Poetry" (2003) summarizes the beginning and the rise of Harlem Renaissance in three periods: 1917-1923, 1924-1926, and 1926-1935.

Hurston took part in the Harlem Renaissance through her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that reflect the views and perspectives of this renaissance.

Zora Hurston: A Short Biography

Zora Hurston's date of birth is mysterious, nobody knows her accurate date of birth, but her biographers claim that she was born in 1891 in Notasulga, Alabama. Her father John Hurston was a black preacher and carpenter while her mother Lucy Potts Hurston was a school teacher (Lieberman 2013, p9). Zora is the fifth child of eight children who grew independently without their mother, this makes Zora becoming the most strong and powerful girl who always fights with her brothers. Her mother dies very early and this event changes her childhood to a rough and tumble one (Ash 2001, p2). Her family moves to live in Easton Ville, Florida and this place forms the setting most of her fiction like *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942). This story exactly portrays the oppression and prejudice that Hurston and other African Americans experience in the United States. During her childhood, she suffers because of her mother who asked her to do difficult works for a child such as not to remove pillow under her head and the "clock and mirror" are not to be draped (Ash 2001, p3). Because of the difficulties of life, she works as a maid for white families at the age of fourteen. Then, she attends Morgan Academy in Baltimore and later at Bernard College where she is being taught under the supervision of Franze Boars (Telgan& Hill 1998, p301). She starts writing when she graduates from Howard University and begins her job as a waitress to support herself and live independently away from her stepmother who treats her very badly. She writes her story *John Redding Goes to Sea* in 1921. When the Harlem Renaissance rises, she was one of the active figures through her cooperation with literary group of writers like Alain Locke, Langston Hughes and others. She is inspired by the philosophy of Locke who encourages her and other young artists of the renaissance to celebrate their race and culture. She joins the literary circles of writers of the Harlem city in 1925 as she moved to live there in that year.

Accordingly, she gains a great reputation through her fiction that impressed literary writers like Mrs. Rufus Osgood Mason; a white rich lady who supported Hurston financially with her adventure in Florida to gather folklore (Telgan& Hill 1998, p301). During the renaissance time, she published many collections of short stories like "*Dust Trucks on a Road*", "*Drenched in Light*" and "*Spunk*" which appear in the *Opportunity Magazine* in 1920. She becomes one of the prominent female writers of the period because she was a part of the literary circle that includes prominent artists like Claude McKay, Margret Walker, Arna Bontemps, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes and others (Lieberman 2013, p 10). She studies anthropology in Bernard College where her supervisor Franze Boars supports her with her research on rural black folklore that has a great influence on her writing later on. She publishes her novel "*John's Guard Vine*" in 1934 and next year, she publishes her controversial play "*Mule Bone*" with a collaboration with Langston Hughes with whom she has a tension over the authorship rights. The play receives good attention, but Hurston feels distressed because black people being presented as "Caricatures on the stage" (Ash 2001, p 6). Then she writes many theatrical works like "*The Great Day*" (1932) and "*Jungle Fever*" that Hurston cares about it very much because it represents and assists Hurston status in later theatrical works. She settles in Florida where she begins writing her notable novel "*Their Eyes Were Watching God*" that she finishes in "seven weeks" (Ash 2001, p7). Many critics indicate that this novel is the translation of Hurston's personal life with a younger man whom she falls in love with before she leaves to Haiti. This novel is published in 1937 and receives a great attention in its heyday. She writes two more novels, but this one is the most memorable one as it depicts the female voice of Hurston as well as the dilemma of a black women in the early years of the twentieth century. She faces difficulties in publication of her novels because she was a *female*. In addition, there were no opportunities for black female writers to write and express their inner feeling at that time because women at that time is regarded to be a traditional house wife not more.

