

**Zora Neale Hurston's Portrait of the American Woman as a Self-fulfilled One  
in her Novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937).**

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**Introduction:**

African American literature traces its first steps to the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the African American population was still enslaved. Slaves were viewed as subhuman and unable to be masters of the arts and sciences. Their inferiority was even reinforced by different prominent white philosophers of the time. The principal aim of early African American writing was to demonstrate that they could create literature that rivaled and surpassed that of the white community, proving African Americans to be full and equal members of society.

This research paper tackles the portrait of the American woman as a self-fulfilled one in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). This novel is regarded as Zora Neale Hurston's finest novel in its portrayal of a black woman's continuous quest for identity and fulfillment through the character of Janie. Set in central and southern Florida in the early 20th century, the novel was initially poorly received for its rejection of racial uplift literary prescriptions. Today, it has come to be considered as an influential work in both African-American literature and women's literature. *Time* included the novel in its 2005 list of the 100 best English-language novels published since 1923.

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* was published in 1937, long after the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance. It has been known as the New Negro Movement and, while it was centered in Harlem in New York City, other locations were also influenced. Zora Neale Hurston served an influential role during this time period. It is important to realize the significance of this era in history and how African American people were capable of developing and adapting their own ideals, morals, thoughts and customs through creativity and art. Therefore, the focus of the exhibition is on the African American search for identity in the post-slavery period and the creation and self-expression through art during the Harlem Renaissance.

**Objective of the Study:**

Because of the oppression which women face especially in the Afro-American society, this paper tries to extract the hidden feelings of those women either they are whites or blacks. This paper focuses on the portrait of the American woman in the eyes of Zora as realized in her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Consequently, this study will be an attempt to find answers to the following basic questions: (1) who are those women? (2) What are their values and rules in life? (3) How is it reflected in Zora's novel? The answer for these questions is the main aim for this paper. This paper attempts to show how the character of the American woman can affect Zora's novels and work of anthropology and folklore to the extent that, she cannot challenge the ideology of racism by attempting to prove the humanity of African-Americans, but rather she challenged the hegemonic power of the dominant culture to represent African-American people negatively. Her literary works

specifically establish Hurston as a well observer of African-American people and the world in which they lived. "Hurston refused to be confined by gender and racial roles" (Hine 598). From Hurston you will find out many things that, even if you live surrounded by Negroes for a long time, you might never know. For as she says, "the Negro, in spite of his open-faced laughter, his seeming acquiescence, is particularly evasive . . ." (Stine and Marowski, 210). He tells the white man what he thinks the white man wants to know, or what he feels he ought to know.

As she feels piety for women of her age, Zora 's works are brilliant glances into the mind of a woman who lived life for what it was, who does not want anything more than to have a busy life, a just mind and timely death. "She lived as she wrote, to the fullest; she wasn't just a writer, but also an anthropologist who brought to the light the folklore, and culture of nations that before there had been little study of" (Walker 8). She brought new, exciting views of the world through her poetic words, and is a shining example of what it is to be a woman. Since Hurston's literary resurrection, scholars of black women's literature and black feminist and womanist thought have proclaimed her as an important link between black women writers of nineteenth-century and those writing since 1950. "She has also been championed by cultural anthropologists for her pioneering work in southern and Caribbean folk traditions. She is intelligent, driven, and confident" (8).

### **Method of Research:**

For asserting the main points discussed in this research paper, the researcher applied the analytical method by analyzing the characters of Zora and their development through the novel. As a novelist, anthropologist, and folklorist, Hurston was recognized for her distinctive way of showing her ideals about racial division through analyzing every minute details in her characters. Also, she is well known for her efforts to connect the artistic world with the African American population. Through her creativity, meaningful and organized words, and doubtless talent, Hurston helped develop a common identity for her people during an influential time in history.

### **Highlights on Womanism as a Theory:**

As a theory existed in most of Zora Neale Hurston's works, it is important to refer to the Feminism Movement. Womanism is a feminist term coined by Alice Walker. It is a reaction to the realization that "feminism" does not encompass the perspectives Black women. It is a feminism that is "stronger in color", nearly identical to "Black Feminism". However, Womanism does not need to be prefaced by the word "Black", the word automatically concerns black women. A Womanist is a woman who loves women and appreciates women's culture and power as something that is incorporated into the world as a whole. It addresses the racist and classist aspects of white feminism and actively opposes separatist ideologies. It includes the word "man", recognizing that Black men are an integral part of Black women's lives as their children, lovers, and family members. Womanism accounts for the ways in which black women support and empower black men, and serves as a tool for understanding the Black woman's relationship to men as different from the

white woman's. It seeks to acknowledge and praise the sexual power of Black women while recognizing a history of sexual violence.

