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Standing Tall: Mapping Step by Step Metamorphosis of Janie Crawford in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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Abstract

Their Eyes Were Watching God is a novel written by African-American novelist Zora Neale Hurston. Janie Crawford is the black female protagonist of the novel who dreams of reaching far horizons and for a relationship of equality in marriage. The novel is a saga of Janie Crawford's journey towards enlightenment and developing an independent feminist identity. The present paper aims at analysing Janie's struggle from a follower of patriarchy to becoming a self-asserting woman with Downing and Roush's five stages of feminist identity development. I posit that Janie defies the stereotypical gender roles and breaks the conventional patriarchal boundaries that keep a woman's movement in check i.e. within the four walls of a house. Although suffered degradation and humiliations in her attempts to realise her dream marriage, she is successful in the end. A step by step analysis of Janie's journey reveals how she gains her voice, how she builds her identity and how ultimately she reaches the far horizons, the destination of her dreams. In the first phase of her journey, she accepts passively the accepted notions of gender roles and follows the well-trodden path of marrying a wealthy man to have shelter and financial security. Unable to establish any emotional connection with her husband, Logan Killicks, she leaves him for Joe Starks. With Joe Starks, Janie becomes aware of her further degradation. She is reduced to the status of the possession. Slowly and gradually she gathers strength inside her to raise a voice of protest against this sexual oppression. This revelation helps Janie to integrate her fragmented self and she learns to maintain a separate public and a separate private self. In the person of Tea Cake, she has a self-fulfilling and reciprocal loving relationship. Janie learns to acknowledge herself and her strengths. She becomes conscious of her own individual identity. She does not hesitate to shoot Tea Cake as an assertion of her identity. As a mature woman, full of Tea Cake's love and remembrance, Janie is satisfied with her life.

Keywords: Assertion, emotional connection, equality, horizon, identity, marriage, oppression, passive, possession.

Introduction

Glorified as the "bible of black women's liberation," *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) traces the metamorphosis of Janie Crawford from a mute object to an active subject (Jordon, 1988, p. 115). Hurston's novel examines with a great deal of artistry the struggle of a black middle class woman to escape the fetters of traditional marriage and the narrow social restrictions of her class and sex (Jordon, 1988, p. 115). The novel is set in the central and southern Florida in the early 20th century. It deals with the oppression of black women who are

doubly oppressed one because they are women and second because they are black. It narrates the story of Janie's bloom from a docile worshipper of patriarchy to a self-sustained woman. Janie Crawford, the black female protagonist of the novel, who marries three times and only in third marriage she has her ideal partner, "is a paradigm for women...heroically attempting to assert their own individuality" (Bloom, 2009, p.2). Hurston through her heroine not only debunks the orthodox ways of society that treats a woman as mere an object to be possessed, to be used and to be kicked when no longer fulfilling its assigned role of inferiority and unquestioning submission to patriarchy but it also questions women's acceptance of society's biased manners and urges them to awaken their dormant souls to affirm their status as equal beings and to see the beauty of love and life.

In the beginning, novel was poorly received but today it is regarded as a representative work of Hurston in both African-American literature and women literature. Praising the author and her work, Bloom writes, "Essentially, Hurston is the author of one superb and moving novel, unique not in its kind but in its isolated excellence among other stories of the kind" (2009, p.1). Janie's three marriages reflect her journey towards liberty and recognition, love and happiness. For Janie, a true marriage must involve love and happiness and she searches for an "unconditional fulfilling love which she finally finds with her third husband Tea Cake, but only after she has passed through the wasteland of being a possession before entering the pear tree garden of her actualized dreams of love and happiness," a dream of reaching far horizons (Wiedemer, 1998, p.5). Janie's plight represents the thrives and experiences of black women. It is not easy for Janie to pass through three marriages and move from town to town and from one man to another in such a conservative and conventional society as it does not allow woman to exercise her free will and expects to abide a woman to the orthodox ways which means men are superior and women are inferior and likewise in marriage, male is more important because he is the breadwinner and his orders should be carried out with an unquestioning submission. But to Janie each marriage is an experience, a harbour where she can anchor the ships that carry the dreams of love, happiness and equality (Hubert, 2001, p.1). Through her struggle and sufferings, she "achieves a sense of identity as a self-fulfilled woman and through her own self-realization becomes a leader of women and of her community" (Jordon, 1988, p. 108).

