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**ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S
MOTHERLESS HEROINES**

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ÖZET

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Zora Neale Hurston'ın Annesiz Kadın Kahramanları

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi

Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi

Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

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Anne ve kız çocuğu arasındaki bağ ve annenin; kız çocuğunun kişiliği, kadınlığı ve cinselliğinin gelişmesindeki önemi antik mitlerden modern psikanalitik, feminist ve edebi eleştirilere uzanan en önemli tema ve konulardan biri olmuştur. Birçok önemli psikanalist ve feminist anne figürünün kız çocuğunun ruh ve kişiliğini nasıl belirlediği, şekillendirdiği ve değiştirdiğini konu almışlardır. Bu kişilerin yapıtlarında, sadece anne ve kız çocuğunun arasındaki ilk bağılılığın önemi değil aynı zamanda kız çocuğunun ruhsal bütünlüğü, kendisini algılaması, cinselliği, bilinci ve özneliği tamamıyla onun annesiyle olan iyi ve karşılıklı duygusal ilişkisi ile ilgili olduğundan bu ilişkinin kalitesinin önemi de vurgulanmıştır. Bu bağlamda, anneyi kaybetmenin veya annenin duygusal eksikliğinin kız çocuğu için ne demek olduğu büyük önem taşır. Bu sebeple, birçok kadın yazarın yazılarında annesinin ölümünden, terk etmesinden veya yetersiz anneliğinden kaynaklanan psikolojik yarayı iyileştirmeye çalışan kadın kahramanlarla sık karşılaşırız.

Afro-Amerikan edebiyatının seçkin yazarlarından biri olan Zora Neale Hurston da bireysel özgürlükleri için mücadele edip aynı zamanda anneleri ile yeniden birleşmeyi arzulayan kadın kahramanların psikolojik ve duygusal çatışmalarını resmeder. Annesini dokuz yaşında kaybetmesinden dolayı, annesinin ölümü Hurston'ın yaşamında büyük bir ıstırap izi bırakmıştır. Anne-kız çocuğu bağı Hurston'ın çalışmasında vurgulanarak tekrarlanan bir tema olmamasına rağmen, otobiyografisi *Dust Tracks on a Road*'un (1942) yanı sıra romanları *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1934), ve *Seraph on the Suwanee*'de (1948) arka planda tüm karmaşıklık ve ikircikliği ile anne-kız çocuğu bağına gösterilmesi vardır. Bu çalışma, klasik psikanaliz, nesne-ilişkileri kuramı ve feminist eleştirileri ışığında seçilen bu romanlarda anne-kız çocuğu bağına çeşitliklerini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Üzerine odaklanılan esas nokta Hurston'ın *Seraph on the Suwanee* ve *Their Eyes Were Watching God* romanlarındaki annesiz kadın kahramanların özerk ve bireyselleşmiş kimlik kazanmak için yaptıkları psikolojik yolculuklarını ayrıntılarıyla incelenmesidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Anne-kız çocuğu bağı, psikanalitik kuram, nesne-ilişkileri kuramı, feminist eleştiri, *Seraph on the Suwanee*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

ABSTRACT

Master Thesis

Zora Neale Hurston's Motherless Heroines

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Mother-daughter bonding and the importance of mothers in the development of the daughter's personality, femininity, and sexuality have been one of the core themes and issues from ancient myths to modern psychoanalytic, feminist and literary criticism. Many pivotal psychoanalysts and feminists have been preoccupied with how the maternal figure determines, shapes and modifies the daughter's psyche and personality. In their work not only the importance of this early attachment between mothers and daughters but also the significance of the quality of this relationship have been underscored since the daughter's well-being, perception of self, sexuality, consciousness, and subjectivity are all consistent with her good and mutual emotional relationship with her mother. In this sense, what mother loss or emotional absence of the mother means to a daughter gains vital importance. Therefore, in many women's writing, we often see a heroine who tries to recover the psychological wound caused by her mother's death, abandonment, or inadequate mothering.

Zora Neale Hurston, who is one of the prominent writers of Afro-American literature, also illustrates the psychological and emotional conflicts of heroines who are simultaneously struggling for their individual freedom and longing for the reunion with their mothers. Having lost her mother at the age of nine, Hurston felt the agony of her mother's death. Although mother-daughter bonding is not a recurrent theme in her oeuvre, we can easily detect that in addition to her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) there is an implicit manifestation of mother-daughter bonding with its all complexities and ambivalences in her novels *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1934), and *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948). In the light of classic psychoanalysis, object-relations theories and feminist literary criticism, this thesis aims to explore the variations of mother-daughter bonding in these selected novels. The main emphasis goes to the elaboration of motherless heroines' psychological journey to gain an autonomous and individuated identity.

Key Words: Mother-daughter bonding, psychoanalytic theory, object-relations theory, feminist literary criticism, *Seraph on the Suwanee*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, motherhood and its consequent complexity and diversity have always been one of the core themes and issues of different kinds of separate but interrelated fields of research. From ancient myths to contemporary feminist and psychoanalytic perspectives, it seems that motherhood and the experience of mothering have been one of the core issues not only in real life but also in fiction and literature regardless of its conflicting and divergent definitions. Thus, the profound importance of motherhood and the complex discourse of mother-infant relationship occupy a prominent place in literature as well as several areas including biological, sociological, cultural, feminist and psychoanalytic accounts. Albeit the dominant patriarchal social order in which men reduce women to the status of silent and subordinate object, maternity and its assured role in the construction of female subjectivity and sexuality deserve considerable exploration and attention. Moreover, not only does motherhood play a crucial role to define womanhood, it has also a prominent function in the formation and construction of “a core beginning of self or identity.”¹ It would not be inappropriate to say that mother is the first world we know. She is the source of our lives by her caring and nurturing capacities. Bearing this in mind, it is evident that the infant’s physical and psychological existence mainly depends on its mother. What makes mothers and motherhood so vital is that the development of individual psychology as well as the interpersonal and social relationships revolves around this “symbiotic experience” between mother and infant.² Early infantile development occurs in relation to another person, that is to its mother or caretaker. Regardless of any gender, class, race and religion our first identification has always been with our mothers. As Adrienne Rich, in her influential book *Of Woman Born*, says “[t]he one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and men is that months long period we spent

¹ Nancy Chodorow. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: California U.P., 1978), p.59

² Elizabeth Fox-Geneovese. “Mothers and Daughters: The Tie That Binds” *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women’s Writing*. Edited by Nagueyalti Warren and Sally Wolff. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. P., 1999.), p. xvii

unfolding inside a woman's body."³ That's why this primal mother-child bond is more important than other relationships. As the infant internalizes the most important aspects of this relationship, the experience of the infant that takes place throughout this early bonding has the most significant effect on its emotional development and adult personality. Nancy Chodorow, one of the most prominent feminist object-relations theorists, also underscores the importance of mother-infant bonding as follows:

The reproduction of mothering begins from the earliest mother-infant relationship in the earliest period of the infantile development. This early relationship is basic in three ways. Most important, the basic psychological stance for parenting is founded during this period. Second, people come out of it with the memory of a unique intimacy which they want to recreate. Finally, people's experience of this early relationship to their mother provides a foundation for expectations of women as mothers.⁴

Moreover, the importance of this early relation to mother and first identification of both genders with their mothers place its effect on the psychic and emotional development of the feminine, which will be the main focus of this study. Rather than a broad examination of mother-infant bonding, the "symbiotic" dependency between mothers and daughters and a girl's original attachment to her mother with all its complexities and ambivalences will be the main purpose of the thesis at hand. The mother's unique bond with her daughter and her influence over her daughter as a role model determine the dynamics of female psychology, sexuality and subjectivity. Feminist and psychoanalytic theories have examined thoroughly the sense of connectedness, emotional connection, intimacy and mutuality between mothers and daughters as well as their need for separation and differentiation for individual empowerment and self-affirmation. One of the special qualities of this bonding is that although they are separate beings with different interests, motives and characters, they are also fused with each other. That is to say, a mother contains her daughter and a daughter contains her mother by mirroring

³ Adrienne Rich. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995.), p.11

⁴ Nancy Chodorow. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: California U.P., 1978), p.59

each other. In Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's words, "mothers and daughters share intimate knowledge of pains and joys of womanhood, of what it means to live in a female body."⁵

As a social and emotional relationship, the bonding between mothers and daughters affects the development of feminine consciousness. However, it is the quality of care and bonding that profoundly affects the daughter's subjectivity. The daughter's well-being and psychological health are all consistent with her good emotional and mutual relationship with the mother. The attitudes of the mother influence the daughter's perception of self, sexuality, consciousness and subjectivity. By internalizing and imitating her mother's attitudes and traits, not only does the daughter attain a heterosexual identity but she also participates in a cyclical relationship with her mother. Just as caring mothers produce caring daughters, daughters of unresponsive mothers internalize and repeat their mother's lack of maternal care and love. As a result of her mother's unresponsive attitude, the girl becomes psychologically impaired. Insensitive mothers account for alienated daughters, but closeness of the mother to her daughter affects the daughter's self-confidence and autonomy. In the Foreword to the book *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fiction in Southern Women's Writing*, Fox-Genovese also states the conflictual aspects of the mutual bond between mothers and daughters:

Daughters look to mothers for love, acceptance, approval, and a model of how to live as a woman; mothers look to daughters for love, acceptance, approval, and the confirmation that they have fulfilled their responsibilities. But when daughters no longer admire and imitate their mothers, or mothers chafe against the constraints of mothering, bond of intimacy fray.⁶

In addition to mothering deficiencies, the absence of a mother or mother loss at an early stage of infantile development is a significant factor in the daughter's sense of self. On the one hand, it results in her vulnerability in a man-defined, patriarchal society. On the other hand, by exposing her into the harsh conditions of a

⁵ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. "Mothers and Daughters: The Tie That Binds" *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women's Writing*. Edited by Nagueyalti Warren and Sally Wolff. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. P., 1999.), p. xv

⁶ Ibid, p.xvi

world and environment in which she is deprived of profound maternal love, she learns to fend for herself and claims her self-reliance.