### **Female Quest and Self-Fulfillment:**

Therefore, this paper attempts to reveal the portrayal and description of the major character within the novel, who is Janie. It presents her experience and perspective as realities perhaps not yet realized but aspired to on submerged level of feeling, thought, and speech by black women, women generally, and blacks specifically such as Hurston's imaginative power by men as well. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. writes in the afterwards to most modern editions of the book, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is primarily concerned with the project of finding a voice, with language as an instrument of injury and salvation, of selfhood and empowerment. By analyzing it, Zora's novel reveals two obsessions: one is the portrayal of the American woman in general black woman in particular; the other is American woman's seek for fulfillment and the psychological complete view of the complex entanglement of forces which impinge on and affects the southern rural woman and make her life, both eternally and internally, a continuous struggle. "Given women's centrality to the survival and liberation of African peoples, an examination of Hurston's strategies of survival and resistance and her struggle for self and self-empowerment, from every possible angle, is of vital importance" (Plant 1995).

In this paper, there is an attempt to realize and illustrate the portrait of the American woman as reflected in the character of the heroine Janie who seeks liberation and fulfillment. Janie Crawford, an attractive, confident, middle-aged black woman, returns to Eatonville, Florida, after a long absence. The people of the town tattle about her and ask about from where she has come and what has happened to her young husband, Tea Cake. They take her self-confidence as separation and bigotry, but Janie's friend Pheoby Watson listens to her. Pheoby visits her to find out what has happened. Their conversation frames the story that Janie relates. So, it is worth mentioning that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* begins at the end of the story: the reader first sees Janie's character after her growth, concluded the adventures that she will relate, and been to the horizon and back. Her story then gets out of her own mouth as she sits talking to her friend Pheoby.

### **Marginalizing the Female Character:**

In addition, the reader can realize that the main aim from reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is to see how and why black women are marginalized and avoided by the controlling society of the white male, who are always silencing their voices and restricting their freedom to even show themselves and the world around them, as also suppressing their recognition of their sexual desires and bodily needs. The black woman, or in another meaning, the mule of the world, could not always do and behave according to her own needs and desire. Instead, she is required to just keep silent whenever a community's voice (usually the male one) is generated and furthermore to play the secondary role as a good wife whose only and main aim in life is merely to meet her husbands' demands. On the one hand, the body of the black female character, which has always been severely beaten, closely

tested, and sexually exploited in the hands of white/black men, is the very site of both white supremacy and male dominance. On the other hand, it also serves as an outlet for black male character to slot the prostration, anger and shame that they have suffered in the predominantly white America. The black woman, therefore, is doubly marginalized in terms of both her race and sex.

### **Janie's Journey to "The Far Horizon": From "Colored Me" to "Womanhood":**

By the same token and same view, it is argued that before trying to reforming herself according to her own desire, Janie should first start a self-discovery journey; this is because as usually exists in the society, her community never offers her a space for herself to grow and this is one of the main points that Hurston sheds light on. Janie must travel to the far horizon and in the meanwhile "walk where people could see her so as to show the shine of the jewel down inside herself" (90). Janie's self, in this sense, is not the cause for shame as male-dominant society has showed her. Instead of being told how beautiful or ugly herself is, Janie must go on her journey to see and find out which is the truth of her as a colored woman. As Janie tells her best friend Pheoby:

It is uh known fact, Pheoby, you got tuh *go* there tuh *know* there. Yo' papa and yo' mama and nobody else can't tell yuh and show yuh. Two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and thry got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves. (192, emphasis original)

Knowing about a known fact the horizon is far is not enough. To go to the far horizon is the best way to know how far it is. For Janie, knowing herself as a nigger woman is far from satisfactory. What stirs in her is the yearning for a different self-made possible by her journey away from a confining space in which a woman is expected to labor but not to love. Janie wants to enter an **unknown** space in which a woman is given the freedom to experiment with her body and actualize her desire.