In Janie's growth from "the young girl" to "a handsome woman", a self-formation occurs and this has been the dominant critical approach to the novel. Different critics have interpreted the novel focussing on Janie's psychological and emotional self (Halloway, 1987; McKay, 1990 ; Silber, 2003; Wall, 1982; Weems; 1989; Wolfenstein, 2008), physical self (Castaneda, 2010), folklore elements (Carby, 1990), feminism (Barbara Johnson, 1987; Dabee, 2008; Deffenbacher, 2003; Racine, 1994), linguistic (Gates, 1989), and spiritual self (Kubitschek, 1983; McMillan, 2005). However, in the analysis of novel's discourse of self-formation, Feminist identity development has not been paid attention. Thus, in the paper at hand, I aim at exploring Janie Crowford's successful journey of becoming an autonomous being with the application of Downing and Roush's five stages of feminist identity development approach. A step by step analysis brings out Janie's ripening from an enthusiastic but voiceless girl into a self-asserting woman who can exercise her free will and build her destiny and make her dreams a living reality.

Methodology: Five Stages of Feminist Identity Development

Nancy Downing and Kristin Roush (1985) proposed a conceptualizing model for woman's feminist identity development. This model is based on the premise that women in contemporary society must acknowledge, then struggle with repeatedly work through, their feelings about the prejudice and discrimination they experience in order to achieve an authentic and positive feminist identity (p.1). Downing and Roush (1985) state that a woman may move through these stages in any order, stay in one stage or may return to first stage. Environment, woman's readiness and interpersonal factors determine a woman's progress. The following figure summarizes the five stages of feminist identity development.

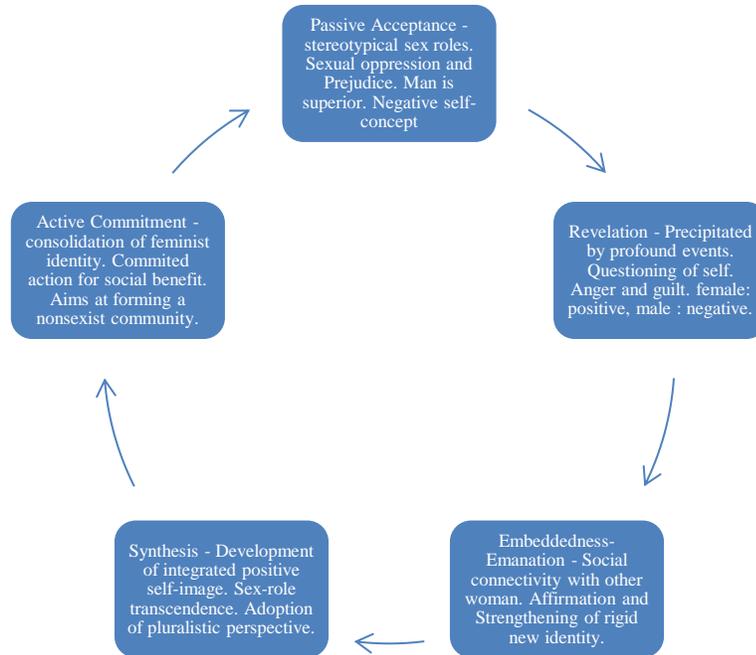


Fig.1 Downing and Roush’s five developmental stages of female identity development.

Identity formation process is a gradual one. So it is imperative to define these five stages on the onset. A summary of Downing and Roush stages is as follows:

Stage 1: Passive Acceptance “describes the woman who is either unaware of or denies the individual, institutional, and cultural prejudice and discrimination against her” (Downing and Roush, 1985, p.669). Woman has an unquestioning attitude. She accepts her stereotypical gender role as an inferior to man. She is totally dependent on man and thinks that she has no identity without man.

Stage 2: Revelation is catalysed by a sequence of consciousness-awakening crisis that puts to question the previous accepted notions and perceptions of gender roles. This precipitates anger at male oppression and guilt at woman’s own dormant nature followed by a dual thinking perceiving male as negative entity and female as positive. Woman form a “pseudo-identity” (Downing and Roush, 1985, p.700). Although considered as positive stage, woman here turns against man instead of strengthening their newly formed feminist identity.