An early twentieth century novelist and influential pioneer in the African American women's writing, Zora Neale Hurston, though not explicitly, deals with the recurring themes of a daughter's search for identity and voice either by claiming her autonomy and separation from the mother or grandmother figure as a caretaker or by following her mother's dying wish at deathbed. The reason why she illustrates similar scenes in her novels is nothing but due to her own childhood experience. Abandoned as an adolescent after her mother's death, Zora Neale Hurston's wandering years begin, which leaves a pivotal mark on her private life and fiction as well. Actually, her determination for self-empowerment both for herself and her female protagonists derives from her wish to keep her promise to her mother. Lucy Ann Hurston, Zora's mother, urges her daughter at every opportunity to "jump at de sun." Hurston, thus, always keeping her mother's exhortation in mind, tries to keep her solemn promise to her mother by becoming a vigorous, self-empowered and autonomous black woman who resists the conventional constructions of womanhood. In her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), Hurston unravels her inner conflicts, drives and motivations, all of which have led her to search for empowering images of self.

Hurston's main drive to write about expression of self through voice and self-discovery is nothing more than her mother's insistence and dependence on her for voice. The dramatic scene between a nine-year-old girl and a mother at her death bed as she trusts her daughter to realize her last wish is a very clear paradigm of the bond of mutual support and dependence between mother and daughter. Lucy Ann Hurston gives her little daughter some instructions with regards to communal death rituals, but little Zora fails to keep her solemn promise:

I had left Mama and was playing outside for a little when I noted a number of women going inside Mama's room and staying. It looked strange. So I went on in. Papa was standing at the foot of the bed looking down on my mother, who was breathing hard. As I crowded in they lifted up the bed and turned it around so that Mama's eyes would face the east. I thought that she looked to me as the head of the bed was reversed. Her mouth was slightly open, but her breathing

took up so much of strength that she could not talk. But she looked at me, or so I felt, to speak for her. She depended on me for a voice.⁷

Cheryl A. Wall, by referring to Hurston's insistence of power of speech and the relationship between voice and selfhood, noted that "the history of her writing career is, to some extent, the history of her efforts to recover her mother's voice."⁸ Similarly in her book *The Character of the World*, Karla F. Holloway discusses about Hurston's spiritual world and the role of her mother in her life and works with references to Barbara Christian and her work *Black Feminist Criticism*:

Hurston felt her mother's call to her voice, her call to sustain the soul, to assure lineage. Voice for Hurston meant something more metaphysical than physical. It meant acknowledging a potential for motherhood, a role, according to Christian, that was symbolic of contradictions and contrasts. The contradictions came in adulthood for Hurston because she answered her mother's call with spiritual rather than biological allegiance. Her voice to be heard by a reader rather than passed on physical progeny, but was still available to any who could participate in the forms of spiritual epiphany that her writing represented.⁹

Even though, Hurston does not explicitly depict sociological study of black motherhood or mother-daughter dyad in her works, beneath the surface of her many texts there lies her longing for her beloved mother and a mutual mother daughter relationship. As a source for her daughter's self-confidence by encouraging her to develop a strong will and to jump at the sun, Lucy Ann Hurston pervades much of Hurston's work and her heroine's struggle for self-empowerment and quest for voice. In addition to her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), the sacred mother-daughter symbiosis and dependence, also the maternal factor in a daughter's psychospiritual journey and development occupy a deserving attention and examination in her novels *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and *Seraph on the Suwanne* (1948), all of which are selected as the case study of analysis in this thesis.

⁷ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.), p.63

⁸ Cheryl A. Wall (1991). "Zora Neale Hurston" African American Writers. 1991 The Scribner Writers Series. <<http://www.galenet.com.proxy.lib>. (6 June 2007)

⁹ Karla F. Holloway. *The Character of the Word: The Texts of Zora Neale Hurston*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.), p.18

In her quasi-autobiographical novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, which is based on the lives and relationships of her own parents, Hurston tells the story of Lucy and John Pearson's marriage. Although the main plot revolves around the black preacher John Pearson, his marital infidelities and hypocrisy, we, as readers, feel Lucy's strength and perseverance throughout the novel as well as John feels his devoted wife's presence even after her death. What makes Lucy Pearson a focus of this study is her approach to John like a nurturing and guiding mother rather than a wife. Most importantly, her sermon to her daughter Isis while she is dying, which is a reminiscence of Zora's own experience, is at the heart of the mother-daughter dyad.

A strong vigorous black woman Janie Crawford in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which is celebrated as Hurston's finest novel, is neither a mother nor a daughter of a strong mother character like Lucy Pearson. Brought up by her grandmother, Janie has never met her mother. Having been raped by her schoolteacher, Leafy, Janie's mother, abandons her daughter after giving birth to her. Janie has a chance to experience the mutual bond neither with her mother nor with her grandmother. However, by narrating her story to her friend Pheoby (after burying the dead) she preaches a sermon not only to Pheoby but also to her other sisters. In a way, she acts as a community mother to them by arousing consciousness which will lead towards black women's self-affirmation and self-exploration.

Contrary to Janie, Arvey Henson, the protagonist of commonly misread and undervalued novel *Seraph on the Suwanee*, meets the reader as a weak-willed woman who suffers psychological and emotional problems. Both as a mother of three children and a daughter of an impotent mother, Arvey Henson deserves psychoanalytical assessment, since at the core of her psychological scars and pains there lies her inadequate, unresponsive relationship with her mother. Able to form neither a mutual bond with nor a necessary separation from her mother to develop a strong sense of self, Arvey is doomed to adapt the subordinate role assigned to her as a mother and wife. Nevertheless, she achieves reconciliation with her own sense of self and her mother by returning to her hometown to (re)evaluate her self at her mother's deathbed. Unlike Isis and Zora, Arvey succeeds in keeping her mother's dying wish and thus develops a new sense of self aware of her strength and talents. *Seraph on the Suwanee*, therefore, presents a portrait of a diverse and complex

mother-daughter bond, its special qualities of the need for unity and division, bonding and separation.

Broadly speaking, my main endeavor in this thesis is to analyze these novels' representations of the unique mother-daughter symbiosis with all its ambivalent dynamics of attachment and loss, individuation and separation, love and hate, bonding and rivalry. While analyzing the heroines' psychological, spiritual and emotional journey from adolescence to womanhood, I will try to construct my critical model by referring to basic Freudian and object-relations theories about the development of personality as well as feminist criticism of motherhood. Composed of three main chapters, this study attempts to give an account of female development, the emotional and psychological turbulence that the heroines undergo in a man-defined dominant social order where women's roles are basically familial and domestic in contrast to men's public roles. Being either wife or mother or both, these female protagonists oscillate between ambivalent emotions. Torn between being a wife, a mother and a daughter, their struggle to overcome the intersecting oppressions of gender, sexuality, race and class is very demanding and complicated thus deserves critical assessment.

Although I have selected these three novels as my text of analysis, my main focus will be on *Seraph on the Suwanee* since its protagonist Arvay best exemplifies my argument of mother-daughter bonding, maternal deficiency and its consequences on the development of a female character. I will try to explain her emotional oscillations, sense of inferiority, low self-esteem and weak superego formation in the light of Freudian psychoanalytical perspective and object-relations theories. I have chosen Freudian and object-relations theories for my critical and theoretical paradigm as they facilitate my analysis of unconscious desires in the formation of female development. Besides, their principal tenets about pre-oedipal stages, the role of pre-oedipal mother in the development of girls and boys and how it determines different relational capacities and sense of self explain best the underlying reasons behind the attitudes of these protagonists and especially Arvay.

In the first chapter, which consists of three parts, I aim to provide a theoretical basis for my study. In the first part of this chapter, Freudian psychoanalytical views with regards to feminine and masculine oedipus complex,

and their resolution in favor of heterosexuality, the role of penis envy and castration complex in the development of the child's personality, his topographical (conscious / unconscious) and structural (id / ego / superego) models are going to be elaborated. Furthermore, his theories about feminine development and feminine sexuality are going to be included in this part. The second part of the first chapter, addresses the same issues according to basic principles of object-relations theories by pivotal object-relations thinkers. Object-relations usually means personal relations; therefore, discussions of this psychoanalytic thought center on the early relations of a child and mother. How this early relation shapes, directs and modifies the child's inner world and his adult relations is the main subject of object-relation theories. No matter how different perspectives and interpretations object-relations theorists have, they all focus on the importance maternal role in the psychic development of a child. Therefore, by referring to the main principles of Melanie Klein, W.R.D. Fairbairn and D.W. Winnicott, mother infant bonding, and its everlasting effects on the psyche of the individual will be the main focus of this part.

Finally, in the last part of this chapter, divergent meanings of motherhood are going to be examined. It is true that object relations theory has extensively influenced feminist discourse about mothering. With the advent of object-relations theory and prominent psychoanalysts' hypotheses, the mother has moved to center stage and taken over the role of the father and his power, which is generally associated with "phallus." Although some feminists claim motherhood as a reason for women's oppression and confinement in the domestic sphere, motherhood is cherished and seen as a source of women's empowerment by many feminists, literary critics and scholars. As an extension to the previous part, mother-daughter (re)union, and the construction of feminine identity in the discourses of motherhood and daughterhood will be explored within the feminist examination of motherhood. Before giving a brief analysis of motherhood in black and contemporary feminism and vicissitudes of mother-daughter relationship, Nancy Chodorow's evaluation of motherhood and her arguments with regards to "reproduction" of mothering will be presented. By grounding her analysis on object-relations theory, Chodorow proposes that mothers treat their daughters differently than sons. By identifying more and for a longer period of time with their mothers, daughters develop more relational

capacities than boys, which in turn creates gender differences in infants and consequently “reproduction of mothering.” In this sense, her arguments will be applied to the mother-daughter relationships and daughter’s relational capacities.