However, in 1948, she is being accused of sexually abusing for a ten-years old boy, but this charge is absolved because Hurston was not in New York City at the time of the crime. After this incident, she feels depressed because this custody has harmed her public reputation. She publishes her last novel "*Seraph on the Suwanee*" after three months, but this novel is regarded to be a failure because it lacks the elements of modern fiction (Ash 2001, p8). Then she spends her last years in Florida where she works in many jobs in order to finance herself. She suffers a sudden stroke in 1959 that causes her health to be declined gradually till her death in 1960. She is buried in a segregated cemetery with "unknown grave". In 1963, Alice Walker identifies Hurston's grave in Fort Pierce Cemetery that is engraved with a phrase from "Toomer's poem *A Genius of the South*" (Ash 2001, p8) proves Hurston's attributions to African American Literature. Hurston's writing is much longer than to cover all her works because she was the most prolific female writer of the Harlem Renaissance.

Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is the translation of her personal life where her mother Lucy Hurston is like the novel's character Nanny who wants her children to be independent persons and have a successful life. Hurston herself is like Janie, the novel female protagonist, grows without her mother and faces difficulties of life from childhood. In addition, Hurston's novel is a connection between the fiction of the ninetieth century and the fiction of the second half of the twentieth century and this is what Alice Walker mentioned in her acknowledgement

of Hurston's work, *Search for Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983) (King 2004, p233). Hurston contributes to the African-American literature through her depiction of black mother who lives in difficult circumstances in order to pave the way for the next generation of black female writers. She does so through the characterization of her heroine Janie who stands bravely against the hypocritical society who lived on the gossip of others. The novel narrates the story of Janie who comes back to her home in Eatonville after a long period of absence. The neighbors wonder why she returns in such bad states after she left as a bride with her husband Tea Cake. Her friend Pheoby Warson visits her to know why does Janie return alone? The story begins when Janie narrates the events of forty years ago of her life; which is formed by one evening meeting between the two friends (Mambrol 2021, p3). Janie is the black woman who searches for love in three relationships. The first one is with her first husband Logan Killicks who offers Janie security and support, but not love. Her grandmother Nanny believes that Killicks is the best husband for Janie so she agrees to their marriage. The second marriage is with Joe Starks, her second husband who is a man of wealthy and power. Starks attempts to support Janie with power and money, but he fails to convince her emotionally, she still feels unsatisfied with love (Mambrol 2021, p5-6). He does not understand her feelings, emotions and her inner perspectives of respect and love. Janie last relation is with Tea Cake, a black migrant who grants Janie the love she desires to have through marriage. Janie feels for the first time with satisfaction in true love with him. She travels with him to Everglades where she works in the beans field. They live happily for 18 months, during which Janie feels in a different feeling that is far from her feeling with her previous two husbands (Mambrol 2021, p8).

Unfortunately, their marriage does not last long because a hurricane hits the land and destroys everything and a rapid dog bites Cake who becomes mad and attempt to kill Janie, but she kills him to save herself. Janie feels with despair and loss and she decides to return to her home-town.

Janie Crawford's Question for Independence and Power

The central theme of the novel is true love and representing of womanhood. Janie Crawford the protagonist of the novel, is the person who presents this theme when she searches for unconditional and true love but she could not find anywhere except with Tea Cake. Hurston is like Janie; regards love as one of the fundamental and principal elements of marriage. This novel authenticates the black woman's perspective by focusing on Janie Crawford, and her life. The novel reflects a romantic gap in Hurston's life as she fails to find true love during her life. She is like Emily Dickinson who endeavors to find the spiritual love rather than the earthly one that is full with the materialistic notion of sex and traditional aspect of house life. While Nanny was submissive and being oppressed by men, Janie refuses to become "wifely and submissive" (Nelson 2015, p242). She experiences marriage many times because she wants to protect herself from the raping acts that most "predatory men" dream to have a sexual relation with her. When Janie marries Tea Cake, she finds him different from other men of the town. Although Cake has done some bad habits for Janie like stealing her money and beats her, but he still the best one for her. She tells her best friend Pheoby when she returns to her hometown that the memories of her short period of marriage with Tea Cake is enough for the rest of her life.