Hence, only when Janie has been to the horizon could she look back to see how far she has gone from confinement to freedom. Diane puts it so well, "*Their Eyes Were Watching God* follows Janie's journey from restriction to fulfillment" (Matza 45). Undoubtedly, Janie does set out on her journey outwardly beginning her journey from Nanny's backyard to Logan's sixty-acres, Jody's store porch, Jacksonville, Tea Cake's muck Everglades and then eventually completing her long journey by traveling back to Eatonville. More crucially, Janie also continues her journey inwardly the spiritual journey begins with self-doubt but ends with self-assurance whereas Janie's outward journey might have already come to an end. In this regard, Janie's journey both outward and inward, could not be simply dismissed as the frame of Hurston's story but should be viewed the core to which Hurston's story telling is firmly anchored. Nevertheless, before beginning a self-discovery journey so as to reinterpret what it means to be a nigger woman, Janie should first be aware of some fundamental questions about the very essence of herself: Who am I? What are the restrictions on a nigger woman in a white-male dominant society? What are her possibilities? Most importantly, is a

nigger woman allowed to ask questions? Inevitably, “There are years that ask questions and years that answer” (3) for Janie’s journey is indeed as much about answering questions as about questioning what has been answered. Janie’s increased awareness of her identity as a black woman, indeed, is the essential prelude to her self-discovery journey.

Janie’s self-discovery journey, furthermore, does not end with her exploration into her colored me. When Janie is sixteen, Janie experiences the first stir of a sexual yearning and comes to recognize herself as a young woman who is as beautiful and charming as a pear tree in full blossom. Sitting under a blooming pear tree at the age of sixteen, Janie is summoned to behold a revelation:

She saw dust-bearing bees sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch 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 a marriage! (11)

The pear tree, from its roots to its tiniest branch, is covered with the “dust-bearing bees” that fly into the sanctum of a bloom in a gesture that suggests to Janie “the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver” of a couple in marriage” (12). What Janie sees in this sight of a tree courted by bees, in fact, “is not simply a tree and its pollinated flowers but a mystery that leaves Janie limp and languid due to the pain of sexual desires a pain that is both remorseless and sweet begetting insatiable desire” (11). The mystery of love and marriage suggested by this nature scene excites in Janie a desire for a love that promises erotic embrace, ecstatic shiver, and endless delight. It is a desire that Janie cannot repress and it is also a love that Janie cannot truly fulfill despite the fact that she has spent all her life searching for it. Janie, while “looking, waiting and breathing short with patience” (12), finally sees her first bee man coming. The tall, thin Taylor, aside from leaving the footprints in Nanny’s backyard, also leaves on her granddaughter’s brow a kiss. The kiss Taylor plants on Janie’s eyebrow stirs up Janie’s deep desire for being touched and loved as a nigger woman. Janie’s deep desire to love and to be loved is always there, but this kiss activates it and brings it to the surface. This is the kiss that brings Janie to break the sexual taboo and it is the original sin in the text, even though it “is not eating an apple proffered by woman but accepting a kiss proffered by man that brings Janie to experience the carnal pleasure of human sexuality”(duCille 117).

Janie, in her romantic eyes, views the character of Taylor who loves wander and travels in rags as a glorious being. In this sense, Janie lets Taylor kiss her not for his loveliness but for the hidden promises behind his kiss. Johnny Taylor’s kiss, surely, brings Janie’s childhood to an end. Since the very turning moment she receives Taylor’s kiss, Janie is no longer a little nigger girl who is ignorant of sexual desire. On the contrary, she has become a real nigger woman whose desire is real and her pain crying for the fulfillment of her desire is real, too. By this way, the representation of Janie’s character as a young woman waiting to be embraced and pollinated by bee, “Hurston suggests that Janie cannot be seen

only as a woman with pugnacious breasts” (2). Instead, Hurston represents Janie as a woman who actively desires to be desired and to be loved. Janie is unique, in this sense, in that she perceives her black female self as a self that is not defined by others but is to be written by herself in the course of a journey taken for the sole purpose of self-exploration and self-realization.