The second chapter of this thesis intends to give a brief examination of Zora Neale Hurston’s life, works and general characteristics of her fiction. Even though she was neglected and harshly criticized during her life time, she apparently succeeded far better than she expected, for she profoundly contributed to Black feminist literary criticism. She is one of the most significant Afro-American women writers of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. Because of her conscious use of autobiographical material, folktale, myths, and southern vernacular and female-male issues rather than the subject of racial discrimination, Hurston was criticized by her contemporaries especially by Richard Wright. This chapter aims to propose that her aim was actually to cherish the Black folk culture and tradition as well as black women’s voice and struggle. By defining her as “a model of resistance” and a strong outstanding woman, Deborah G. Plant notes that “Hurston, like other ‘exceptional’ Black women, is revered as a survivor instead of mourned as a victim.”¹⁰ Her struggle for survival and quest for voice will be expressed in terms of her identification with her mother. In addition to references to her autobiography, her first novel *Johan’s Gourd Vine*, which contains autobiographical materials, will also be analyzed in this chapter.

Finally, the last chapter of the thesis is based on the psychological journeys of the protagonist in Hurston’s *Seraph on the Suwannee* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Compared to *Their Eyes* and its resilient, autonomous heroine Janie, *Seraph on the Suwannee* and its protagonist Arvey have been considered as a disappointment by many literary and feminist critics for Arvey shows no images of female vigor and spirit. Even Hurston’s biographer Robert Hemingway and Alice Walker, whom the latter of dedicated most of her research to unearth the unmarked graves of their foremothers and especially Zora Neale Hurston’s, regarded *Seraph* as less artistic, weak and inconsistent. For this reason, I would like to start by speaking up for the unfairly charged *Seraph* and its heroine Arvey. Although Arvey is

¹⁰ Deborah G. Plant. *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1995.), p.143

accused of being subordinate and domestic as a wife and mother, her innermost upheavals and turmoil stem from her being excluded from parental, especially maternal intimacy, that is her being “an emotional orphan.”¹¹ Therefore, with a detailed outline of the novel, Arvay’s difficulty in separation-individuation process with her mother, her struggle to reconcile with her mother, her rival sister and finally with her husband Jim will be scrutinized.

The second part of final chapter is dedicated to a discussion on Janie Crawford and *Their Eyes*. The concern of this chapter is quite different from the previous one. Rather than witnessing the theme of black mother-daughter relationship, which occupies most Afro-American women writers’ tradition, we note a different form of motherhood here: Janie is the caretaker mother of the Black womanhood. As it is stated above, Janie is not a biological mother, but she takes the role of a community mother initially for Pheoby, to whom she tells her story, and then for the women in “Mouth Almighty.” As a role model, she initiates a change among her sisters. Besides Janie’s role as a community mother, her role as a daughter who achieved her separation-individuation process to control her own destiny will be presented here.

To put it briefly, this thesis aims to explore mother-daughter symbiosis and its outcomes on the development of feminine psychology and subjectivity in the light of Freudian psychoanalysis, object-relations theories and feminist literary criticism. This is an attempt to analyze via Hurston’s own experiences and her heroines how a mother affects her daughter’s perception and sense of self, relations and image of the world. Last but not least, I hope to present an opportunity to rethink the meaning of motherhood, thus femininity.

¹¹ Ava L. Siegler. “Some Thoughts on the Creation of The Character.” In *The Mother-Daughter Relationship. Echoes Through Time*. Edited by Gerd H. Fenchel. (London: Jason Aronson, 1998.), p.39

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Freudian Account of Psychological Development of a Child

Sigmund Freud, who is the father of psychoanalysis, contributed greatly to the principal tenets of psychology, psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic literary criticism. His theories have dominated other schools of psychoanalysis and given way to new models such as object relations, self-psychology and interpersonal psychoanalysis. Obviously, his successors, either by opposing or by approving of his ideas, have been inspired by his psychoanalytic accounts. By devoting most of his time and research to the development of psychoanalytic tenets and working with neurotic people, he served as the starting point for new and modern theories. How the human subject is constituted, what forms the human personality and how the human psyche functions constitute the backbone of his concerns and principles.

He put forward two significant models in order to explain how human personality is developed: “the topographical model” and “the structural model.” In his topographical model, which he later abandoned as he believed it lacked the necessary ground for the explanation of psychical and pathological apparatus, Freud tried to analyze human psyche and its functioning by “[t]he division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious.”¹² According to him, the mental functioning and the mental structure were divided into two portions, one of which is “repressed” and the other is “repressing.” He associated the “repressed” parts of the psyche with the unconscious and the “repressing” parts with conscious. However, he later revised his division of the portrait of the mind by adding the term “preconscious.” He made the distinction of by stating that “we have two kinds of unconscious-the one which is latent but capable of becoming conscious, and the one which is repressed and which is not, in itself and without more ado, capable of becoming conscious.”¹³ In other words, for Freud, unconscious is completely unknown and latent whereas preconscious can rise into conscious via “word-

¹² Sigmund Freud. *The Ego and The Id*. (New York: Norton and Company, 1962.), p. 3

¹³ *ibid*, p.5

presentations.” Moreover, according to Freud, unconscious is mainly personal and a room for forgotten and repressed contents which are after pleasure and satisfaction.

After making a distinction between unconscious and preconscious, Freud developed his most widely applied model, the structural model, in which he analyzed the components of the personality as an interrelated association of the id, the ego, the superego. He proposed that each individual’s psychic mechanism and personality develop out of the interactions of these three structures. The ego, the mediator of the id and the superego, has the demanding task of regulating the instincts and libidinous demands of the id as well as complying with the regulations of the superego. Therefore, the more capable the ego of mediating between the opposing demands of the id and the superego, the healthier a person mentally is. For Freud, thus, the ego is attached to both consciousness and unconsciousness. It is neither separated from the id, which is at the service of “pleasure principle,” sexual and destructive wishes or drives nor from the principle setting superego. Freud describes the difficult situation in which the ego struggles by comparing it to “a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the id, and from the severity of the superego.”¹⁴

The id, the shelter of the passions and the repressed, is regarded as a threat to a civilized adult and society as it acts in accordance with the “pleasure principle.” In contrast, the superego, which develops the latest of the three, contains the regulations of society as authority and therefore, represents society within the psyche. While the id as an unconscious structure is inborn and present in every infant, the superego develops out of the resolution of the Oedipus complex, which is “a period of innovation” for the child.¹⁵

As an essential cornerstone of Freud’s theory of personality and other psychoanalytic theories, the Oedipus complex has many momentous outcomes, one of which is the formation of superego or the ego-ideal. Due to a primal fear of accompanied by sense of guilt, the child follows the demands of the father to separate itself from the mother and internalizes the father figure as a representation

¹⁴ Ibid , p.46.

¹⁵ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 16.

of social and moral authorities in order to become individuated, socialized and civilized. Upon recognizing the demands of society and civilization to repress all prohibited and incestuous desires, the child gives up his desires for the mother and identifies with the father.¹⁶

“Identification” as a psychological mechanism plays a crucial role in the formation of the ego and the resolution of the Oedipus complex, namely in the formation of the superego. In contrast to “repression” which is mainly concerned with instincts, identification is directed towards people or the objects in the environment. Broadly speaking, “identification” means to become like or to take on characteristics of someone. Freud says in *The Ego and the Id* that the identification and the object-cathexis are indistinguishable from each other during the oral phase of the development.¹⁷ However object choice or cathexis is gradually replaced by identification due to the necessity of relinquishing these objects. The ego takes on the characteristics of the object or the person through identification. By setting up of the objects within itself the ego is formed, so identification also creates and shapes the ego. However, the object choice or the first objects of love are never fully replaced by identification. Through “abandoned object cathexis,” the child starts to relate to the objects in a more mature way and puts the earlier mode of relationships with her/his first objects into unconscious. This means that the traces of the interpersonal relationships with important people in the past remain in the individual’s identity and shapes her/his personality. “Thus, the ego contains within it the history of past object choices or past interpersonal relationships. The traces of past love relationships remain in the child’s personality and cause the child to resemble his or her parents.”¹⁸ Thus, identification has a key role to explain aspects of ego formation. In addition to its role in the formation of the ego, identification also helps the development of the superego in relation with the successful resolution of the Oedipus complex. The child successfully resolves its oedipal struggle by identifying with the parent of the same sex thus in turn forms a superego.

¹⁶ In his discussion of the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, Freud presumes the child to be male and says in *The Ego and The Id* that the development of the Oedipus complex for girls is exactly similar. p. 22

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud. *The Ego and The Id*. (New York: Norton and Company, 1962.) , p.19

¹⁸ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 28

Freud's account of the resolution of the Oedipus complex for boys follows a straightforward route. At the very beginning of his infancy the boy develops an object cathexis for his mother with intense desires related to the mother's breast. His preoedipal attachment to his mother then becomes more intense and he sees his father as a dangerous rival, who frustrates his sexual, incestuous wishes and phantasies. As a consequence of his perception of his father as an obstacle, his Oedipus complex originates. He wants to replace his father or his penis; therefore, he develops murderous wishes against his father. Nonetheless, his attitudes toward his father take an ambivalent characteristic. Owing to his fear of being castrated by his father, he has to choose between his self-love, that is his penis, and his love for his mother. By giving up his erotic object-cathexis of his mother, he transforms his heterosexual attachment to an affectionate kind of love. As a result, he identifies with his father to develop his masculinity. This is how positively or normally the Oedipus complex resolves for boys since there is also another way of identification with the mother which will result in "inverted" or "negative" Oedipus complex.