Hurston criticizes the black society through the character of Janie as she (Hurston) discusses how black woman is ready to lose everything for the sake of love but no man appreciates her. Hurston is like Janie, strives to be a poor black girl rather than a rich lady because she believes that simple life is the key factor toward acquiring true love. Some black writers like Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison find the novel a "fun-loving" portrayal of black woman and nothing more. They refuse to praise Hurston work because they do not believe in woman's liberty in searching for love (Thaden 2015, p240-41). This belief could be the outcome of the traditional aspects of black heritage that submerged the black culture at the early years of the twentieth century. The novel portrays the story of Janie who searches for love, independence and identity. She has the ability to take decision and lives independently, but the crucial fate of her husband Tea Cake overcomes her own will. She finds independence and power when she finally kills Tea Cake in order to protect her right in life as an independent woman. Her liberation starts when she leaves her husband Logan and runs away with Joe Starks. This incident proves that she has courage to leave her loveless and miserable life with Logan (Ash 2001, p83). Janie's independence reveals her transformational process from merely black woman who was the victim of black traditional aspects to a new identity of independence and free will. She observes herself in mirror in which she appears like a white girl. This scene asserts that she has no identity or even human right of expressing her inner feelings. According to Elizabeth Mease (1987), "Janie receives her sense of definition from others. She is a woman as object in a racist, patriarchal culture. Failing to recognize herself as the one black child in a photograph, she begins her story without name or color" (Mease 1987, p61-62).

Janie quest for love, independence and identity focuses on marriage after she has the vision of the pear tree that bees pollinate it. She realizes that this tree is marriage and she can attain her independence only through marriage. This tree is the symbol of true love that Janie has searched for through her life. This tree serves as the starting point from which Janie's personality and individuality begin to be developed (Low 1994, p170). The tree also presents Janie's fulfillment of love that being asserted when she awakes under the pear tree. Hurston explains the role of this tree through the novel when she said:

"She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the invisible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust bearing bee sent into sanctum of a bloom, the thousand sister-calyxes arches to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So, this was marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation".

Hurston 1995(1934), p183)

This revelation asserts Janie's sexual development and awakening her grandmother Nanny who realizes this fact and convinced her to marry an old farmer who does not fulfill her desire for love, respect and independence. Janie's marriage options clash with her grandmother, Nanny's hopes, who attempts to make Janie marry for money and protection rather than passion. This is understandable, as Nanny, who was "a former slave", aims to protect Janie from the world of raping and atrocity (Mambrol 2021, p10). The trauma for continuity with Janie in her second marriage with Joe, who, suppresses her independence as a wife because he thinks that if he has a control over her, she will be submissive and not runs away. She acquires her strength and power from her previous marriage as well as Joe, but these experiences give her the notion of finding the suitable man who can grants her what she searches for. This man is Tea Cake who grants her not only love, but she finds independence and power when she has married him. Janie becomes professional in judgment the true love from the material one. She becomes the "heroin" who proves herself in spite of all difficulties she has faced. Hurston professionally sketches the character of Janie to reveal the new identity of black woman who has the will and independence; female who has power and opportunities to be a creative person in the society (Mambrol 2021, p11). This process of passing from powerlessness to self-confident and self-expression was employed by many female playwrights of the Harlem Renaissance like Nella Larsen whose novel "Quicksnd" examines the psychological aspects of her protagonist Helga Crane who is like Larsen, moves from the south to the north to ask for belonging and freedom. Hurston's novel also gives moral lessons and delivers her message that every black woman should have the powerful will and encouragement to face the injustice and racism of the white society. In addition, she must overcome the traditional aspects of the house life that make most black women suffer from the mental stagnation of not being an active member in the society.

Hurston's Voice in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Hurston's novel is regarded to be about women in folk community. It is Hurston's mouthpiece toward injustices against women. It is the text by which feminist writers aim to reveal and express the female power. Janie is the main character of the novel who represents this theme through her experience with three marriages. On the other hand, many critics assume that Hurston fails to create a female voice through the character of Janie. Mary Washington believes that the novel is about "women's exclusion" from attaining their identity and power. Washington claims:

"I think it is a novel that represents women's exclusion from power, particularly from the power of speech...Janie's image of herself as a blossom waiting to be pollinated by a bee transforms her figuratively and literally into the space in which men's action may occur".

