

**The Depiction Of Women's Constraints Through The Perspective Of
Beauvoir's Concept Of Otherization In Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes
Were Watching God*.**



Ayaz Ahmad Khan

M.Phil Scholar At The Department Of English And Applied Linguistics,
University Of Peshawar ayaznumal@gmail.com

Saeed Ahmad

Lecturer In English At Govt. Superior Sciences College Peshawar

Abstract: *This term paper explores the depiction of women's constraints in Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's concept of Otherization. Janie Crawford, the central character, embodies the intersectionality of her identity as a Black woman, shaping her experiences of marginalization and Otherization. The paper explores Janie's journey from conformity to self-discovery, challenging traditional gender roles and emphasizing the potential for women to break free from societal constraints. Janie's leadership and willingness to confront oppression disrupt the narrative of women's subservience, carrying feminist implications of agency and intersectionality. Her character's enduring legacy underscores the ongoing quest for gender equality and self-empowerment. Through Beauvoir's concept of Otherization, this paper offers a comprehensive analysis of Janie's experiences and their broader societal implications, recognizing the nuanced ways in which women's identities and agency are compromised within patriarchal systems.*

Keywords: Depiction, God's Eyes, Otherization, Embodies, Self-empoverment Challenges

Introduction

Zora Neale Hurston's novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, takes us on a journey through the complexities of identity and self-discovery in the African American community during the early 20th century. At its heart, the story revolves around Janie Crawford's pursuit of self-realization and empowerment. However, beneath this personal journey lies a profound exploration of how society, especially men, often treats women as less important, pushing them into subordinate roles.

During this time, Black feminism was on the rise, and women like Hurston were challenging the traditional roles of Black women in society.

In this period, Black women faced many challenges due to the oppressive system of racism, sexism, and classism. They had to fight

against these forms of discrimination, and Hurston, through her own experiences, portrayed these struggles in her writing.

The novel's main character, Janie Crawford, represents a woman who holds feminist values and faces harsh treatment in her marriages. She is silenced, objectified, and made subservient to men. Hurston uses Janie's story to expose how society often defines women solely in relation to men, reducing them to a secondary role.

Hurston's work was criticized by some for not focusing on the harsh aspects of Black life, but later, it became an important part of African American literature. Hurston aimed to shed light on the oppression and marginalization faced by Black women within their own community.

The researcher's goal is to understand why Hurston depicted the impact of a dominant

society that viewed women as inferior and subjugated them to men. They want to prove that Hurston's portrayal of women's suffering is a form of feminism. Janie's story shows how she was treated as an "Other" from her childhood, and there are many examples in the novel that highlight the limitations and status of women.

To understand this better, the researcher is using Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "Otherization." Beauvoir was a French philosopher and feminist who questioned why women were seen as less important than men in society. She argued that women were often defined in relation to men and were treated as objects of male desire and domination. This concept of Otherization can be seen in Janie's experiences, where she faces marginalization based on both her race and gender.

In Janie's first two marriages, she is treated as a possession to be controlled by her husbands, denying her agency and reducing her to an object for their pleasure. This reinforces the idea that women exist primarily for the convenience and desires of men.

In summary, Hurston's novel paints a vivid picture of the challenges faced by Black women in a society dominated by men. Through Janie's journey, she exposes the objectification and Otherization of women and aims to give a voice to those who fought for their rights

In the narrative, Janie's experiences go beyond traditional notions of womanhood, offering a rich portrayal of her quest for self-realization. But there's more to her story. It also shines a light on how society, mainly men, "Otherizes" women, making them feel like they are less valuable or important.

The story follows Janie Crawford, a woman breaking free from the expectations and limitations imposed by her community. Her journey unfolds in a society deeply rooted in patriarchy, where men define women's identities and worth. To understand this better, we'll use Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "Otherization," which helps us see how dominant groups shape the identities of marginalized groups.