In Freud's original view, feminine Oedipus complex is "precisely analogous" to the masculine Oedipus complex.¹⁹ He proposes that the girl develops an Oedipus complex and a superego symmetrical to those of a boy. Nonetheless, his theory of feminine development is expanded in a series of articles: "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," "Female Sexuality" and "Femininity." He applies the male norm to the development of feminine sexuality and compares female development to it: "The girl's Oedipus complex is much simpler than that of a small bearer of the penis; in my experience, it seldom goes beyond the taking of her mother's place and adopting of a feminine attitude towards her father."²⁰ He analyzes the girl's female development of femininity referring to a set of concepts that he attributes to her such as "phallic sexuality," "masculinity complex," "penis-envy" and "sense of inferiority." In his article "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" he states that initially the girl's clitoris acts as a penis; however, upon realizing that hers is

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud. *The Ego and The Id*. (New York: Norton and Company, 1962.) , p. 22

²⁰ Sigmund Freud. "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex." (In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001.), p. 300

completely different from the other sex, she regards it as inferiority and a wrong done to her. This vital discovery that she is doomed to make leads her to “notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognize it as the superior counterpart of [her] own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis.”²¹ Unlike the boy, who fears the possibility of castration, the girl thinks that she has been castrated, thus perceives her “lack” as a scar to her self-esteem, which explains the origin of her “narcissistic wound.” “She makes her judgment and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it.”²² Now that her “masculinity complex” has arisen she develops a sense of inferiority and contempt for other women especially for her mother whom she blames for her lack of a penis. As a consequence of her anger and hostility towards her mother, who has been her first object of love, she turns to her father because he has an omnipotent penis and he might provide her this much desired object.

As a compensation for the missing object or the renunciation of the penis, the girl makes a shift in her desire for the penis. She changes from wanting a penis from her father to wanting a child, preferably a boy, from him. Consequently, Freud underlines the unconscious equation of penis and child to explain the development of femininity. Upon taking up her father as a love object and turning her mother into a rival and the object of her jealousy, the girl achieves her heterosexuality and becomes a potential mother-to-be via her desire for a child. Thus, [t]he little girl has turned into a little woman.’’²³

Furthermore, Freud points to two shifts that the girl makes to achieve her normal femininity. Firstly, in the course of her development, the girl has to move from the clitoris as a leading erotogenic zone to the vagina. Thus, she also moves from the active masculine sexuality into a passive feminine one as Freud proposes that the girl’s sexual life is divided into two phases. Secondly, she replaces her first love object, her mother whom she later blames for her insufficiency and with her

²¹ Sigmund Freud. “Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes” (In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001.), p. 309

²² Ibid, p. 309

²³ Ibid, p. 312

father as her new-object love. Due to these two extra tasks, the development of a girl into womanhood is more complicated and difficult compared to the development of a male child.²⁴

Freud also speaks about the discrepancies between sexes in Oedipal dissolution in relation with the castration complex. In a boy the Oedipus complex, by which he regards his father as a rival and his mother as an object of desire, must be abandoned because of the threat of castration. As a consequence of this and thanks to identification with the father his masculinity and a severe superego develop. Nonetheless, in a girl, the castration complex initiates the Oedipal drama rather than destroy it. She is preoccupied with her lack of a penis rather than castration fear. The envy for the penis, with its momentous outcomes, leads the girl to enter the Oedipal situation. To put it differently, “[w]hereas in boys the Oedipus complex is destroyed by the castration complex, in girls it is made possible and led up to by the castration complex.”²⁵ As such, the outcome of the Oedipus resolution in girls with regards to the superego formation is not akin to that of a boy. According to Freud, because girls remain in Oedipus complex for a longer period of time and destroy it later and not completely, they do not develop a strong ego formation which is a general feminine character. For him, this incomplete resolution accounts for the weak superego, which results in her sense of inferiority and lack of independence.

Not only does Freud mention the differences between two sexes with regards to the outcomes and formation of the Oedipus complex, but also he tells about the differences in the “prehistory” of the Oedipus complex. He starts to question the subject matter in “Some Psychological Consequences,” but it is in “Female Sexuality” and “Femininity” that his inquiry is expanded. He focuses on the pre-oedipal mother-daughter relationship and on how this bond gives way to father as object of love. He questions and analyzes how and why the girl turns to her father. He acknowledges that the Oedipus complex in girls has a long prehistory. Pre-oedipal phase in girls underscores the origin and the formation of the feminine Oedipus

²⁴ Sigmund Freud. “Femininity” (In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001.), p. 346

²⁵ Sigmund Freud. “Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes” (In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001.), p. 313

complex. What he turns his attention to in a girl's pre-oedipal phase and her attachment to her mother is the presence and absence of the penis, namely the penis envy. For both sexes, the first love object is the mother, and she remains so for the boy. However, for the girl the mother serves both as a love object and as a rival. Freud says that the lack of the penis and wish for it are responsible for her turn to the father. The girl accuses her mother of giving her insufficient nourishment, little milk, lack of love. In addition, she blames her for her lack of a penis. That's why her attachment to her mother ends in hostility and hate.

The psychological consequences of penis envy and women's lack of a penis, for Freud, are a sense of inferiority, narcissistic wound, the general character trait of jealousy, ill-formed superego and the shame about their body. With regards to a girl's pre-oedipal attachment to her mother, Freud finally reports that the girls' strong attachment to their fathers is in fact preceded by an equally strong and passionate attachment to their mothers. Moreover, by stating that its duration is longer than he thought he adds that "we had to reckon with the possibility that a number of women remain arrested in their original attachment to their mother and never achieve a true change-over towards men. This being so, the pre-Oedipus phase in women gains an importance which we have not attributed to it hitherto."²⁶ In fact, a girl's attachment to her mother is never given up completely, and sometimes it is carried over to her attachment to her father and her husband through "regression" and "repression."²⁷ Therefore, the mother becomes an ambivalently loved and hated object in the girl's psyche. As a provider of the breast, care and nurture, she is loved while at the same time she is hated to death as a rival for the possession of the penis (the father) and as a reason for the lack.

To put it succinctly, the formation and the dissolution of the masculine and feminine Oedipus complex have many important outcomes on both sexes. As the most critical developmental period of childhood, it leads to identifications which result in the superego formation. Besides, by abandoning the incestuous hostile wishes, the child has the chance to find an appropriate love and sexual objects in

²⁶ Sigmund Freud. "Female Sexuality." (In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001.), p. 323

²⁷ Ibid, p. 328. This theory is going to be discussed in more detail in the chapter three of this thesis while analyzing Arvay and Jim's marriage in *Seraph on the Suwanee*.

adult life. Thus, the Oedipus complex and its resolution play a crucial role in the heterosexual feminine and masculine identities as well as in healthy psychic development. However, if it is not resolved successfully and completely, it gives way to neurotic or sexual conflict in later life.

In conclusion, although Sigmund Freud is accused of his male bias in his remarks about women's development especially by feminists, he has contributed a lot to psychoanalysis and feminism. All in all, his final remarks in his article "Femininity" seem to be said as an excuse for his theorizing of female psychology:

That's all I had to say about femininity. It is certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly. But do not forget that I have only been describing women in so far as their nature is determined by their sexual function. It is true that that influence extends very far; but we do not overlook the fact that an individual woman may be a human being in other respects as well. if you want to know more about femininity, enquire from your own experience of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper or more coherent information.²⁸

This future phase is partly achieved by later theorists who will develop further his object-relations theories and mother-infant bonding.

1.2. Object-Relations Theories and Mother-Infant Bonding

Apparently, the term "object relations" has become the center of interest in much psychoanalytic and feminist writing. Mainly concerned with interpersonal relations, object-relation theorists look into the early formation of psychological structures and how these structures are revealed in interpersonal relations. These theorists have concentrated their attention on the relationships of early life which have enduring and imperative effects on the psyche of the individuals and their adult love as well as their relations. What forms the linchpin of their argument is the early mother-child relationship and its everlasting significance and upshot. Underlining the undeniable importance of early childhood experiences and the child's

²⁸ Sigmund Freud. "Femininity." (In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001.), p. 362

relationships with parents especially with the mother, object-relations theorists argue that, rather than innate factors environmental influences play a crucial role in the development and shaping of personality. Unlike Freud, who draws attention to innate instinctual drives and biological factors, more weight is given by these later theoreticians to interpersonal relations and environmental influences and aspects. They generally refer to the influences of the parents over the child. Their argument is that the interpersonal environment plays a permanent and central role in the development of personality and the self. Emphasizing the importance of earliest experiences, for they are internalized and will be repeated in later life in different ways, object relation theorists highlight that the traces of interpersonal relations with important people in the past color and shape the individual's core identity. They propose that past interpersonal relationships or past object choices dominate the child's personality and ego boundaries throughout her/his life. To put the same idea another way, Michael St. Clair points out that "[t]hese residues of past relationships, these inner object relations shape perceptions of individuals and relationships with other individuals. Individuals interact not only with an actual other but also with an internal other, a psychic representation that might be a distorted version of some actual person."²⁹

Different from the classic Freudian model of personality, object relation theorists all refer to the primacy of relationships and the influence of environment in shaping personality. Although they may differ among themselves and point to different notions, what is generally agreed upon is the importance of internal images of and vital exchanges with important people in individual's life. Object relation theorists such as Melanie Klein, W.R.D. Fairbairn, Edith Jacobson, D.W. Winnicott, Margaret Mahler, Otto Kernberg, Harry Guntrip all share a common concern with these relational issues. Since Freud's models served as the foundation and starting point for object-relation theories, these theorists developed a new stream within psychoanalytic tradition either by expanding or completely opposing to him. An indispensable cornerstone of Freud's theory of personality is the notion of innate instinctual drives as the basic human motivation. He refers to the instincts to explain

²⁹ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 2

the interpersonal relationships and environmental influences that shape the personality. For him, interpersonal affairs are important but secondary to human drives. Therefore, here comes the most distinguishing disagreement with Freud within object relations tradition. In contrast to Freud, object relation theorists generally give priority to environmental influences rather than innate ones or biological factors. Thus, they focus on earlier pre-oedipal development and how personality and self are developed through interpersonal relationships especially in a family. Moreover, object-relation theorists regard disturbances and conflicts differently from Freud. For Freud, conflicts arise from unresolved Oedipus complex or when there are conflicts between sexual or instinctual demands and the demands of the ego or reality. Conflicts among the id, the ego, the superego are also another reason for psychological disturbances. On the other hand, by focusing on the disorders or disturbances in crucial relationships, object-relation theorists suggest that early pre-oedipal developmental deficits result in psychological disturbance and prevent the formation of a cohesive self. Another issue of disagreement between object relation theorists and Freudian account is about the role of aggression. While Freud regards aggression as an instinct, object relation theorists state that aggression is produced as a result of early developmental deficits or frustrations in relationships. They generally focus on the frustration in the mother-child relationship, which prevents the child from forming an integrated, unified sense of self.