(Washington 2009, p33)

Washington continues that Janie is being controlled by Jody who enforces her to go with him to Eatonville and lives in a submissive way with the rest of the town and being the subject of laugh-making and scorn for the men of the town (Washington 2009, p33). Her submissive way comes to an end when she starts to speak about the male-dominant society in the town and this is the climax of the novel which is regarded to be the starting point from which Janie's personality begins to be changed from weakness and powerlessness to self-confident and self-expression. Janie says:

"Sometimes God gits familiar wid us womenfolks too and talks His inside business. He told me how surprised He was 'bout y'all turning out so smart after Him makin' yuh different; and how surprised y'all is goin'tuh be if you ever find out you don't know half as much 'bout us as you think you do".

(Hurston 2007(1934), p113)

However, other men do not appreciate her voice and words, throughout the context of the novel, Janie's personality is passing the transformational process from the old submissive female towards a new identity of independence and power. She realizes that she was a subject for mockery and ridiculous for Jody and other men of the town (Mambrol 2021, p12-13). She answers Jody who insults her many times that she has been changed and it is the first time that Janie rebukes Jody with such "verbal blow". She states:

"Naw, Ah ain't no young gat no mo'but den Ah aint no old women neither. Ah reckon Ah looks mah age too. But Ah'm uh woman every inch of me, and Ah know it, Dat's uh whole lot more'n you kin say. You big bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but tain't nothin' to it but yo'big voice, Humph! Talkin 'bout me lookin' old! When you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life".

(Hurston 2007 (1934), p113)

As a result, Jody rebukes Janie and dismisses her from his store which he regards to be his "Eden". This incident makes Janie recall these events after the death of Jody, which strengths her to utter her inner feelings and be the mouthpiece for the other women of America. Many critics like Barbara Johnson assure that Janie acquires her power

of speech and acting by accepting the evitable fate of self-division. Johnson asserts that Janie acquires the ability to speak not as a submissive woman but as an independent woman and her quest for identity is indicated by her "inside and outside revelation" (Wall 2000, p11). Other critics like Robert Stepto claim that Janie has not acquire her own voice as an independent female because of using the technique of narration by using a third person narrator. Stepto claims that "Janie has not really won her voice and self after all" (Stepto 1979, p55).

However, Hurston uses the character of Janie to reveal the impact of racism and slavery upon the African-American women, Janie's appearance, her long hair and dark skin, is the outcome of this "interracial rape" (Clarke 2008, p149). Hurston asserts that black women stay powerfully resistant to this slavery and it is obviously visible throughout the novel. According to Andre Lord, the visibility of black women's identity is the only aspect by which we can be powerful and strong. He states:

"Within this county where racial difference creates a constant, if unspoken, distortion of vision, Black women have on one hand always been highly visible, and so on the other hand, have been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism. Even with the women's Movement, we have had to fight, and still do, for that very Blackness. And that invisibility which make us most vulnerable is that which also is the same of our greatest strength".

(Lorde 1984, p42)

Hurston attempts to exhibit the impact of racism on black bodies as well as to solemnize the "voices and bodies" of African-American women (Clarke 2008, p150). Some critics criticize the silence of Janie in the novel in some situations whether she is expected not to be such, but Hurston through the silence of Janie, has the ability to scout Janie's inner consciousness and her mental voice. When Tea Cake appears in the narration, "his name and voice" are being heard more than Janie's voice" (Washington 2009, p35). Janie speaks about his role in the story and his support for her. She says: "Tea Cake ain't wasted no money of mine, and he ain't left me for no young gal, neither. He gives me every consolation in the world. He'd tell em so too, if he was here. If he wasn't gone" (Washington 1997, p199).