### **What’s Love Got to do With a Black Woman’s Growth into Self Realization?**

Climbing onto Logan’s cart, Janie who is only sixteen-year-old finds out that she is not heading for a home full of love and care but for “a lonesome place like a stump in the middle of the woods where nobody has ever been and for the house that is absent of flavor, too”(21-22). Being dismissed by her old and offensive husband, Janie finally realizes the truth that “marriage could not end the cosmic loneliness of the unmated nor could it compel love like the sun the day” (21). Instead of making her pear tree brilliantly prosper with love, the vision of Logan Killicks was depressing. The protection which loveless marriage supposed to guarantee, almost, turns out to be the prison house of her individuality. Marriage without love, “is no longer a site of utopian partnership, but [is] a seat of emotional confinement, sexual commodification, and the male domination [...]” (duCille 112).

When Janie decided to ask Nanny for some helpful suggestions concerning the way she can use for improving her loveless marriage, Nanny, instead of giving Janie a direct advice, she still warns her from paying an immense price for the very love she wishes for saying: “D[d]at’s de very prong all us black women gits hung on! Dis love! Dat’s just whut’s got us uh pullin’ and uh haulin’ and sweatin’ and doin’ from can’t see in de mornin’ till can’t see at night. [...] It jus’ makes you sweat” (23). The lawful husband of Janie, despite his great wealth and luxury, is not an attractive man in her eyes. The most effective thing is that he could never be the bee man that can satisfy Janie’s sexual desire for both passionate love and its sexual satisfaction. To leave the backyard of Nanny for Logan’s sixty-acres, Janie sees the pear tree as neither in full blossom nor bearing bountiful fruits. Instead, the pear is dry into a pitiful stub as if dying of love. She feels as withered and wasted as the pear tree.

Clearly, Janie’s first dream is dead because marriage could not give her love she has dreamed. Contrariwise, instead of wasting time mourning for her first dead dream, Janie goes on dreaming new dreams in her life journey. Persuaded that if God can “[tear] down the old world every evening and build a new one by sun up” (25), Janie insisted on dreaming new dreams instead of her previous failure ones. Her dreams might change and disfigure but they would never be forgotten in her life-journey. Hence, when Janie learns of the Logan’s ill-conceived scheme for buying another mule which is “gentled up so even uh woman kin handle” (27), Janie could not place with this marriage without neither love nor passion anymore. Unquestionably, what Logan wants to do is not to love her but to “make her [Janie] the very man-made mule of the world” (duCille 118), even though it is precisely to prevent her from leading a mule-like life that her grandmother has compelled her to marry the well-to-do Logan in the first place.

Rejecting entirely to be muled by a man who is mute than she is, Janie decides to leave Logan for Joe Starks, who, in her eyes, will liberate her and make her a real respected woman.

Janie, is well recognizing that now is the time for her to dream new dreams, continues her female quest for change. “The sow-belly is still in the pan, yet Janie has taken off her apron and left for the next stop in her self-discovery journey” (32). Janie’s very act of taking off the brat tied around her waist, in this regard, indicates her full readiness to put down the heavy burden that Logan has handed onto her. Avoiding any kind of thinking of the matter or hesitations, Now, Janie lets her inner feeling and desire to direct her steps and finds Jody Starks standing where she has arrived. In Janie’s eyes, Although Jody, the man with the brown skin color, he does not characterize the sexual satisfaction promised by the pollen and blooming trees, “he speaks for far horizon and promises change and chance” (29). Janie therefore lets Logan and then flees away with Jody. Her escape with him is not for loving him but just for the next revision and happy chance that he may offer her in her future. Since the memory of Janie’s grandmother was still strong and powerful, Janie gives Jody the chance of being her second husband for the power that his great g voice expresses rather than choosing a bee man according to her deep desire. Janie’s voice, consequently, “demonstrates that a woman’s need for economic security and social recognition often conflicts with her need for self-development” (Ferguson 188). Even so, Janie does make her own decisions and further bears the full responsibility for what she has decided. “In escaping from Logan, Janie foreshadows her ability to triumph over patriarchal oppression throughout her life” (187).