Thanks to object-relations theory, the mother, who was regarded subordinate to all-powerful, omnipotent father, has become the focal figure of interest. Unlike Freud, who associated power with the paternal phallus and focused on the father's role in the Oedipus complex, object-relation theorists emphasized the fundamental role of the mother in the child's development. Although Melanie Klein, who is the founder of the object-relations theory, did not concentrate on the mutual interactions between the mother and the infant and the importance of maternal environment, she emphasized the infant's phantasies concerning the mother's "insides." Specialized in the psychoanalysis of children and their play, Klein extended Freud's concept of objects and object relations. She agreed with Freud with regards to the role of instinctual drives in explaining the motivation for and the formation of personality,

yet she departed from Freud in some of her concepts. Robert Rogers describes her “as an amphibian, a creature who swims in the great sea of Freudian instinct theory but travels as well on the solid land of object relations.”³⁰

Klein began her investigations with children by observing their play. She discovered that their identifications with objects constitute their personality. In their play, she noticed that as a result of their internalized relationships with external objects, they develop fantasies, anxieties and defenses that define their personality development. Referring to the child’s unconscious and fantastic constructions in her/his psyche, she exclusively focused on aggression, anxieties, frustrations and splitting that the infant goes through in relation to the mother and her breast. Although she contributed much to changing the focus of psychoanalysis from the father’s role to that of the mother, she “did not posit some blissful symbiotic preoedipal stage, or even some mutually gratifying relational construct”, which would be underscored by later object relations theorists.³¹ Greenberg and Mitchell pointed to the some common misconceptions concerning Klein’s work that “she focuses exclusively on aggression at the expense of other motives, and that she neglects the importance of real people altogether at the expense of fantastic and phantasmogoric creations of the child’s own mind.”³²

Her explorations of the infant’s psyche involve biological drives and instincts. She followed the Freudian emphasis on instincts but regarded them as connected with objects and as relational. “Klein’s emphasis on biological drives in interactions makes her psychology id-centered, a psychology that focuses more on the role of drives as expressed in mental phantasies than on parents’ contributions.”³³ As Greenberg and Mitchell indicate, her emphasis on both instinctual drives and object relations makes her “a key transitional figure between the drive/structure model and the relational / structure model.”³⁴ In summarizing

³⁰ Robert Rogers. *Self and Other: Object Relations in Psychoanalysis and Literature.* (New York: New York U. P., 1991.), p. 10

³¹ Janice Doane and Devon Hodges. *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the “Good Enough” Mother.* (Michigan: Michigan U.P., 1992.), p. 8

³² Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory.* (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1983.), p. 120-121

³³ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology.* (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 40

³⁴ Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory.* (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1983.), p. 121.

Klein's contribution to the development of the object relations model and her reformulation of the Freudian account of the drives, they say that for Freud drives seek gratification or release and are essentially objectless or the object "remains temporally secondary and always functionally subordinate to the aims of drive gratification."³⁵ They state that, on the other hand, in Klein's theory drives are directed towards objects and "are not discrete quantities of energy arising from specific body tensions but passionate feelings of love and hate directed toward others and utilizing the body as a vehicle of expression. *Drives, for Klein, are relationships.*"³⁶

Klein also extended Freudian concept of "internal objects" in her work. Freud portrayed parental images and their internalization during the resolution of the Oedipus complex. They remained limited to the superego formation. Nevertheless, Klein broadened the internal images via her usage of phantasy. She proposed that the child's mind is filled with phantasies concerning her/his parents. These phantasies then become more and more complicated as the child starts to imagine the mother's inside. S/He desires to possess all the riches s/he imagined concerning the inside of the mother including her womb, food, babies, feces and the father's penis. In addition, the child imagines an analogous interior in her/his own body, in which both the good and bad aspects of the objects remain. Thus, as Klein claims, by the help of these internal objects and phantasies and anxieties concerning them, one's personality, sense of self, moods and behavior are established.

According to Klein, the infant attempts to both possess and destroy the mother. The mother is not only the source of plenitude and gratification but also the source of aggression, anxiety and frustration. Therefore, the infant makes use of different psychological mechanisms of projection, introjection and splitting to control its feelings. The infant associates its own feelings with the object's qualities. It turns its good and bad feelings onto the object, generally to the mother's breast. Conceived as either good or bad, the breast stands at the center of the infant's phantasy life and it projects the bad and good feelings onto the breast. Through introjection, the things which are perceived in the outside world are taken into the

³⁵ Ibid, p.136

³⁶ Ibid, p. 146 (italics theirs)

infant's phantasy life. Hence, the outside danger or deprivation becomes an inner danger. To protect itself from these frustrations and anxieties, the infant uses the mechanism of splitting. By separating the good and bad aspects of the breast and keeping apart the feelings associated with them, the infant disperses dangerous feelings.

Envy is another major concept described by Klein. She postulates that envy is a form of infantile aggression and is directed not toward bad objects but toward good ones. Although all forms of hatred are directed toward the bad objects, envy is directed toward the riches of the mother's body and inside. "The child experiences the goodness and nurturance which the mother provides but feels it to be insufficient and resents the mother's control over it. The breast releases the milk in limited amounts and then goes away."³⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising that "[t]he relationship with the mother and her breast is a complex relationship where feelings of love and hate, and frustration and gratification coexist."³⁸ Driven by the phantasies, depressive anxieties arising from the working of the "death instinct" the infant has to deal with the external and internal objects on a phantasy level.

Finally, Klein postulates two positions in the infant's relations and developmental stage: the destructive "paranoid-schizoid position" and the reparative "depressive position." Klein suggests that in the paranoid-schizoid position, the infant is moved by a destructive impulse which is inherent from the beginning. In the first six months of life this position dominates. She depicts that by keeping the good and bad aspects of the object separate and isolated the infant tries to protect itself. In the second half of the first year of life, the infant develops the second position, in which the child is capable of integrating the previously split images of the mother. Now that there is only one mother as a whole object and with good and bad features "the infant is motivated by an inherent capacity to love and so to construct phantasies that restore both mother and itself as a 'whole'".³⁹ Finally, the child comes to the resolution of this depressive anxiety and the guilt accompanied by it through "reparation," the repair of the mother through restorative

³⁷ Ibid. p. 128

³⁸ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 42

³⁹ Janice Doane and Devon Hodges. *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother*. (Michigan: Michigan U.P, 1992.), p. 10

phantasies and behaviors. What leads the infant to move from the “paranoid-schizoid” position to depressive anxiety and finally to reparation is explained by Greenberg and Mitchell as follows:

Klein makes it very clear that the child’s concern for others does not consist simply of a reaction formation against his destructiveness, nor is it simply anxiety deriving from dependence on the object. The concern for the fate of the object is an expression of a genuine love and regret, which develops, as Klein later suggested along with a deep gratitude for the goodness the child has received from the mother.⁴⁰

Therefore, the mother in Klein’s account does not do anything to initiate or provoke the infant’s greedy aggression and phantasies: she merely offers her breast. As Doane and Hodges define The Kleinian mother, she “is wonderfully difficult to place; she is both inside and outside, both male and female. This ‘mother’ whether imagined as ideal and destructive, is not ‘really’ good or evil: she is a fluid construction of the child’s desires and anxieties.”⁴¹ Thus, for Klein disturbances do not stem from external influences or the mother’s insufficiency, but they are from within and direct result of internal world of the infant. However, though the mother is not determinant of the infant’s anxieties and phantasies by her direct actions, Klein states that the child is never fully finished with the mother. By redefining the Oedipus complex in terms of depressive anxiety and emphasizing depressive anxiety instead of castration complex, she proposes that the depressive anxiety is never fully overcome. “Ultimately, the work of symbol formation, art and culture themselves, can be attributed to our attempts to make reparation, to regenerate the mother.”⁴² As for the last words for Klein, who is a key figure in the shift of focus to the early relationships between the infant and the mother, we can say that by giving priority to the infant’s aggression, anxieties and complex set of phantasies, she contributed a lot to the psychoanalytic tradition.

Among the psychoanalytic theoreticians who have contributed to the increasing focus on the object-relations theory, W. Ronald Fairbairn, a pivotal

⁴⁰ Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1983.), p. 126

⁴¹ Janice Doane and Devon Hodges. *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the “Good Enough” Mother*. (The United States of America: Michigan U.P., 1992.), p. 16

⁴² *Ibid*, p.12

psychoanalytic thinker, stand out as he inaugurated significant changes in psychoanalytic discourse. He can be regarded as the first thinker to formulate a true relational nature of the self. According to Michael St. Clair, he “fashioned a model of object relations that is the most ‘pure’ - that is, free of biological emphasis and purely psychological- a model that is very different from Freud’s model of motivation and personality.”⁴³ He put forward the conceptions of “infantile dependence,” which is different from autoerotic infantile sexuality and “endopsychic structure,” which depicts the relations of the ego to internalized objects. That he pervades the psychoanalytic theory and literature even today is not happenstance, for he proposed the importance of objects at the expense of instinctual drives and the importance of infantile dependence rather than Oedipus complex.