Thus, Janie seems to have a spiritual connection with Tea Cake, she loves him because he gives her what she deserves as a woman not as a toy. When she meets him in that night, she observes the beautiful moon rises in the sky with its bright color "its amber fluid...drenching the earth" (Hurston 1934, p95). The witness of the moon symbolizes contrast between blackness and whiteness, between the two races. This perception exemplifies the idea of "color binary" that Hurston and other artists of the Harlem Renaissance aim to assert the process of passing from "grief to happiness" from "loss to fulfillment" (Clark 2008, p160). Janie seems to accept her transformation and her own new image of identity as an independent woman. She transforms into new person who judges things in a different way than before. She begins to utilize her own new vision to find God and asserts that through her speech about God and the acting of "watching God" that the title indicates:

"They sat in company with others in other shanties, their eyes straining against crude walls and their souls asking if He meant to measure their puny might against His. They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God".

(Hurston 1934, p51)

Janie certifies that in the presence of darkness, there is a hope and she is still strong and tries to attain independence. The pronoun "their" in "their eyes", refers to black women or depressed people who hope that God may change their destiny to the best. Hurston aims to deliver her message that God is not found in darkness, but ones can see God by marching on through darkness (Clark 2008, p161). Janie with her new identity and vision is able to "see" through darkness, to see the light of knowledge and spirituality. In this transformation process, she is able to view God and blackness and differentiates between the state of being away from God and the ability to see through darkness. As the title of the novel refers to; Hurston presents the transformation process through which African-American women accomplish the "verbal and visual" rhetoric of self-awareness and self-estimation. She endeavors to reshape the identity of black woman who has the ability of asserting the dominance of body over the voice, to "foreground the body without surrendering the voice" (Clark 2008, p163). This process starts when Joe Starks, Janie's second husband dies, she starts to attain her lost identity especially when she marries Tea Cake whose feelings and affection for Janie is more authentic than her previous husbands. He supports her to free herself from the bourgeois ideology that suppresses her identity and voice. She finds with Cake what she is missing during her life while her previous two husband attempt to deprive her from her right in life as a woman and being independent (Clark 2008, p165). She becomes aware of her class and race through her celebration and not being shy of her race and her gender.

Constantly, she feels with intimacy toward African-American women with whom she meets during her life and have the same experience of Janie. This self-realization, is like Du Boise concept "double consciousness" where Janie was aware of her individuality as well as other people, but she has not self-consciousness regards her view in the eyes of others. She realizes that her race and class conscious is the one to which she is belonged. She does not change her lifestyle to the bourgeoisie lifestyle, but she passes a process of self-realization or transformation by which she becomes a happy woman and lives as a human being. Janie asserts the female voice through her rejection to the falsity inherit of property and acquires the knowledge and power that she has missed before. She becomes a source

of inspiration for other women in the town who will observe her as a source for inspiration to overcome the difficulties of life. Her voice forms the call for independence and liberation in the world of women as she becomes the feminist heroine who suffers many traumas during her experience with marriage.

Hurston employs Janie's voice to utter a narrative that celebrates black female identity and her individuality too (McKay 1990, p68). Hurston embeds the female slave narrative in most of her fiction to indicate the celebration of her black tradition. She exhibits the celebration of her protagonist with the rest of society [especially black women] to show the love of freedom and pride of self. Janie is the voice of all black women who suffer the injustices of the white society. Janie is the "singer" who utters a beautiful tones and anthems that celebrate her race. According to Houston A. Baker Jr., Janie is "The voice of lyrical autobiographical recall.... She is a singer who recapitulates the blues experiences of all black women" (McKay 1990, p67).

Moreover, in her study Carla Kaplan describes the text of the novel as the representation of black female who is "the symbol of sexual subject". She assures the "value and status of self-revelation as a means of social transformation" (Wall 2000, p13). Kaplan discusses the novel in terms of sexuality and does not focus on the psychological and physical transformation of Janie. Many critics locate the novel in the best texts of the Harlem Renaissance because it certifies the humanity and values of black folk as well as it deals with the transformation process of black heroin from a state of being submissive and under control to a state of autonomy and independence. Janie and her friend Pheoby represent the expressing of storytelling voice that coming into existence (Cotera 2008, p177). Both of them serve the role of innovative genre of narration that expresses the dilemma of black female in the early twentieth century as well as the new style of female speaking subjects in both literary and ethnographic contexts of black folk. Hurston aims to assert this notion through the creation of the character of Janie Crawford. Other critics believe that the life history and other aspects of experiences could reveal "significant contextualization of female's life that disappear the universality of their agony and anguish" (Geiger 1986, p334). Janie's history plays a great role as it visualizes her experiences as a middle class and multi-races female in an environment that is a place of special race, class and gender. Janie's history exposes her inner feelings about this place through her position in the social web of relations of her place and asserts her struggle and conflict within the barriers of such relations as well as "her strive to attain freedom and independence from the realm of necessity" (Cotera 2008, p179). The experience of Janie is being exposed through the narration of her story which is by return symbolizes the experiences of other black women.