Entering into the marriage with Jody, Janie becomes a woman of positions and possessions who sits on high as Nanny has always wanted her to become since her husband “has put honor all over her, building a high chair for her to sit it and overlook the world” (62). Janie does not have to sweat for her life by plowing the farmland; instead, she is the mayor’s wife who even arouses others’ extreme jealousy for her husband “bought a little lady-sized spitting pot for [her] to spit in” (47). However, instead of doing things according to her own desire, Janie just does what she is ordered to do. Rather than speaking as a self-esteem woman whose voice could be reached to other people, unfortunately Janie is excluded from the male-dominated discourse because of her husband’s denial in participation or even her existence in his store porch. After all in Jody’s views, Janie is “uh woman and her place is in de home” (43).

In addition to that, Jody starts to behave in a strange way with Janie, he has Janie tie her hair whenever she has to appear before other men in public. Jody issues his command without even telling her about the reasons or just what promotes him to make this authoritative demand, lest he should unknowingly reveal his fear that other men may gaze at Janie’s beautiful and glossy hair. Instead of loving Janie as who she is, “Jody immediately sets about the task of molding and shaping her Janie into *his* woman” (Ferguson 189, emphasis original). No matter how big his voice is and how almighty he is thought to be as a black mayor running a store and a post office, “Jody nevertheless needs her Janie’s

feeble female consent to be viewed in society as a man” (Ferguson 190). Having Janie put on the silken dress when town people welcome their arrival at Eatonville, Jody wants Janie to be class off so no other women could stature with her. Nevertheless, instead of viewing Janie as a woman who is equal to him, Jody regards Janie as the bell-cow whereas “other women were the gang” (41). Although Janie is class off she is not an independent woman but is still a mule any way. Janie, like the objects displayed in Jody’s store, is regarded not as a human being but as a piece of furniture that can be bought and owned by her husband.

In the same vein, “Janie becomes especially vulnerable to Jody’s offer of status. Folks only know Janie as the mayor’s wife in their mind for she sleeps with authority but Janie “couldn’t get but so close to most of them in spirit. Janie’s social status, indeed, thwarts Janie’s attempt to set out on “the great journey to the horizons in search of people “since it is so important for her to travel around the world that she should find people and they find her” (89, emphasis added).

Janie’s dream to travel around the world is her guiding principle of her attempt to make a comparison between her inner and outer self to satisfy the expectations of people who confirm to the criteria of a racist and patriarchal social order. Thus, while attending Jody’s funeral, Janie dutifully puts on a sorrowful look, although she feels joyful from inside and welcomes her springtime wholeheartedly. It is time for her to be reborn and rejuvenate like pear tree blooming in its season. In Janie’s eyes, Jody’s very death makes revival and life become possible again. Since the very moment Tea Cake walks into Janie’s store “with a sly grin and his funny story, Janie’s feelings saved up for some man she had never seen” (94) have indeed come to be revived. Going hunting and fishing with Tea Cake, playing checker and coon-can with him, Janie comes to realize that Tea Cake could be her bee man that can make Janie to be petal-open” (110) again by enabling Janie to see and furthermore to fulfill her enormous potential. “Taking a downward glance at Tea Cake who sleeps like a baby, Janie deeply and strongly feels a self-crushing love” (128) throbbing painfully inside her. Tea cake “the glance from God does enable Janie’s soul to crawl out from its hiding side” (106). Since that precise moment, Janie no longer has to keep herself split so as to maintain the wholeness of her inner self. Once again, she is later to find herself wrong in making this hypothesis that she may have a consolidated self and life is nothing but happiness.

Tea Cake, the very representation of the possibilities of compassionate love, has all the answers to Janie’s questions that Janie testily asks herself. Boarding the train which shuffled on to Jacksonville, Janie no longer merely “thought of a country road at sun-up but instead heads straight for a whole lot of things she wanted to see and to know” (76,116). Janie’s train ride with Tea Cake brings them to Everglades or the muck. In going on de muck, with Tea Cake, Janie “could listen and laugh and even talk some when she wanted to” (134). She no longer has to “trade labor behind the plow in one husband’s fields for work behind the counter in another’s store” (duCille 118); instead, she

is now free to tell her stories and be a big story teller giving her people the great joy in return for what they have given her. Undoubtedly, Janie's life journey has taken her to travel from isolation to participation, silence to speech, from confinement to possibilities.