Simone de Beauvoir, a prominent figure in

existentialist philosophy and feminism, introduced the idea of Otherization. She explained how those in power define and limit the identities of those who are not. This idea strongly resonates with Hurston's exploration of women's experiences and the constraints they face. By applying Beauvoir's theory, we aim to uncover how Janie's journey reflects the broader struggles of women who are "Otherized" and how she breaks free from this pattern to assert her identity and agency (De Beauvoir122).

Our journey begins with an examination of Simone de Beauvoir's concept of Otherization, providing a strong theoretical foundation for our analysis. We'll closely study key passages from *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to identify instances of Otherization. Through detailed textual analysis, we'll show how Janie challenges this pattern, defying the gender norms of her time. By exploring Janie's growth and her interactions with other characters, we'll reveal how she confronts and transcends the limitations of Otherization. In the end, we'll gain a deep understanding of how Zora Neale Hurston's work critiques and resists the Otherization of women, contributing to the ongoing conversation about gender roles and identity in literature.

This study aims to shed light on the hardships women faced in a male-dominated society, where they were often seen as vulnerable and less important. Using Simone de Beauvoir's concept of Otherization and a feminist perspective, we will explore how Zora Neale Hurston's novel exposes the struggles women endured under the control of dominant men. We will also examine how the values and beliefs ingrained in a male-dominated society contributed to the unequal treatment of women.

Janie Crawford, the central character in the novel, faces a double form of oppression—racism and sexism. This oppression is a constant presence in her life, starting from her early years and continuing until she asserts herself. Throughout her journey, Janie is treated as an outsider, unable to find her place in a society that views her as an "other." Her story reveals the inner workings of society's treatment of women, highlighting the challenges faced by Black

women. It challenges established norms and draws attention to the oppressive patriarchal system that silences and mistreats them.

Research Methodology:

The research methodology employed for this study is qualitative in nature, with a focus on textual analysis. Textual analysis involves a systematic examination and interpretation of the text itself, in this case, Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The primary objective of this research is to analyze the text through the theoretical framework provided by Simone de Beauvoir's work, *The Second Sex*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Ratnawati and Hernawati (2017) *Their Eyes Were Watching God* explores resistance against women's objectification (245). They state that Janie Crawford employs various coping strategies to resist objectification throughout her life. These strategies are deeply rooted in her self-definition as a woman and are influenced by her relationships with other women, particularly her mother and Nanny. Janie's ability to value herself, her self-reliance, and her desire for independence all contribute to her resistance against objectification.

Janie's relationship with her mother and Nanny provides her with a foundation of strength and resilience. She learns from their experiences and struggles and is empowered by their examples. This relationship with other Black women is a vital aspect of her resistance.

Janie's self-valuation and self-respect are evident when she refuses to accept Jody's objectification and asserts her intelligence and worth. She doesn't allow herself to be defined solely by her appearance or by the expectations of men. This self-valuation enables her to stand up and fight back when necessary.

Sawsan Qashgari's (2014) article *Racism, Feminism, and Language in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* discusses how Hurston's novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, addresses issues of race, feminism, and language. This article articulates that there has been some debate about how

Hurston portrays the struggles of African Americans. Some of her male contemporaries felt that she oversimplified the issues related to race. However, a closer look at her book reveals a more complex perspective. Hurston skillfully portrays not only the challenges faced by African Americans but also those faced by women. One of the strengths of Hurston's writing is her ability to represent these complex issues without resorting to anger or hostility, which can be found in the works of many other African American male writers of her time, such as Richard Wright. Instead, she uses the character of Janie Crawford to provide a powerful representation of the African American woman's experience in the early 1900s. Hurston pays careful attention to the details of her characters, including their skin color and the language they use. These elements help her create an authentic portrayal of African American women during that period. Her choice to use African American dialect gives Janie Crawford a unique voice, despite the societal pressures to silence her.