However, in her study (2000), Patricia Collins persists that this type of storytelling generates a connection between "what one does and what one thinks" or it is simply connects one's identity with "Black women's experiences and ideas as a group" (Collins 2000, p24). This experience reshapes a "standpoint" that enables black women to considers their experience (Collins 2000, p25). Through this kind of storytelling, Hurston paves the path for next generation of black women to share their ideas, feelings and emotions as an opposed aspect to white female ethnographer. This belief certifies the theory of making and practice of black women (Cotera 2008, p182). Janie transforms into a mouthpiece of the people in Eatonville when she tells her friend Pheoby that she [Janie] will informs her about her stories, but Pheoby must tell these stories to others with a sense of empathy and intellectuality (Cotera 2008, p180). Janie says "we been kissin' friends for twenty years, so Ah depend on you for a good thought. And Ah'm talking to you from the stand-point" (Hurston 1990, p7).

Janie mixes her storytelling with specific aspects of her experience as a child and a young woman that frame her self-consciousness about her race, gender and class that interact among each other. She narrates her story by revealing the crucial experience of her mother when she was raped by a schoolteacher and her work in a house of white family (Cotera 2008, p183). When Janie observes the photograph that was taken by a white man, she wonders "where is me?" She inquires "I don't see me" (Hurston 1990, p8). This indication asserts that Janie does not identify herself as a child because she was black. When Miss Nellie answers Janie by referring to a "de dark one" and tells her "Dat's you, Alphabet, don't you know yo' ownself?" at this moment Janie realizes that she is "black" and she replies "Aw, aw! Ah'm colored!" (Hurston 1990, p8-9).

Janie understands her social status in society and how she must take care of herself. This passage indicates the sever circumstances in the post-reconstruction era where black people come to understand and estimate their fate and experience as "colored" people (Cotera 2008, p184). Janie has self-acknowledge by identifying herself as a black girl and what this means to her in a time when crucial ideologies between black and white communities were at its zenith. She believes that she is different from black children when she was at school and this difference introduces her to the mechanism of colorism portraying by the process of marginalization from the black playfellows. When Janie grows up and becomes a young lady, her grandmother Nanny was afraid of the acts of raping that were present in the society so she informs Janie that she must marry to protects herself from such acts. In addition, Nanny claims that the necessity of marriage for black woman in the period of reconstruction comes because of the dominance of white man and his control in the American society (Cotera 2008, p185). Nanny says:

"Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fn as Ah been- able tuh find out. May be its' some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell the nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but

he don't tote it. He had it to his women folks. De nigger women is de mule uh de world so far as Ah can see".

(Hurston 1990(1934), p14)

Nanny is like Janie, has a personal experience and story, she tells Janie that she will narrates her story and "understanding" that Janie and Pheoby share between each other. Nanny's story also inspires the women of her generation. It gives voice to the "muted aspiration" of black women who fail to achieve their dreams and hopes (Cotera 2008, p184). The experience and storytelling of these women assert the female voice through the novel, but Janie's role is the dominant one as she becomes the female voice that inspires the subsequent generations of black feminists. The voice of Janie continues throughout the novel and reaches its peak in chapter 19 when her last husband Tea Cake dies. She comes to recognize herself as a "unique voice" that she can control and own without the assistance and control of man (Florman& Kestler 2015, p 5). Janie aims to discover this voice and develops it to be her own alone in order to express her inner feeling and emotions as an independent woman. She succeeds in achieving her goal and desire to be both the protagonist of the novel as well as the storyteller or the narrator of this story. Hurston's use of dialect is also another aspect that through which she makes a balance among different aspects of narration in the novel. She endeavors to present her own voice or the voice of black woman that was unrecognized or not worth listening to" (Florman& Kestler 2015, p 6) through these aspects of narration.