Stage 3: Embeddedness-Emanation describes woman’s immersion process. Woman immerses in woman culture. She connects socially and emotionally with another woman. Woman forms a

sisterhood bond with other women. As women emanate from this stage, they relinquish their polarized position and begin to reintegrate themselves into a new personhood (Worell and Remer, 2002, p.314). Women affirm to and strengthen their new identity but this transition is difficult because they cannot avoid male culture wholly. As Gurin (as cited in Downing & Roush, 1985) stated, —no other subordinate group [has] such an intimate relationship with the dominant group (p. 701). Upon embedding themselves within the feminist culture, women may reach emanation. Emanation, as described by Downing and Roush (1985), occurs when women realize that their —pseudo-identities (p. 700) are as rigid as the identities they assumed during Passive Acceptance.

Stage 4: Synthesis characterises woman’s integration of herself as having an independent identity together with freedom of making choices based on her personal views. Man is evaluated as an individual. Woman does not attribute all events to sexist oppression but make “accurate attributions” (Downing and Roush, 1985, p.702). This stage develops a more positive identity and a flexible relationship with man.

Stage 5: Active Commitment defines woman’s dedication for social change. She strives to end sexual oppression. She takes rational actions. This stage aims at ending all discrimination and forming a gender transcended society. Woman commits herself to take meaningful actions for the benefits of whole woman community.

The charting of Janie Crawford’s fulfilment as an autonomous imagination, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a lyrical novel that correlates the need of her first two husbands for ownership of progressively larger physical space (and the gaudy accoutrements of upward mobility) with the suppression of self-awareness in their wife. Only with her third and last lover, a roustabout called Tea Cake whose unstructured frolics centre around and about the Florida swamps, does Janie at last bloom, as does the large pear tree that stands beside her grandmother’s tiny log cabin (Gates quoted in afterword to text, p.140-141). The next section of the article analyses the protagonist Janie Crawford’s movement from ignorance to recognition of sexual oppression, raising her voice against it and gaining her independent identity.

Analysis: Mapping Janie's Journey Step by Step

Regardless of their ultimate success or failure, men dream of great accomplishments of working on and changing their external worlds (Editors, 2007, p. 29). Janie also dreams of a relationship of understanding based on mutual love, respect and equality, a relationship which blossoms her personality, a relationship with complete physical and emotional connection, a relationship helping her reaching far horizons. Suffering humiliations in her earlier two marriages, she finally learns to stand on her own and set an example for others to achieve freedom from congested traditional social conventions. All of this doesn't happen suddenly, Janie goes through different phases in her life in order to build her individual independent identity.

Passive Acceptance: As a young girl, Janie is docile. She internalises social conventions of gender differences. She accepts how society defines her and her stereotypical gender role, a role of inferiority, a role of dependency. She is reminded again and again that a woman is a pitiful thing, she needs a man to complete her. Simone de Beauvoir comments, "Marriage is traditionally the destiny offered to woman by society" (quoted in B. Bergoffen, 2006, p.94). Similar fate awaits Janie. The moment Janie ushers into womanhood by kissing a young boy, Nanny, her grandmother, seals her destiny by marrying her off to Logan Killicks, a wealthy middle-aged farmer. Despite the age differences between Janie and Logan, Nanny views Logan a suitable match for Janie for he can provide Janie a place of security, which she herself has only dreamt of. Preparing Janie psychologically ready for marriage, Nanny voices society's degrading notion of coloured women, she says that black women are the mules of the world and she doesn't want Janie to be a mule.

Nanny sees "marriage as a haven from indiscriminate sexual exploitation (as opposed to the particular abuse of a loveless marriage) and as a shelter from financial instability" (Jordon, 1988, p.109). Nanny's account of hardships she and her daughter Leafy have faced in their lives softens Janie's heart and she passively gives her consent for marriage thinking love will come naturally after marriage. Unconsciously, Nanny "puts Janie up on the auction block of marriage" (Bone,, p.59). To Nanny, Logan represents an ideal husband because he is well-off and in a harsh world, he offers shelter and physical security. Janie searches for deeper kind of fulfilment. To her, a relationship should offer not only physical passion but also an emotional connection.