At the center of Fairbairn’s disagreement with Freudian theory lies his reinterpretation of the drive model. Fairbairn’s theory of psychology rejects Freud’s emphasis on drives as the basic human motivation. “For Fairbairn, motivation no longer comes from the ego being in service to impulses of the body, but rather from the ego striving for a relationship with an object.”⁴⁴ Within Freud’s system, impulses seek satisfaction through tension-reduction, known as the pleasure principle. Only when objects are useful in reducing tension can impulses become directed towards objects. However, from the Fairbairn’s point of view, “libido is not pleasure seeking, but object-seeking.”⁴⁵ He also differs from Klein over the concept of drives. For Klein, as for Freud, the main aim of the impulses is still satisfaction – the object acts as a means to an end. On the other hand, “Fairbairn reverses this means/end relationship. He argues that the object is not only built into the impulse from the start, but that the main characteristic of libidinal energy is its object-seeking quality. Pleasure is not the end goal of the impulse, but a means to its real end, relations with others.”⁴⁶

Another major area in which Fairbairn and Klein differ is related with their perceptions about the source of pathology or suffering in human experience. For

⁴³ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 55

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.58

⁴⁵ James S. Grotstein and Donald B. Rinsley. *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. (New York: Free Association Brooks, 1994.), p. 77

⁴⁶ Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1983.), p. 154

Klein, who partially favors the drive/structure model, the conflict stems from human instincts, particularly death instinct and aggression accompanied by it. In contrast, Fairbairn regards the source of psychopathology and human suffering as an outcome of maternal deprivation. Grotstein and Rinsley outline Fairbairn's vantage point as follows:

Ideally, perfect mothering results in a whole, non fragmented ego, with its full libidinal potential available for relations with actual, external objects. Inadequate parenting, poses grave threats to the integrity of the ego. The central anxiety for Fairbairn involves the protection of the tie to the object in the face of deprivation, and all psychopathology is understood as deriving from the ego's self-fragmentation in the service of protecting the tie and controlling its unsatisfying aspects.⁴⁷

As a consequence of their different point of views with regard to the source of pathology and conflict, Klein and Fairbairn are also at odds with each other over the concept of "bad objects." Klein concludes that the child's own destructiveness and aggression projected onto others result in the "badness" of the object. For Fairbairn, however, "badness" is associated with dissatisfaction and deprivation. Bad objects frustrate the child by their absence or unresponsiveness. "For Fairbairn, 'bad objects' are aspects of the child's parents which make them unavailable to him and frustrate his inherent longing for contact and relatedness."⁴⁸

In his discussion of the ego's inner structures, Fairbairn reveals that the ego strives for a relationship with an object and the basic human drive is relating with others. Only when these relations are satisfactory can the ego remain integral and whole. Unsatisfactory relations, thus, necessitate the setting up of inner objects which compensate for the bad external objects. Establishment of these inner objects cause the splitting of the ego's unity as different portions of the ego remain related to different internal objects. When the child mentally splits the object into good and bad aspects, s/he internalizes the bad aspects and this makes the object or environment good and the child bad: It is not the parents as external objects who are

⁴⁷ James S. Grotstein and Donald B. Rinsley. *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. (New York: Free Association Books, 1994.), p. 84

⁴⁸ Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1983.), p. 176

bad, it is he. By transferring the badness into her or himself, s/he takes upon the “burden of the badness,” which results in the ego’s identification with internal “bad” objects. As a kind of defense mechanism, the child adapts the outer badness at the expense of internal security for s/he preserves the hope of control over it. If the badness is within her/him, s/he can handle it much more easily. Sacrificing internal integrity means multiple structures of the ego since the ego splits into separate aspects.

In short, the ego’s frustrating relationships with objects become internal, and these inner objects become active structures within the psyche. It is as if there are now multiplicity of egos at war with one another. The *endopsychic situation* refers to these structures of the ego in relation to internalized objects that have become structures.⁴⁹

The infant sets up the endopsychic structure in several steps. Firstly, the infant splits the mother into two partial objects. Depending on her satisfying the infant’s need, she is good and bad. Then, it internalizes the mother as a bad object. However, the trouble is not really overcome by internalization. The infant’s solution is to split the inner bad object into an exciting or needed object and a frustrating or rejected object. Finally, it represses both of these objects by aggressive repression. Rather than *have* bad objects the child her/himself would rather *be* bad. The motive for this is to make the object good. As St. Clair explains by referring to Fairbairn’s endopsychic situation “[t]he ego defensively and repressively banishes the internal bad object to the unconscious. But the inner, repressed bad object acts dynamically and causes bad behavior or bad feelings about the self.”⁵⁰

These bad internalized objects are seen as the cause for neurotic and psychopathologic symptoms for Fairbairn. The intensity of the process of splitting and internalizing these bad objects as well as the intensity of the badness of these objects result in conflict and disturbance in the psyche of the child. For the child’s essential striving is for relation and contact, s/he needs someone to love her/him. If the (m)other is gratifying and responsive, the child enjoys pleasurable activities. However, as Fairbairn stresses, if the (m)other is emotionally absent, unresponsive, inconsistent and chaotic, then the child is doomed to suffer a considerable dilemma.

⁴⁹ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 57

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.62

Fairbairn expands his theory by adding that the self-accusations of the child result from the child's core feeling of helplessness and ultimate need for relatedness and dependence. His developmental model requires the individual's dependency upon his/her internal external objects.

In Fairbairn's theory of development, there are several stages to complete so as to achieve an emotional development, which is a sequence of relations to others. In contrast to classical Freudian developmental model, which is built on the nature of the libidinal aim, Fairbairn proposed three stages. The first stage is "infantile dependence stage," which is typified by identification with the object. Underlying the infant's helplessness and dependency, he suggests that the infant is involved with others and its survival depends upon the mother's presence. The infant wants to be at one with her or tries to be at one with her by relational activities such as sucking, clinging, incorporation and so on. In Fairbairn's developmental theory, the "primary narcissism," in which the child's love is self-directed, is replaced by the inclination to merge with the mother through identification with the object.

During the second stage, "a transitional stage," which is a bridge between the relations with objects based on infantile dependence and relations with objects based on mature dependence, the child expands her/his relationships with the objects. According to Fairbairn this stage is difficult and never fully complete. The child is afraid of losing the objects altogether. To achieve maturity, the child must abandon her/his dependency on her/his parents and claim her/himself as differentiated and separate from them. What s/he essentially needs is to be loved and to believe that her/his own love and sense of self are valued and welcomed. Finally, in the "mature relational stage," which refers to an increased differentiation from the object, Fairbairn points to the capacity to mutual give-and-take relationship between two differentiated people.

Like the other object relation theorists, Fairbairn underscores the child's experience with her/his mother and grounds his theory of disturbances on the mother's inadequacy or unresponsiveness. For him, the basic need of the infant is to set up a satisfactory relation with the mother and to maintain this relationship. As he claims, different features of the mother are internalized and established as an internal object. In the light of his theory of internal objects, he introduces two

fundamental features of the relationship to the mother. He defines them as a “gratifying component” and an “ungratifying component.” Since the gratifying component is separable and involves both rejection and sense of hope and promise, Fairbairn presents three different experiences of the mother: gratifying mother, enticing mother and depriving mother. As a consequence of the relationship to these external mothers, three internal objects are established: the ideal object, which is associated with the gratifying aspects of the mother; the exciting object, which relates to the promising aspects of the mother; and the rejecting object stemming from the depriving aspects of the mother. To put it briefly, Fairbairn offers a theory of personality by giving primacy to the infant’s relatedness to and dependence on the mother. The mother, both as an external and internal object, defines, shapes and modifies the child’s sense of self, ego formation and psychic survival.

Next, Donald W. Winnicott, an English pediatrician and psychoanalyst, is another prominent figure who contributed greatly to the development of psychoanalytic theory and practice. Even though he did not construct a broad and comprehensive vision of human development like his predecessors such as Freud, Klein and Fairbairn, he achieved a rightful position in psychoanalytic tradition via his innovative and important contributions. His introduction of major concepts such as “holding environment,” “good-enough mothering,” “the true self,” and “the false self” in his discussion of personality development made him emerge as a forerunner for later theorists.

While not opposing directly to the Freudian account of instincts and inner dynamics of the individual, Winnicott altered the focus by underlying the interaction of the child with the environment. He accentuated the prominence of environment by saying that when it is good enough, it helps the healthy development of the self. That the emotional development of the child is exclusively contingent upon the child’s relationship with the mother is asserted by Winnicott. Depending on its being favourable or not, the environment plays a crucial role in the development of the infant, and Winnicott asserts that what determines the conditions and features of the environment is maternal care. Furthermore, Winnicott continues, it is the mother herself who is the facilitating environment. It is by depending on the facilitating environment that the infant develops a healthy self and achieves a maturational

process. Integration of the self and the ego is closely connected to this facilitating “holding environment” according to Winnicott. Greenberg and Mitchell explain Winnicott’s notion of “holding environment” as follows:

The mother provides experiences which enable the incipient self of the infant to emerge. The latter begins life in a state of “unintegration,” with scattered and diffuse bits and pieces of experience. The infant’s organization of his own experience is preceded by and draws upon the mother’s organized perceptions of him. The mother provides a “holding environment” within which the infant is contained and experienced: “an infant who has had no one person to gather his bits together starts with a handicap in his own self-integrating task.”(1945, p.150)⁵¹

For Winnicott, the development of an infant as a person depends on the successful “holding environment” as it helps to build up positive feelings within the psyche. Winnicott also regards the mother functioning as a mirror, by evoking the baby’s existence. He describes that the mother provides the infant with a reflection of its own gestures and experience. When the infant looks at the mother’s face, what it sees is nothing but itself. “The mother gives back to the baby the baby’s own self. It is as if the baby, in looking at the mother’s face, looks in a mirror and sees itself. ‘When I look I’m seen, so I exist’ (Winnicott, 1971a, 114).”⁵² Therefore, the mother, or as Winnicott says the “good-enough mother” serves as a foundation for constitution and differentiation of the self by adapting to the infant’s needs and maturational processes. By sufficiently providing what the child needs of her child and by forming a “holding” and mirroring environment for her child, the “good-enough mother” supplies the child’s ultimate need for relatedness and contact.