Janie's train ride with Tea Cake, however, is short-lived. In order to save Janie from the attack of a mad dog when they manage to flee from the devastating flood, unfortunately, Tea Cake is bitten by the ferocious animal and eventually loses his mind due to rabies. It is notable that the gun used by Janie for shooting practice right now turns out to be the weapon which Janie has to use to help her fight against Tea Cake's madness. At the end, Janie has no other choice but to use the rifle to end Tea Cake's life and to, thereby, rescue him from intensive pain and humiliation. Janie, who is partially responsible for the death of her second husband, is now held legally accountable for the death of her beloved Tea Cake. Although plot and language manipulate events so that the heroine kills off the man unintentionally, Janie is clearly a dangerous woman. Obviously, since male-female relationship is not predicated upon love and respect but is determined by the patriarchal structure of power and sexual difference, the husband-murdering Janie is then seen either as a rebellious heroine or a dangerous woman. Janie, Lee R. Edwards suggests, behaves in a way that is befitting a hero in a conventional quest romance; that is, she is dangerous to a male-dominant world since "she threatens his authority and that of the system he sustains" (4).

Hence, instead of supporting the male system by succumbing to Tea Cake's madness, Janie must fight for herself. After all, Tea Cake was gone. The rabies has changed him into another mad dog that desperately wants Janie to die. In this sense, shooting Tea Cake is Janie's assertion to the world that she has a life worth of living. All her life, Janie always gets ready and is willing to give and to take love. Nevertheless, she also remains ready to defend her shining self against any danger and harm that would extinguish the bright light that may shine on her journey to self-realization. Rather than await somebody else's rescue, Janie must fight for her own sake whenever she needs to. Sad off considers Janie's very act of killing her husbands to be, both metaphorically and physically, Hurston's attempt to "act out her rage against male domination, and to free Janie, a figure for herself, from all men" (22). In this sense, only when Janie "eliminates the male oppressors" (duCille 121) could she become completely free from male domination. For Janie, all the men she encounters in her self-discovery seem to be the oppressors who demand from her absolute obedience. In their relationship with Janie, Logan and Jody are always eager to be the dominating ones by limiting Janie's self-growth. Even Tea Cake, "the son of evening sun who had to die for loving Janie" (178), slaps Janie around not only to show he was boss but also to soothe his bitter jealousy which "stems from beliefs that he is too black for Caucasian-featured Janie" (Ferguson 194). Tea Cake, like Jody and Logan, diminishes Janie's self in favor of his egoism.

As for Janie, all men fail to be the bee men to her pear tree. Nonetheless, Janie's life journey is far more than a disillusionment "the discovery that there is no bee man" (Brown 45). Instead of viewing this disappointment as a defeat or as

a disadvantage of her life, Janie turns to regard it as one part of her self-fulfillment journey. Traveling in the springtime of her life, “Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with things suffered, things enjoyed, [and] things done and undone” (8). Rather than taking her life to be a tragedy, Janie sees her life like a great tree though it might not be petal-open right now - waiting for its next season. Also, her coming back from the far horizon, Janie has no regrets about her life, and she would never let herself wallow in self-pity. Really, life is not always good and secure. Yet Janie would not let this disillusionment to be the handicap but, instead, she is confident that she now has the power for her to go on her life-journey. This time, she does not need a man to tell what her dream should be. She is to walk on de muck by herself.

Rather than only being a woman as dreamer in waiting” (Brown 42), Janie is bold enough to travel the long distance to go to the far horizon just to find out how far the horizon could be.

Unlike men who are rarely shown capable of change and growth Janie allows experience to change her. Janie’s experience, furthermore, would bring about the change to her black community even if it might upset them and challenge their given assumptions about the world. Janie comes back to the black community not to accuse people of failing to live their life to its fullest but to share with them what she has seen in her self-discovery journey. Janie’s “traveling blues,” indeed, captures the very essence of African American music, especially its “antiphonal singing technique” (Jones 26). LeRoi Jones gives this special technique a precise definition:

A leader sings a theme and a chorus answers him. These answers are usually comments on the leader’s themes or comments on the answers themselves in improvised verses. The amount of improvisation depends on how long the chorus wish to continue. (26-27)

Janie’s act of return to her community shows her ability to assume the role of leader in the collective traveling blues that African American women need to improvise and sing in the course of re-writing their life stories. Making use of a call-and-response strategy, Janie tells her story to Pheoby who, after having heard the story, breathed out heavily and exclaims with excitement that she has grown ten feet higher listening to Janie’s traveling blues” (192). In this sense, Janie’s story about her self-fulfillment journey changes her and her friend Pheoby and moreover, her story may become, in the words of Lee Edwards, “a compelling model of possibility for anyone who hears her tale.