According to Tasharofi, (2019) *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a powerful exploration of feminism and domestic violence. The article emphasizes that the said novel is more than just a tragic love story. It is a skillful exploration of race, gender, and class issues in America during that era. It sheds light on domestic violence in Hurston's book *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. It says that the book is a strong feminist story. It mainly looks at feminism and a big problem in feminism called sexism. It focuses on something called domestic violence, which is when people hurt their partners in their homes. This can happen with words or actions, like yelling or hitting. As the main character, who is a black woman, goes through domestic violence from her different husbands. Each husband does it in a different way. This article wants to show how the black woman in the story fights against this violence. It is about discovering herself.

In this article by Long Shi, (2019) the focus is on Black feminism in Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Black feminism is an important lens through which to analyze the book, and this article explores how it's

portrayed. It discusses the experiences and challenges faced by the African American women in the novel, particularly the main character, Janie Crawford. It highlights how Janie's journey in the book reflects the struggles and aspirations of Black women in a society marked by racism and sexism.

Furthermore, the article explores into how Janie's relationships with different men in the story illustrate the complex intersections of race and gender. It suggests that her experiences with these men can be seen as metaphors for the broader issues faced by Black women in their pursuit of self-discovery and empowerment. It serves as a platform to explore the unique challenges and resilience of Black women, making it an important work in the realm of Black feminism.

After reviewing the existing literature on the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, it became clear that researchers have already explored various aspects of the book, including feminism, domestic violence, postcolonial feminism, and Black feminism. However, one important perspective, known as "Otherization" based on Simone De Beauvoir's concept, has been largely overlooked and missed in previous studies. This research aims to address this gap by examining the novel through the lens of De Beauvoir's concept of Otherization. This paper intends to investigate how this concept applies to the characters in the story, particularly the protagonist, Janie Crawford, and how they are marginalized or treated as different or "other" in the narrative. By doing so, it hopes to provide a fresh perspective on the novel and its relevance to broader themes of race, gender, and identity.

Research questions

- 1_How does the portrayal of Janie's leadership in the context of inferiority and otherization contribute to broader societal implications?
- 2__To what extent does Janie conform or diverge from the assumptions that underlie the male's attitude towards females?
- 3__How does Janie's is misrepresented by her husband's due to gender inequalities?

Research objectives:

- 1) To analyze how Simone de Beauvoir's concept of Otherization is portrayed in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.
- 2) To assess the impact of Otherization on the female characters in the novel.
- 3) To explore the novel's contribution to feminist discourse and its relevance in contemporary discussions of women's rights and identity.

Research Aims:

This research endeavor seeks to provide a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dynamics within patriarchal systems that contribute to the subjugation and Otherization of women. It aims to elucidate the underlying mechanisms that relegate women to inferior positions, often treating them as objects without regard for their individual perspectives. Furthermore, this study endeavors to shed light on the apparent passivity displayed by some women in the face of exploitation and domination, inquiring into the complex reasons behind their reluctance to assert themselves and challenge their objectification. To achieve these objectives, this research will draw upon the seminal ideas articulated by Simone de Beauvoir in her groundbreaking work, "The Second Sex," to illuminate and dissect the various facets of this intricate issue.

This study is a journey into the heart of patriarchal systems, seeking to unravel the intricate web of power dynamics, societal norms, and cultural influences that perpetuate the subordination and objectification of women. Through a critical examination of these forces and the application of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist philosophy, this research aims to provide a profound understanding of the factors contributing to women's vulnerability in such systems and to shed light on the complex interplay of factors that influence their responses to exploitation and domination. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and the dismantling of oppressive structures.

Significance of the study:

The significance of the study lies in its exploration of how Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* reflects and challenges the concept of otherization of women as elucidated by Simone de Beauvoir. By analyzing the novel through this lens, the study sheds light on the enduring relevance of the text in understanding the struggles and triumphs of women who seek to assert their agency, transcend societal expectations, and embark on journeys of self-discovery. This analysis contributes to the ongoing discourse on feminism, gender roles, and empowerment, highlighting the importance of literature as a means of examining and critiquing societal norms and prejudices.