When the mother is good enough or able to adapt to the baby’s needs and wants, she improves its gradually evolving sense of self. Nonetheless, when there are deficiencies in the child’s environment, the self of the child cannot be integrated, cohesive or true. “The failure of the mother to actualize the child’s gestures and needs undercuts the child’s sense of hallucinatory omnipotence, constricting his belief in his own creativity and powers and driving a wedge between the evolution

⁵¹ Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1983.), p. 191

⁵² Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 79

of the psyche and its somatic underpinnings.”⁵³ This is what Greenberg and Mitchell sum up with regards to Winnicott’s perspectives over the reasons of anxiety and mental illness.

As a consequence of the deficiencies in maternal care when the mother fails to provide a perfect environment for the child, a split occurs between the “true self” and “false self” forming a fragmentation of the ego. If the environment is not safe, the “true self,” which is the source of needs, gestures, and wants isolates itself and goes into hiding. The child becomes or takes the role of the mother’s image of her/him. Then, the “false self” develops to protect the integration of “true self.” As St. Clair explains the function of the false self, it “hides the true self and cannot act spontaneously. Only the true self can be spontaneous and feel real or genuine. The presence of a false self results in the person feeling unreal and futile and unable to be genuine in relationships.”⁵⁴

To conclude Winnicott’s remarkable contributions to psychoanalytic and object relations theory, finally we must address his notion of the “transitional objects.” He regards the formation of the “transitional objects” as a notable aspect of the developmental process. They act as mediators between the state of illusory omnipotence, in which the child considers her/himself having control over the things and the state of objective perception in which s/he realizes her/his helplessness and limitations. Stating that these objects can be a blanket, a diaper or an old piece of cloth, St. Clair states that these objects “belong to that intermediate area of experience to which inner reality and external life both contribute” and adds that “the blanket is a real, objectively perceived thing but serves like the comforting breast that is under the control of the infant.”⁵⁵ Therefore, as a kind of mental protection against anxiety or loneliness, these objects help the infant to cope with the external reality or distress. In conclusion, Winnicott, with his notable concepts and perceptions emphasized that the child’s development is interrelated with the relationships with the mother, who is preferably good enough to hold her child.

⁵³ Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1983.), p. 193

⁵⁴ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 75

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.76

To sum up, although these three noteworthy psychoanalytic thinkers are not alone in their discussion of mother-infant bonding and the importance of mother's role in the development of the child's personality, they can be distinguished from their contemporaries for they initiated and contributed to the psychoanalytic model of object relations more than the others. Next to them, we can also name John Bowlby, who put forward the "attachment theory" by arguing that the attachment to the mother is primary in child's development; Edith Jacobson, who tied the drive model to an object relations model by explaining the infant's experience of the mother; Margaret Mahler, emphasizing the child mother interaction and the personal aspects of reality relations; and Otto Kernberg, whose integrated model of object relations and instinct theory focuses on the internalized past relations with others. All in all, psychoanalysis with its divergent concepts and models by foregrounding either innate biological instincts or interpersonal relations, provides insight into the puzzling and ambivalent but irrefutable mother-infant bonding. Now that the importance of the maternal figure in the development of the child has been scrutinized, I would like to go on my analysis of motherhood and mother-infant bonding in the light of feminist literary criticism.

1.3. Feminist Perspectives on Motherhood

Psychoanalysis has more or less stressed the importance of the infant's early relations to its mother. Although there have been numerous clashing perceptions with regards to the mother's role, it is agreed by common consent that the infant's physical, mental and emotional survival merely depends on its interaction and relation with the mother. Psychoanalysis has also shaped the discussion of mothering and mother-infant bonding in feminist discourse. Most of the feminist writers' work and analysis of motherhood are affected by the theories of psychoanalysts. In feminist theory, not only motherhood but also the aspects of womanhood namely female psychology, feminine sexuality and subjectivity are defined in the light of psychoanalysis. Therefore, this chapter attempts to shed light on the investigation of mothering and mothering experience in feminist theory. What is attempted to do is to examine motherhood in archetypal, social, and cultural contexts to unravel the disputed meanings of mothering and motherhood.

It will be proper to start an elaboration of motherhood in archetypal context by referring to Carl Gustav Jung, whose hypothesis of “collective unconscious” and its main content “archetypes” contribute to an understanding of the mother image as a central figure. By expanding Freud’s theories of personal unconscious, Jung asserts that in addition to our immediate, personal consciousness, there is “a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals.”⁵⁶ Jung explains his theory of “collective unconscious” in detail in his *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* as follows:

A more or less superficial layer of the conscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the *personal unconscious*. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term ‘collective’ because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us.⁵⁷

Jung goes on his elaboration that the content of the collective unconscious is made up of archetypes, which “are complexes of experience that come upon us like a fate”⁵⁸ and which express “the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere.”⁵⁹ Underlying the parallelism between mythological motifs and archetypes, he states that dreams, fantasies, imagination and delusion are the sources of proof for the existence of archetypes. He describes four major archetypes, namely “Mother,” “Rebirth,” “Spirit,” and “Trickster,” all of which appear under a variety of aspects. Of interest here is naturally the “mother archetype,” which Jung describes as follows:

Mythology offers many variations of the mother archetype, as for instance the mother archetype who reappears as the maiden in the myth of Demeter and Kore; or the mother who is also beloved, as in the Cybele-Attis myth. Other symbols of the mother in a figurative

⁵⁶ Carl Gustav Jung. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. (New York: Princeton U. P., 1968.), p.43

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 3-4

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.30

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.42

sense appear in things representing the goal of our redemption, such as Paradise, the Kingdom of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem. Many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe, as for instance the Church, university, city or country, heaven, earth, the woods, the sea or any still waters, matter even, the underworld and the moon, can be mother symbols. The archetype is often associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness.⁶⁰

Jung also terms the qualities which are generally associated with it as maternal solicitude and sympathy, female magic authority, the wisdom which transcends reason, helpful instinct or impulse and all features that cherish and foster growth and fertility. However, there are also negative qualities attributed to the mother archetype. Jung explains them as “anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate.”⁶¹ Therefore, the ambivalent and complex nature of motherhood is also once more notified by Jung since he formulates the dual nature of the mother as “the loving and the terrible mother.”

In addition to positive and negative attributes of the mother, Jung also claims that the mother archetype creates the foundation of “mother-complex.” From Jung’s point of view, “the mother always plays an active part in the origin of the disturbance, especially in infantile neuroses or in neuroses whose aetiology undoubtedly dates back to early childhood.”⁶² According to Jung, “the mother-complex” differs in son and daughter. Homosexuality, Don Juanism and sometimes impotence are the general effects of the mother complex on the son. Its effects on the daughter are summarized as an overdevelopment of feminine instinct or the weakening of them. One of the possibilities of mother-complex in girls is the intensification of all female instincts, but the one that is reinforced most is the maternal instinct. Jung states that the negative aspect of this possibility namely the overdevelopment of maternal instinct is that the woman’s sole goal is childbirth:

Even her own personality is of secondary importance; she often remains entirely unconscious of it, for her life is lived in and through others; in more or less complete identification with all the objects of

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 81

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 82

⁶² Ibid, p. 85

her care. First she gives birth to children and from then on she clings to them, for without them she has no existence whatsoever.⁶³

Contrary to the investigation of maternal instinct, another outcome of the mother-complex can be the atrophy of the same instinct which results in the “overdevelopment of Eros” according to Jung. He says that a woman of this type, unconscious of her behavior, develops an incestuous relationship with her father and, in turn, becomes jealousy of her mother. Thus, she becomes interested in married men by attempting to wreck their marriage. Jung states that identification with the mother is another likelihood of mother-complex. It leads the daughter to have a “shadow existence” under the mask of complete loyalty and devotion to her mother. Passivity, sense of inferiority, and the injured innocence become her characteristics. Since she does not know a thing and terribly in need of help, she waits for her knight, who finds her helplessness attractive. Finally, the last outcome of the mother-complex is defined as “resistance to the mother” by Jung. This kind of daughter relates to the mother in the form of resistance and would like to choose her own fate.

Jung also points to the positive aspects of the mother-complex by stating that the overdevelopment of the maternal instinct is identical with the mother image with which intense feelings are associated. On the negative side, overdevelopment of the maternal instinct can cause in the shadow existence of the daughter; however on the other hand, in broader sense it can help to the glorification of “mother love” which is worshipped anywhere and anytime. Jung describes mothers and mother love as indispensable part of our lives in following:

This is the mother-love which is one of the most moving and unforgettable memoirs of our lives, the mysterious root of all growth and change; the love that means homecoming, shelter, and the long silence from which everything begins and in which everything ends. Intimately known and yet strange like Nature, lovingly tender and yet cruel like fate, joyous and untiring giver of life - *mater dolorosa* and mute implacable portal that closes upon the dead. Mother is mother-love, *my* experience and *my* secret.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid, p. 87-88

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 92

To achieve a positive identification with the mother, Jung claims that a daughter who has an overdevelopment of maternal instinct must be abducted or stolen from her mother so as to become aware of her own personality and valuable gifts, and this must be done by a man's help. She may play the role of a devoted and self-sacrificing wife for quite a long time, but in the end she may come to realize and discover who she actually is. Finally, Jung explains why he emphasizes the mother-complex in girls rather than boys as that the mother-complex in a son is always mixed with the anima archetype and cut across by erotic attraction or repulsion. Whereas, the mother-complex in the daughter, Jung says, is very clear and uncomplicated as it does not mix with animosity. Above all, Jung clearly demonstrates that the mother images as an archetype or as our personal mother "is the psychic as well as the physical precondition of the child" as she is the first one whom "the child lives at first in complete participation with."⁶⁵

After a brief analysis of mothering in archetypal context and its effects on the infant, a feminist analysis of mothering with different ideologies will expand the understanding of mothering and help to broaden the perception of motherhood. In the light of the traits that are attributed to woman as aspects of female psychology, feminist writers have tried to (re)define what it means to be a woman and to live in a female body in a male-dominant, patriarchal society in which women's role are defined by their male counterparts. The general social role assigned to a woman is that of a serving image as a daughter, a mother, and a wife. What feminists try to do is to prevent patriarchal ideology from the habitual attempt of men and the institutions ruled by them to silence, oppress, subordinate and devalue women.