Lonely but at peace with herself, Janie pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net and called in her soul to come and see. For Janie, it is not the proper time for wailing over her loss but it is the real the time to come and see what she has harvested. Her journey, nevertheless, does not come to an end yet. On the contrary, it would be continued by anyone else either black male or female who generously responds to Janie’s call. At the end of the novel, Hurston portrays Janie as a single woman. All told, Janie abandons her first husband, struggles against her second and “Marriage, Hurston seems to say, is a deadly proposition: someone has to give up

his or her life” (Boyd 304). Feels freed upon his death, and kills her third husband to protect herself.

### **Conclusion:**

Society is suffering from a number of serious social problems related to women, and to the interaction between the two sexes. So that the researcher tries to show here how Zora Neale Hurston's novel speaks out against the uncivil and the unjust treatment of American women especially in their marriages. Her work reflects violence against women that occurred in that era. It is apparent that one of the greatest intellectual and critical issues in American literature is the portrait of the American woman as pictured by the African American writer Zora Neale Hurston. The researcher tried through this paper to extract the good side of devotion and loyalty existed in both of white and black woman. The researcher wants to show the uncivil and unjust treatment of women especially in their marriages. Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* reveals the disturbing for American women about abuse in the 1930's, when speaking out was unheard of. It also reveals violence against women that occurred during that era. Zora tried to tackle the universality of women's problems .....etc. Here, the reader can see the way Zora showed how women were treated and being exploited through the character of Janie. As now coming to the end of the paper, the researcher would like to reiterate that frustration caused by economic deprivation and so many other reasons led the male characters in Zora's novel to abuse women.

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### صورة المرأة الأمريكية كمحقة لذاتها في رواية "كانت عيونهم تراقب الله لـ" زورا نيل هيرستون "

يحاول هذا البحث أن يعرض صورة المرأة الأمريكية كما عكستها رواية "كانت عيونهم تراقب الله" للكاتبة زورا نيل هيرستون. كما تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تعرض خلفية عن "نهضة هارلم" وتأثيرها علي العديد من الكتابات خلال هذه الفترة. يلي ذلك تقديم لأهم النقاط التي تناولتها الكاتبة فيما يتعلق بالضغوط التي تتعرض لها المرأة الأمريكية بشكل عام والافريقية بشكل خاص؛ بالإضافة إلي تحليل لأهم اسباب تلك الضغوط بالاشارة الي النظرية النسائية. كما تحاول الكاتبة أن تجسد المرأة الأمريكية بشكل مختلف عما نعرفه تماما. فهي ايجابية لاسلبيية، متعاونة لا متكاسلة، لديها ثقة بالنفس وبحث دائم عن ذاتها القوية التي تكمن بداخلها، لا متراجعة ولا مستسلمة لواقعها المرير وايضا مدافعة عن زوجها وعائلتها.

كما يحاول هذا البحث أن يعرض حياة الكاتبة من خلال مقدمة تشمل اهم الاعمال الأدبية وأسباب اهتمامها بشئون المرأة الأمريكية حيث تعتبر الكاتبة واحدة من اهم العناصر المشاركة في "نهضة هارلم". كما يتناول هذا البحث صورة المرأة الأمريكية كمحقة لذاتها من خلال شخصية "جيني" برواية "كانت عيونهم تراقب الله" التي تعتبر من أجمل الروايات التي جسدت بحث المرأة عن الذات واستمرارية المطالبة باستقلال الهوية ضد سيطرة الرجل والمجتمع. وعلي الرغم من قلة شعبية هذه الرواية عند بداية ظهورها بسبب تجاهلها لوصف ارتقاء العنصرية الا انها تعتبر من ارقى الاعمال في يومنا هذا سواء ف الأدب الأفروأمريكي بصورة خاصة او في أدب المرأة بصورة عامة. كما أعطاهما إستفتاء جريدة "التايم" لعام 2005 أنها واحدة من اهم 100 أفضل رواية أدب إنجليزي منذ عام 1923 وحتى الآن.

والله من وراء القصد،،،

اسماء احمد سيد ابو العلا

محافظة المنيا

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