DISCUSSION

Simone de Beauvoir, in her seminal work *The Second Sex*, critically examines the concept of otherization of women in society. She asserts, **"Man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female – whenever she behaves as a human being she is said to imitate the male."** (De Beauvoir 22). De Beauvoir's words emphasize the societal tendency to treat women as 'the other,' implying that they are defined in relation to men. This otherization is a fundamental aspect of women's oppression as it relegates them to a secondary position and limits their individuality.

De Beauvoir also delves into the notion of freedom and how it is restricted for women. She notes, **"She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other."** (De Beauvoir 22). Here, De Beauvoir underscores the unequal power dynamics that result from the otherization of women. Women's freedom is curtailed as they are seen as 'the Other' and, therefore, not entitled to the same degree of autonomy and subjectivity as men.

Furthermore, De Beauvoir highlights how society often perpetuates women's subjugation by imposing roles upon them. She argues, **"Women have always been man's prey, and her**

destiny has been dependent on him." (De Beauvoir 19). This observation illuminates the historical context in which women's roles have been shaped by patriarchal norms. It exemplifies how women's freedom has been systematically curbed by assigning them roles that are subservient to men's desires and expectations. De Beauvoir's critique underscores the urgent need to challenge these restrictions and redefine women's roles in society to achieve true gender equality.

These passages from *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir offer a profound insight into the pervasive otherization of women and the constraints imposed on their freedom. They lay the foundation for an exploration of how these ideas manifest in Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and how the character of Janie defies these limitations.

He hair was not going to show in the store That night he ordered Janie to tie up her hair around the store. That was all. She was there in store for him to look at, not those others. (Hurston 64-65)

In the above passage from Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, where Janie is told to tie up her hair around the store, a clear example is seen that how women, in this case, Janie, are subjected to the concept of "Otherization." This term, drawn from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, refers to the process of treating certain individuals or groups as different or inferior, often leading to their marginalization or objectification.

In the novel, Janie is being objectified and otherized by her husband, Joe Starks. He insists that she tie up her hair so that other men won't look at her, reducing her to an object for his own possession and control. This act of controlling her appearance and restricting her freedom is a form of Otherization, as Janie is being treated as an object that should not be seen by others, particularly men.

De Beauvoir's concept of Otherization, as applied to this text, highlights how women like Janie are often relegated to the role of the "Other," treated as objects or possessions rather than individuals with their own agency and

autonomy. This control over Janie's appearance and her restriction to the store for Joe's viewing reinforce the idea that women are often objectified and denied the freedom to express themselves or interact with the world on their own terms.

This passage exemplifies how women, represented by Janie, are Otherized in Hurston's novel, subjected to control and objectification by the male characters. De Beauvoir's concept of Otherization helps us understand how gender dynamics are portrayed in the novel, with women like Janie being marginalized and denied their full humanity.

“so she put on one of her bought dresses and went up the new cut road all dressed in wine colored red. Her silken ruffles rustied and muttered about her. The other woman had on percale and calico with here and there a head-rag among the olders ones”. (Hurston 48-49)

In the passage above from Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the differences in clothing between Janie and the other women in the community serve as a heartbreaking example of how women are Otherized and how their freedom is restricted within the context of gender dynamics.

Janie is described as wearing a wine-colored red dress, which stands out as more luxurious and fashionable compared to the other women who wear simpler garments like percale and calico, and some even wear head-rags. This contrast in attire highlights the economic and social disparity between Janie and the other women in the community.

Simone De Beauvoir's concept of Otherization refers to the process of treating certain individuals or groups as different or inferior, often leading to their marginalization. In this context, Janie's attire sets her apart as different, perhaps more sophisticated or independent, from the other women. This difference in clothing can be seen as a form of Otherization, where Janie is perceived as an outsider or "Other" due to her distinct fashion choices.

This also passage also highlights how women's freedom is restricted by societal norms and

expectations, often enforced by men. Janie's choice of clothing, representing her desire for self-expression and freedom, is in contrast to the traditional and conservative clothing worn by the other women. This reflects how women like Janie are limited in their choices and are expected to conform to the standards set by society, which are often influenced by men.