Although Janie compares woman with a tree that passively wait for an active bee but love
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embrace is reciprocal. Both complement each other and create a perfect union in a mutual embrace (Editors,2007, p. 13). However, her reality is different from the expected marriage concept. Patriarchy clips the wings of Janie's imagination. Her married life is stale and couple's daily conversation is limited to living activities- chopping and potato peeling. Janie calls Logan ugly and that he is not meant to be loved. He has big belly and he remains dirty and "he don't even never mention nothing' pretty" (Hurston,1937, p.17). Like a true patriarch, Logan considers he has done Janie a favour. He tells her, "a whole lot of mens will grin in yo' face, but dey ain't gwine tuh work and feed yuh" (Hurston, 1937, p.22). Logan buys a mule for Janie to help him in the labour. Janie could do nothing but oblige to the wishes of Logan. Logan places Janie on his patriarchal pedestal. This pedestal confines Janie's movement within the four walls of house. Rightly Tyson writes that the wrong by being placed on a pedestal is that for one reason pedestals are small and leave a woman very little room to do anything but fulfil the prescribed role...for another thing, pedestals are shaky. One can easily fall off a pedestal (2006, p.90). Madsen too highlights women' plight in the following words:

Women internalise patriarchal values to perfect their obedience; they conform to the stereotypes, they display unwavering loyalty, they do not betray any sign of dissatisfaction or resistance to male control. (2000, p.161)

Though Janie's stay with Logan is short but one can observe the basic pattern of male oppression. He exploits her knowing that she has nowhere to go. He silences her whenever she tries to confront him and he even threatens to kill her. He insists on Janie's complete obedience to him and to conventional sex roles. Janie feels no connection with Logan- physical nor emotional nor intellectual. Joe Starks infuses fresh hope in Janie's life. His grand dreams dazzle Janie. Joe awakens Janie's dormant dreams of a comfortable life. Praising Janie's beauty, he says, "a pretty doll-baby lak you is made to sit on de front porch and rock and fan yo' self and eat p'taters dat other folks plant just special for you" (Hurston, 1937, p.20). Once again Janie's hopes for love come alive. After two weeks of clandestine affair Janie leaves Logan and marries Joe.

The pattern of passivity continues in second marriage too. Janie is attracted by the power Joe offers and believes that it can grant her a better life. His talks of future prospects, victory and travels wins Janie's heart and these ideals seem to Janie as a medium of reaching far horizons.

Once they are married, Joe shows his true colours. He treats Janie as a trophy wife. He controls each and every movement of Janie. When Joe is elected as Mayor in Eatonville and townpeople request Janie to say few words, Joe answers on her behalf, “Thank yuh fuh yo’ compliments, but mah wife don’t know nothin’ ‘bout no speech-makin’. Ah never married her for nothing’ lak dat. She’s uh woman and her place is in de home” (Hurston, 1937, p. 31). Joe reduces Janie to an enviable possession. As a possession, she is denied any self-defined goals and even the expression of her own opinions (Jordon, 1988, p.109).

Joe subjugates and suppresses Janie. Janie is hurt and stunned. Her marriage ideals are once again broken. Although she feels anger in her heart, she has not gathered enough strength to raise her voice against this oppression. She remains silent and Joe is happy with Janie’s obedience. Janie has to wear a head rag under the wishes of Joe and she is not allowed to talk to her community members. Giving the logic of his status, he calls common folks as trashy people and who only play and waste their time. Joe tries to make Janie an “angel in the house”¹ (cited in Bressler, 2007, p.178). He wishes her to conform to the virtues associated with patriarchal femininity (passive resignation and acceptance of patriarchy and unquestioning obedience). That’s why Helen Cixous writes that in patriarchy’s binary thought of activity/passivity, subject/object, women always occupy the right side of binary oppositions, that patriarchy considers inferior (cited in Tyson, 2006, p.100). Janie’s patience runs out. She starts retorting Joe, “ah know uh few things, and women folks thinks sometimes too” (Hurston, 1937, p.52). Though she is silenced once again but a wave of rebel rises in Janie. Joe’s unceasing demand for total submission has left her life empty and mechanical, “the bed was no longer a daisy-field for her and Joe to play in. It was a place where she went and laid down when she was sleepy and tired” (Hurston, 1937, p. 52). Slowly Janie enters the second stage of identity formation i.e. *Revelation*, an assertion of positive female self and anger for man community.