Hurston's style of writing asserts her passion and alteration to black folk tale that she shares with the audience through her narration of interesting stories and using her own magic in this kind of narration. Barbara Johnson (1995), speaks about the structure and style of Hurston's writing. She points out:

"If, as Hurston often imagines, the essence of telling "lies" is the art of conforming a narrative to existing structures of address while gaining the upper hand, then Hurston's very ability to fool us into thinking we have been fooled-is itself only effective way of conveying the rhetoric of the "lie".

(Johnson 1995, p245)

The art of narration that Hurston utilized, is the most powerful and professional one. She uses the narration form with "third person" to indicate the development of Janie's voice in the novel. This form of narration does not hide the achievement and self-realization that Janie should come to face to be an independent woman. It asserts the personal voice of Hurston and proves the significance of her style of writing that visualizes the experience of Janie in a picaresque way. However, many critics criticize Janie's silence when her husband Tea Cake beats her as a "submission to the dominance and supremacy on the matter" because her beating represents the destructive impact of racism on the social relationship between black individuals in their community (Collins 2005, p82). This event also asserts the state of being a victim of this racism that black women bear. It indicates that "black women are often the ones who bear the brunt of Black men's anger at a racism that has and continues to operate so thoroughly through gendered practices and ideologies" (Collins 2005, p82).

Finally, Janie's beating deprives her from achieving her goal and desires. She seems to forgive Tea Cake for this act because she believes that he is the only person among other men of her community who understands her inner feelings and desires. Hurston never forgives Tea Cake as she transforms the narration form and visualizes Tea Cake as a "mad dog" (Cotera 2008, p195). It seems that Tea Cake's madness is the outcome of his being insecure in the society that is controlled by racism and injustices. This feeling reflects the state of mind of black individual in the American society. Although Tea Cake seems to be "a mad dog" in the last part of the novel, but he supports Janie till his last breath. Tea Cake gives Janie the self-confidence and self-worth that she needs as well as he provides her with love and happiness (Cotera 2008, p196). Through these characters Hurston aims to give us a theoretical perspective about the reality of the American society through the story of Janie who is a black heroine of this society.

Conclusion

As a member of the Harlem Renaissance. Hurston succeeds in depicting the perspectives of this movement in liberating black woman and advocates her right in life as an independent person. Hurston's novel is a survey about the difficulties and woes of black woman that were the outcome of the colonial invasion of the whites for Africa that forced many black migrants to serve white people as slaves. Hurston aims to expose the violence of the male-dominance in society of both cultures: black and whites. Hurston explores the notion of gender in the novel through many images. On the one hand, she sketches the character of Janie and how she gains her independence after a crucial experience through three marriages. Her suffering with these traumas makes her passing through a process of transformation from a submissive woman into an independence one. Janie becomes the source of inspiration for the next generation of feminist writer who utilizes the character of Janie as a model of empowerment. After all the severe experiences that Janie is passing, she explains how she finds her identity and true love that most female characters strive to achieve.

The circumstances that Janie lives with, make her more strength and powerful. She comes to realize that all her three husbands aim to shape her identity as they want not like what she hopes or dreams. Thus, she rebels against the supremacy of males in the society and becomes aware of her status as a black woman. Her self-realization and

independence motivate her knowledge when she becomes completely different from her previous identity. Janie decides to be alone and lives as a single for the rest of her life because she believes that marriage can destroy everything she has achieved. Hurston succeeds in asserting the female identity and voice of black women in the novel through the characterization of female characters of the novels. She plays a great role in the Harlem Renaissance through her reflection to the oppression and agony of black women in the United States in early years of the twentieth century.

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