‘Thank you fuh yo' compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin 'bout speech-makin'. Ah never never married her for nothin 'lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home” (Hurston 51).

In Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the above part is when a man, Joe Starks, tells people not to expect speeches from his wife, Janie. He believes women should stay at home and not speak in public. This idea of limiting women's roles and voices connects to Simone De Beauvoir's concept of Otherization, she claims that women are treated as different or lesser in society (De Beauvoir 155).

De Beauvoir explains in *The Second Sex* that women have often been seen as the choices of men, like possessions. This is similar to Joe Starks treating Janie as if her only place is in the home, not as an equal partner. It shows how women's freedom is restricted by men, and they are limited to certain roles based on their gender (De Beauvoir 59). The way, to exemplify, Janie is seen as inferior, her voices silenced, and her choices controlled by men, which aligns with De Beauvoir's ideas about how society treats women.

When Joe Starks says to Janie, ***"You ain't got no particular place. It's wherever Ah need yuh. Git uh move on yuh, and dat quick,"*** (77). He is basically otherizing her. This statement reflects how men in the novel view women as objects at their disposal, echoing Simone de Beauvoir's observations in *The Second Sex*.

In *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir discusses how men have historically defined women's roles and identities. Women were often treated as tools or instruments to fulfill men's needs or desires. Joe's assertion that Janie's place is wherever he needs her demonstrates this objectification. He sees her as having no independent identity or

purpose outside of serving him.

Joe's command to "**git uh move on yuh, and dat quick**" emphasizes the restriction of women's freedom. He expects Janie to obey his orders sharply, reinforcing the idea that women should be compliant and subservient to men. This aligns with De Beauvoir's analysis of how societal expectations and norms limit women's autonomy and choices.

De Beauvoir argues that women have historically been defined in relation to men, and their freedom has been constrained by male-dominated societies. Joe's statement underscores this point, as he perceives Janie as an extension of himself, with no agency or independent will. This Otherization and restriction of freedom reflect the broader societal context in which women like Janie lived, highlighting the challenges they faced in asserting their own identities and desires.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie defies traditional gender roles when she stands up to Joe Starks after years of submission. She tells him, "**You done lived wid me for twenty years and you don't half know me at all. Ah'm colored and Ah'm woman and Ah'm strong and Ah'm hard and Ah love you**" (Hurston 86). This moment represents a significant subversion of gender norms.

Janie's assertion that Joe "**don't half know me at all**" marks a crucial moment of gender subversion in the novel (Hurston 86). She challenges the assumption that women are easily understood or defined by men, which aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's ideas.

De Beauvoir argues that women have historically been objectified and reduced to their perceived attributes, limiting their complexity as individuals. Janie's statement, "**Ah'm colored and Ah'm woman and Ah'm strong and Ah'm hard**," emphasizes her multifaceted identity. She refuses to be reduced to a simple, one-dimensional stereotype of a woman. This subversion of gender expectations reflects De Beauvoir's call for women to assert their individuality and reject predefined roles (De Beauvoir 160).

Janie's declaration that she loves Joe further challenges gender norms. In many societies, women were expected to express love and affection openly, while men often had more emotional restraint. Janie's willingness to express her love demonstrates her agency and challenges traditional gender scripts.

"You ain't got no particular place. It's wherever Ah need yuh. Git uh move on yuh, and dat quick" (Hurston 29).

In the above example, Janie's experiences with Joe Starks represent a heartbreaking portrayal of women's suffering, echoing Simone de Beauvoir's observations in *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir argues that women have historically been treated as the "Other," objectified and oppressed by men (De Beauvoir). Joe's assertion that Janie has no particular place and should be at his disposal reflects this objectification.

Despite the suffering imposed by Joe's controlling behavior, Janie eventually finds the strength to defend herself and seek autonomy. Her journey toward self-discovery and resistance is a central theme in the novel. As De Beauvoir notes, women have been conditioned to accept their role as the "Other" and have been denied the freedom to define themselves.