Janie realises that Joe “didn’t represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees” (Hurston, 1937, p. 21). He is only a symbol for masculine aggression and power; he attempts to purchase, control

¹ “angel in the house” is a concept introduced by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). This concept denotes woman’s unassuming, self-sacrificing and nurturing nature. She makes the house a safe heaven for husband. She is satisfied by serving the family. She has no needs of her own.

and dominate the world around him (Editors, 2007, p. 14). Her dream of marriage with Joe as her renaissance is shattered into pieces by Joe's conservative ways. Janie is now hopeless and disheartened to see that her marriage with Joe has not helped her to realize her dreams. In fact, the threat of violence under Killicks turns into Joe Starks's actual violence. Joe always enjoys Janie's cooking. One evening the food is not tasty and Joe slapped Janie. The slap stabs her heart. She is petrified and stands still until

something fell off the shelf inside her...then she went inside there to see what it was. It was her image of Jody tumbled down and shattered...she had no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man...she found that she had a host of thoughts she had never expressed to him and numerous emotions she had never let Jody know about: (Hurstons, 1937, p. 52).

Here Janie becomes conscious of her sexual identity. According to Kristeva², women are both producers of culture and reproducers of species. They are not evil creatures but need to learn to join inside them fragmented pieces together. Janie feels her other self, "she had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them" (Hurstons, 1937, p.52).

Janie stays patient and quiet until one day when she challenges Joe's authority publicly with her voice. With one cutting sentence she shakes Joe's throne:

Stop mixin' up mah doings wid mah looks, Jody. . . . Yeah, Ah'm nearly forty and you're already fifty. . . .Naw, Ah ain't no young gal no mo' but den Ali ain't no old woman neither. . . . 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 'taint 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: (Hurstons, 1937, p.57-8).

This humiliation shatters Joe's public image and he strikes Janie with all his might. Joe's health starts declining but he is unrepentant. His death opens the doors of freedom for Janie. Janie's first act of liberation after Jody's death is to release her hair from the shackles of the head-rag. She reasserts her identity as beautiful and arousing woman—an identity that Jody had denied her by trying to suppress her sex appeal and making comments about her aging appearance (Editors,

² The structure is a psycho-symbolic. Kristeva asks us to internalize this structure, "From that point on, other is neither an evil being foreign to me nor a scapegoat from the outside, that is, of another sex, class, race, or nation. I am at once the attacker and the victim, the same and the other, identical and foreign." For more details see McAfee, 101-102.

2007, p. 19). She "let down her plentiful hair. The weight, the length, the glory was there. She took careful stock of herself, then combed her hair and tied it back up again. Then she starched and ironed her face, forming it into just what people wanted to see." Then she opened up the window and cried, "Come heah people! Jody is dead. Mah husband is gone from me" (*Hurston, 1937, p.63-64*).

Janie moves one step further in her journey towards developing an independent female identity. She feels released and joyous. Now that she is alone, she begins to examine her feelings and realises that she hates Nanny for the values with which Nanny has raised her. Nanny taught her to seek superficial prizes such as wealth, security, and status instead of chasing her dreams (Editors, 2007, p. 19). Suitors approach Janie but she values her independence more and rebuffs all advances. She only confides in Pheoby, forms a female bond of friendship with her.

In the third stage of *Embeddedness-Emanation*, the woman feels strongly connected to other women and she may choose to surround herself with a self-affirming women' community in order to strengthen her new identity (Boisnier, 2003 p.212). Lorraine Bethel defines the importance of relationships between African-American women in the following words:

Black women identification...is most simply the idea of Black women seeking their own identity and defining themselves through bonding on various levels- psychic, intellectual, and emotional, as well as physical- with other Black women. Choosing Black...women-identification is...the process of identifying one's self and the selves of other Black women as inherently valuable (p.17).

Due to Joe's strict rules of not mixing up with common people, Janie does not have many friends. Pheoby is her only friend and secret-sharer. Janie loves talking to Pheoby as this talk relieves Janie's heart of unexpressed burden of emotions. Pheoby acts as a link between Janie and townspeople, on the one hand, she is Janie's woman-identified friend and companion, on the other hand, she is the conveyor of information both to her friend and to the porch community. Pheoby informs Janie that there are rumours that Janie herself poisoned Joe and that's why she is not sad for Jody's death. Janie doesn't feel bad about this negative talk and tells Pheoby she loves her new independence. She does not care for what people say or think because she can't pretend to be miserable if in reality she isn't. Janie further tells Pheoby that Tea Cake is her dream partner. She reveals to Pheoby her plans of selling the store, marrying Tea Cake and

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leaving the town. Like a true friend Pheoby warns Janie of Tea Cake's low status and that he might be only interested in her wealth. Janie has a clear idea of what she desires in her life and who she herself is. She confides in Pheoby that until now she has followed dutifully the traditional ways but now she will create her own path. She adds that augmented status seems like the ultimate achievement to a former slave like Nanny but that she Janie, is searching for something deeper. Pheoby shares Janie's newfound happiness. Hence by conversing with Pheoby, Janie is able to articulate the complex, previously inexpressible ideas and emotions (Editors, 2007, p. 21). Janie's quest for self-discovery is literally a quest to find her own voice (Editors, 2007, p.22). Janie has finally begun to take real steps toward the horizon and Tea Cake is a catalyst in helping Janie living her dreams.

The fourth stage is *Synthesis* and it occurs when the woman "achieves an authentic and positive feminist identity in which gender role transcendence is coupled with the evaluation of men on an individual basis" (Boisnier, 2003, p.212). This level of identity begins when Janie comes in Tea Cake's contact. S. Jay Walker views Janie's romance with Tea Cake as a "blurring of sex-role stereotypes within an intensely sexual relationship" (p.188). In her earlier two marriages, Janie is either treated as a domestic slave (Killicks) or as an ornamental object (Starks). In both marriages, she is humiliated and oppressed. Her fighting spirit is exhausted but she never gives up on her dreams. Her relationship with Tea Cake is liberating and egalitarian. Claire Crabtree writes in her article "The Confluence of Folklore, Feminism and Black Self-Determination in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" that "Tea Cake expands Janie's horizons both literally and figuratively" (57). Later in the article she writes, "The sense of sexuality and shared roles found in Janie's relationship with Tea Cake is another aspect of Janie's development as a person. ...It is in her life 'on the muck of the Everglades with Tea Cake that Janie achieves equality with men" (60). Maria Tai Wolff echoes Crabtree when she states, "Tea Cake gives Janie the world, from which they will make a 'dream' together. He offers her experience" (31).

Janie has realized that her quest for the horizon involves a pursuit of the mystical and unknown mysteries. Tea Cake's creativity appeals to Janie. Through his respect for her and his vibrant nature, Tea Cake seems to Janie the man who will complement her and take her toward the horizon for which she longs. In this marriage, Janie flourishes in love and experience the respect

of an equal that she so desired in her earlier marriages (Racine, 1994, p.288) Tea Cake treats Janie as her equal. He respects her personal space, both ideas absent in first two marriages. Nellie McKay writes, "Tea Cake shows her a non-materialistic, day-to-day existence of love and respect between people who are not in constant state of competition and control" (Quoted in Racine, 1994, p.288). Tea Cake teaches Janie the game of checkers, driving, coon-can. Together they go hunting, and fishing. They dance and go to cinemas. All this strengthen Janie's confidence and she discovers that women have their own identity. They don't need man to complete them but to complement them. Janie is happy that Tea Cake cares for her needs and desires. Janie begins to acknowledge herself and her beauties. She is now free from the pressures of maintaining a fake social status. In Everglades life is "dancing, fighting, singing, crying, laughing, winning and losing love every hour. Work all day for money, fight all night for love" (Hurston, 1937, p.95). She starts working side by side Tea Cake in the fields and gets the opportunity to mix with common people. To Janie, Tea Cake seems an angel send by God. Her dreams of happy and content life are now reality. She has her own identity and a reciprocally rewarding relationship. For the first time she feels what it is to be jealous when she sees Tea Cake with a local girl Nunkie in the fields. Janie like an authoritative wife, tries to beat Tea Cake:

They fought from one room to the other. . . . They fought on. . . . They wrestle on until they were doped with their own fumes and emanations; till their clothes had been torn away; till he hurled her to the floor and held her there melting her resistance with the heat of his body, doing things with their bodies to express the inexpressible; kissed her until she arched her body to meet him and they fell asleep in sweet exhaustion. (*Hurston, 1937, p.99*)

Similarly, when Tea Cake slaps Janie out of jealousy, she does not feel her spirits broken, she feels more strength and courage now. On the muck, a slap is socially accepted as an expression of possessive love and authority (Racine, 1994, p.289). Michael Awkward reads Tea Cake's slap as an act of "unmotivated violence...intended to exhibit to others the extent of his authority over Janie" (as cited in Racine, 1994, 289). He beats Janie because he does not know how to verbalize his fear of losing her to someone else (Racine, 1994, p.289-90).