Janie's later disobedience of Joe, her assertion of her identity, and her decision to leave him represent her resistance against the suffering imposed upon her. She realizes that she deserves better and refuses to continue living in subjugation. This resilience and determination align with De Beauvoir's call for women to recognize their suffering, resist oppression, and assert their freedom and individuality (De Beauvoir 144).

"Her place was wherever he was" (Hurston, p. 45).

Another instance of Janie's otherization and her eventual subversion of gender roles can be seen in the above passage. When she is married to Joe Starks, Joe, who becomes the mayor of Eatonville, expects Janie to conform to the traditional roles of a mayor's wife. He asserts, "**Her place was wherever he was**" (Hurston, p.

45). This quote underscores the idea that Janie is merely an extension of Joe's public image.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie's experience with Joe Starks exemplifies the concept of otherization discussed by Simone de Beauvoir. De Beauvoir argues that women have been historically treated as the "Other" in relation to men, defined by their roles as wives or companions rather than as independent individuals.

Joe's expectation that Janie's place is wherever he is reflects this otherization. He views her primarily as a symbol of his status and authority, disregarding her desires and autonomy. Janie, initially conforming to this role, appears as the submissive mayor's wife.

However, Janie's character undergoes a transformation as she subverts these gender roles. Over time, she challenges Joe's dominance and begins to assert her own identity. She recognizes that she is more than just an accessory to Joe's ambitions.

Janie's eventual rejection of Joe's control and her pursuit of self-discovery highlight her journey from otherization to self-assertion. This transformation aligns with De Beauvoir's call for women to transcend societal expectations and define themselves on their terms.

"They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God" (Hurston, p. 129).

Janie's marriage to Tea Cake represents a significant departure from her previous relationships. While the townspeople's gossip reflects their tendency to otherize her and attribute ulterior motives to her actions, Janie's union with Tea Cake is characterized by genuine love and companionship.

Simone de Beauvoir's concept of otherization is evident in the townspeople's judgmental attitudes. They perceive Janie's relationship through the lens of stereotypes and prejudices, failing to acknowledge her agency and her right to pursue her desires. Their "staring at the dark" metaphorically represents their inability to understand Janie's choices outside the confines of societal norms.

However, Janie's journey toward self-discovery and autonomy becomes more pronounced in her relationship with Tea Cake. Unlike her previous marriages, where she was expected to conform to specific roles, Janie experiences a sense of freedom and authenticity with Tea Cake. Their love is genuine, and Tea Cake encourages her to explore life on her terms.

In this context, the phrase *Their Eyes Were Watching God* takes on a profound meaning. It suggests that Janie's choices are guided by her inner desires and her quest for spiritual and personal fulfillment, rather than the judgments of society. Her defiance of societal norms and her embrace of a relationship built on love rather than material gain reflect her subversion of traditional gender roles.

"She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree, falling through the universe. . . . He drifted off to sleep and Janie looked down on him and felt a self-crushing love" (Hurston, p. 143).

In this passage, Janie's actions exemplify her subversion of traditional gender roles and her pursuit of self-discovery through love and independence. Simone de Beauvoir's concept of otherization is once again relevant in understanding this transformation.

Janie's decision to engage in strenuous labor alongside Tea Cake challenges the conventional expectations placed upon women. Traditionally, women were expected to be dependent on men, both financially and emotionally. However, Janie's choice to work in the muck with Tea Cake demonstrates her determination to contribute actively to their relationship and to assert her independence.

The description of Janie "falling through the universe" suggests a sense of liberation and transcendence. It signifies her realization that her identity is not limited to societal roles but is expansive and interconnected with the cosmos. Her love for Tea Cake, described as "self-crushing," reflects the intensity of her emotions and her willingness to defy societal norms for the sake of love and self-fulfillment.

This moment marks a significant step in Janie's

journey toward self-discovery. She finds a deeper connection with Tea Cake, one that transcends traditional gender roles and empowers her to live authentically. Janie's actions challenge the prevailing notion that women should be passive and subservient, emphasizing her determination to shape her destiny on her terms.