Tea Cake's love, companionship and his acceptance of Janie further pushes Janie along the journey toward self-actualization. Natural forces overpower the couple. They are able to survive

a devastating hurricane but a rabid dog bites Tea Cake. Tea Cake's health starts deteriorating and he becomes excessive violent and Janie has to shoot him in self-defence.

This event constitutes the final leg of Janie's spiritual journey, and she suffers a great deal. The narrator notes that "real gods require blood," (Hurston, 1937, p.104) and Janie's trials here represent her final sacrifices on the path toward liberation and enlightenment. The moment of Tea Cake's death, though horrible for Janie to endure, reflects how much she has grown as a person and how secure she has become. Although Tea Cake means everything to her, she is able to kill him to save herself (Editors, 2007, p.27). Emma Dawson suggests that Janie kills the one who represents her "self-fulfillment and self-assertion" (as cited in Racine, 1994, p. 291). Racine notes that shooting Tea Cake is Janie's assertion to the world that she has a life worth living whether married or single (1994, p.291). Wolfenstein suggests, when Janie kills him, she splits off this mad dog from the loving man who was unable to keep a leash on it and that she killed the maddened beast which took possession of the man she loved (Quoted in Racine, 1994, p. 291).

Her relationship with him has brought her along the path of enlightenment, and now that she has achieved the horizon, she is strong enough to live on her own. She faces ostracism in the courtroom but "It was not death she feared. It was misunderstanding." She does not need the superficial acceptance in the gossip culture of the porch—she has already dismissed that world—but she needs the community to recognize the strength of her bond with Tea Cake as well as her own fortitude (Editors, 2007, p.28).

The final stage is *Active Commitment* to meaningful feminist ideals. Janie, a mature and experienced woman, returns to Eatonville. She is satisfied with her life. She is full of Tea Cake's love and remembrance. She shares her whole life journey of self-fulfilment with Pheoby. Janie voices Ulysses's message of "to strive, to seek, to find and never to yield" to her community (Tennyson, 1891, L.70). One must suffer to achieve his/her goals and should never accept defeat. Continuous efforts always yield success, strength and knowledge. She allows Pheoby to narrate to others her story so that they can also free themselves from the shackles of patriarchy and stand on their feet. For Janie, language is a vehicle of exploring and asserting oneself and also a mean to enjoy human interaction. She tells Pheoby that she has experienced true love, "love is lak de sea. It's uh movin' thing, but still and all, it takes its shape from de shore it meets, and it's different with every shore" (Hurston, 1937, p.138). Tea Cake's support and encouragement helps

Janie's transition from a naïve girl to a self-affirming and confident woman. As she reflects on her experiences, "the day of the gun, and the bloody body, and the courthouse . . . commenced to sing a sobbing sigh," once again, impersonal forces harass Janie. But the memory of Tea Cake vanquishes the sadness and fills Janie with an understanding of all that she has gained and become (Hurston, 1937, p.139). Giles comments on this situation, she "will now develop a new method of coping with time—reflective hedonism. She will cultivate memories of sexuality and drama. She needs no new experience because her cup is full" (as cited in Howard, 1982, p.412).

Conclusion

The woman identity model describes the experience of women and how the evolution happens from "external, societal definitions of womanhood to an internal, personally salient definition of womanhood" (Boisnier, 2003, 212). Janie Crowford is a womanist³. She transforms from a passive follower of patriarchy to an independent woman. Despite male oppression, she not only survives the hardships and humiliations but also explores her independent identity. Janie learns that she is not what patriarchy defines. Her experience defines her and gives her voice, her separate individual self. This internal self gives her a feeling of realness. As a young girl, she has a romantic, superficial notions of life and love. As she matures, she learns the only being she need to know about is herself, her roots, her emotional fluidity and her strength. Both Nanny and Leafy are the victims of patriarchy, but more because they dare not think beyond accepted thoughts. Janie dares to challenge the norms and consequently attained desired goals. Janie though suffers hugely but her steadfastness yields success and she is able to liberate herself from oppressive cultural forces and reaches at a level of self-fulfilment, self-assertion, becoming a role model for other black women.

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³ Womanist, a term coined by Alice Walker in her book, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (New York: Harcourt, 1983), has four elements which first and foremost include "a Black feminist or feminist of colour." Second, is one who "appreciates and prefers women's culture." Third, is "love" of culture and "self." Finally, the most routinized section of this quadruple expression is simply, "womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender." The fundamentals of womanism is to find survival strategies for both sexes, celebrating the strength and progress of woman.

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