"She pulled in her horizon like a great fishnet. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see" (Hurstun, p. 184).

In this poignant moment of the novel, Janie's experience of dealing with Tea Cake's illness and ultimately having to kill him reflects both her otherization as a woman and her subversion of traditional gender roles. Simone de Beauvoir's concept of otherization is once again applicable in understanding this complex situation.

Tea Cake's illness and the necessity of Janie taking drastic action place her in an inherently challenging position. As a woman, she is often seen as the caregiver and nurturer in a relationship, expected to provide emotional support and care for her partner. However, the situation forces Janie into a role that goes beyond traditional gender expectations. She must make a life-or-death decision, which traditionally falls under the domain of men. This starkly contrasts with her earlier experiences as a woman who was objectified and controlled by her husbands.

The metaphor of Janie pulling in her horizon like a fishnet is significant. It symbolizes her agency and strength in the face of adversity. She metaphorically reclaims her power by pulling the vastness of life, experiences, and responsibilities onto her own shoulders. The act of draping the horizon over her shoulder suggests that she is taking control of her destiny and the difficult choices she must make.

Janie's call for her soul to come and see underscores her journey of self-discovery and her determination to transcend societal expectations. It implies that she is confronting the existential dilemmas of life and death, taking ownership of her actions, and asserting her

autonomy as an individual.

Conclusion:

In Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the central character, Janie Crawford, embarks on a profound journey of self-discovery and empowerment. Throughout the narrative, Janie's experiences are intricately linked to the concept of otherization, as explained by Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal work, *The Second Sex*. The pattern of textual evidence and analysis presented throughout this discussion demonstrates how Janie's life is marked by societal attempts to otherize her as a woman, and how she navigates these challenges to assert her agency and subvert traditional gender roles.

Janie's early marriages exemplify the societal norms of her time, where women were often objectified and relegated to subservient roles. Her first husband, Logan Killicks, viewed her as a possession to be controlled, and her second husband, Joe Starks, aimed to stifle her voice and ambitions. These relationships represent the systematic otherization of women, where their identities are defined by the desires and expectations of men. Janie's subsequent marriages and her ultimate choice to be with Tea Cake underscore her desire for self-realization and love on her own terms.

Janie's journey is punctuated by moments of subversion, where she breaks free from societal constraints and asserts her autonomy. Her decision to leave Joe Starks and her relationship with Tea Cake challenge traditional gender roles, as she actively pursues her desires and passions. The hurricane scene, where Janie must make a life-or-death decision, epitomizes her agency and inner strength, as she transcends traditional gender expectations and takes control of her destiny.

Simone de Beauvoir's concept of otherization is a powerful lens through which to analyze Janie's experiences. It illuminates how society, especially the men in her life, attempts to limit her choices, silence her voice, and define her solely in relation to their desires. However, Janie's journey exemplifies the possibility of liberation and self-discovery. She pulls in the

vast net of life onto her own shoulders, symbolizing her reclaiming of power and the assertion of her autonomy.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a narrative that intricately weaves together the themes of otherization, gender roles, agency, and self-discovery. Janie Crawford's character evolves from a woman subjected to societal expectations and control to one who defies convention and seeks authenticity. Her journey mirrors the transformative potential of women breaking free from the chains of otherization, embracing their agency, and charting their destinies on their terms. In the words of Simone de Beauvoir, women can indeed transcend their status as "the other" and emerge as individuals who shape their own narratives, just as Janie did in the novel, ultimately finding her voice and her horizon.

REFERENCES

- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Translated by H. M. Parshley, Vintage, 2011.
- Gates, Henry Louis Jr. "Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography." Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Qashgari, Sawsan. "Racism, Feminism and Language in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*." *AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies* 1.2 (2017).
- Tasharofi, Parmis. "Domestic violence in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*: A Feminist reading." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 3.4 (2014): 120-127.
- Shi, Long. "Black Feminism in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*." *Advances in Literary Study* 8.01 (2019): 1.