Accused by many feminists of having a male biased voice in his analysis of feminine sexuality and psychology, Freud describes women as incomplete, deficient, narcissistically wounded and inferior due to their lack of a penis and penis envy. For him, female identity stems from not having a penis and not being a male. He points that women suffer from sexual inhibition and great discontent with their bodies and social conditions, which result in their developing traits of passivity, masochism, and narcissism. He says that only when they have a child can they fulfill

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 102

their sexuality and accept their femininity. Thus, it is not surprising that his portrait of femininity as “failed masculinity” has framed specific debates.

Contrary to Freud’s notion of penis envy, there are also claims that in fact it is men and their feeling of inadequacy that cause them to develop patriarchal power and domination over women. Eva Feder Kittay introduces a parallel envy which is inherent in men and which accounts for their own inadequacy and dependence. She defines it as “‘womb envy,’ meaning by the term not merely envy of the specifically named organ, but of the complex of woman’s organs and capacities particularly as it relates to her distinctive childbirth functions.”⁶⁶ Melanie Klein also mentions the notion of primal envy of the child: envy of the mother’s breast. She claims that the mother’s breast as a valued possession is the source of envy for the child. Thus, the construction of womanhood and the roles assigned to female identity, in short the concept of femininity have been integrated by classic and recent feminist writing with references to fundamental texts of psychoanalysis.

Motherhood and its role in the construction of womanhood and the development of feminine identity, perchance, have been one of the most controversial issues among feminists because it contains its own ambivalence, duality and diversity in its nature. Evelyn Nakano Glenn elaborates on the contradictory elements of ideology of motherhood as follows:

Motherhood ideology certainly encompasses multiple contradictions. Mothers are romanticized as life-giving, self-sacrificing, and forgiving, and demonized as smothering, overly involved, and destructive. They are seen as all-powerful--holding the fate of their children and ultimately the future of society in their hands-- and as powerless-- subordinated to the dictates of nature, instinct, and social forces beyond their ken.⁶⁷

Therefore, it is obvious that there is slight consensus over the women’s capacities as nurturer, life giver and child bearer. Feminists have all engaged in the concept of motherhood in their discussion of distinctions between sex roles, femininity and masculinity and interdependent constructions of womanhood such as class, race, and gender. Ideas of motherhood and mother-infant bonding may differ

⁶⁶ Eva Feder Kittay. “Womb Envy: An Explanatory Concept” in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory* edited by Joyce Trebilcock (Savage: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers., 1983.), p. 95

⁶⁷ Evelyn Nakano Glenn. *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, Agency*. (New York: Routledge, 1994.), p. 11

from culture to culture, from century to century, and these variable constructions of motherhood and womanhood are studied in the realm of feminist ideologies, psychoanalytic account and sociological research. There have been numerous debates among feminists, sociologists and other scholars with regards to the definition of the proper role of women. Perhaps, it is the notion of “the cult of true womanhood” that produces much of the debate over the ideas of femininity. Barbara Welter, in her influential essay “The Cult of True Womanhood,” portrayed “four cardinal feminine virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.”⁶⁸ Although these roles were generally attributed to the upper or middle class white women in the nineteenth century, they established a general portrait of how a woman should be. Women were put in the center of domestic, private sphere whereas men were performing their roles in the public sphere. “Increasingly, women were persuaded that their femininity was contingent upon their being angel in the house. Creating a haven in a heartless world was their appropriate vocation.”⁶⁹ A woman’s role as wife and mother then began to determine the widely accepted gender roles in which men were associated with reason, public, labor and power while women were thought to have altruistic motives.

The cult of true womanhood and domesticity dominated feminist discussion in the fifties again. However, it is in fact with the second wave of feminism that fundamental divides took place. During the sixties and early seventies, when the claims for autonomy and equality formed the standpoint of feminists, women’s role as mothers, their responsibility for the child care and their biological reproduction were seen as the major reason for sexual division of labor and women’s subordination. The feminists of the second wave proclaimed that only when the ties of motherhood which confined women to the domestic sphere were loosened could women achieve equality with men and claim their autonomy. They also asserted that psychological theories and models of child development, which highlight mother-infant bonding by tying mothers to child care and home, also failed to concentrate on mother’s separate sense of self as a differentiated individual. Therefore, as a consciousness raising process, women were encouraged to overcome their already

⁶⁸ Diane E. Eyer. *Mother Infant Bonding: A Scientific Fiction*. (London: Yale U. P., 1992.), p. 102

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 102

assigned roles and to go beyond home. Inspired by Simone de Beauvoir and her important book *The Second Sex*, in which she analyzed women's subordination and their reduction to the status of the second sex, and by Betty Friedan and her *The Feminine Mystique*, many feminists such as Kate Millet, Shulamith Firestone, Elizabeth Janeway, Sherry Ortner and Michelle Rosaldo expressed that women's difference was a primary source of their oppression.

Speaking of patriarchy in her work Kate Millet proposes that sex-roles and sex-role stereotyping are conditioned under the rules of the patriarchy. Analyzing the works of recent feminist theory and referring to the second wave feminists as well as the ones who claimed women's differentiation, Hester Eisenstein comments on Millet's analysis of social pressure on women and the roles that force them to conformity and obedience:

Millet demonstrated that for female, "normal" meant passive, while for male, it meant active. Men had instrumental traits: they were tenacious, aggressive, curious, ambitious, planful, responsible, original, and competitive. Women had expressive traits: they were affectionate, obedient, responsive to sympathy and approval, cheerful, kind and friendly.⁷⁰

Similarly, for Janeway, Ortner, and Rosaldo the association of the female with the private sphere and their exclusion from the public sphere stem from female difference and their nurturing capacities for women are regarded as homemaker, passive and obedient. Moreover, they claim that even in the sexual act between a man and a woman, the latter is dominated by the former through the "conquest," because according to these feminists sexual interaction between a man and a woman also reveals a part of ideology which maintains the male power and domination over women. For Rosaldo, men's ability and freedom from childcare and domestic labor and women's lack of mobility because of their childbearing and lactation task explain the distance and opposition between men and women. Likewise, Sherry Ortner argues that the association of women with nature --as they reproduce human race-- and with home and the domestic circle is responsible for women's subordination. The ideology that confines women in home due to their mothering is also stressed by Shulamith Firestone, who argues that women's biological

⁷⁰ Hester Eisenstein. *Contemporary Feminist Thought*. (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co. ,1983.) , p. 8

reproduction is the original source of their oppression. In her radical suggestion to change the society, her “point was clear: for women to be liberated, motherhood and the family in current forms [have to] be abolished.”⁷¹ Finally, Jeffner Allen declares in her article “Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women” that she is endangered by motherhood. She also states that mothering is men’s domination over women’s bodies reproduces patriarchy. Further, she proposes that the mark imposed on women’s bodies as “MOTHER” is “man’s proof of his virility that he can produce himself.”⁷² As a defendant of ideology that motherhood is at the heart of women’s oppression, she goes on putting all the blame on motherhood and the experience of mothering. She claims that “motherhood is dangerous to women because it continues the structure within which females must be women and mothers and, conversely, because it denies to females the creation of a subjectivity and world that is open and free.”⁷³

On the other hand, the general view that women’s differences, especially their mothering, were the main source of female oppression and subordination changed in emphasis at about mid seventies. The debate set by de Beauvoir and Friedan and extended by the early writers of the second wave feminists took a different and clashing direction by the works of Adrienne Rich, Nancy Chodorow, and Dorothy Dinnerstein. Instead of considering women’s differences from men as a source of inadequacy and oppression, these feminists sought to reclaim these differences and motherhood as a source of special power, pride, confidence and creativity. This new women-centered analysis initiated a reassessment of motherhood in which women’s nurturing traits were celebrated. At the center of this heated debate, Adrienne Rich, thanks to her compelling book *Of Woman Born*, divided the concept of motherhood into two: “the experience of motherhood” and “the institution of motherhood”. Rich explains the distinction as follows: “I try to distinguish between two meanings of motherhood, one of superimposed on the other: the *potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 17

⁷² Jeffner Allen. “Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women.” In *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory* edited by Joyce Trebilcot (Savage: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1983.), p. 322

⁷³ Ibid, p. 315

children; and the *institution*, which she aims at ensuring that that potential --and all women-- shall remain under male control.”⁷⁴

For Rich, motherhood as institution lies at the heart of the dangerous split between public and private sphere which degrades female potentialities and alienates women from their own bodies. She says that her book is “not an attack on *the family or on mothering, except as defined and restricted under patriarchy.*”⁷⁵ In her view, the experience of motherhood is a powerful experience which suggests a potential for strength, creativity and joy by putting the women in touch with their bodies and with their children. If the institution of motherhood is destroyed, she suggests, then motherhood will be a revolutionary and transforming experience for women. Thus, to “destroy the institution” of motherhood she writes “is not to abolish motherhood. It is to release the creation and sustenance of life into the same realm of decision, struggle, surprise, imagination, and conscious intelligence, as any other difficult, but freely chosen work.”⁷⁶

Rich also lists the elements of institution as rape, marriage as economic dependence, the unequal pay women receive, the solitary confinement of full-time motherhood, the laws regulating contraception and abortion and such. However, she says that within this web of the elements of the institution, the thing which is astonishing

is all that we have managed to salvage, of ourselves, for our children, even within the destructiveness of the institution: the tenderness, the passion, the trust in our instincts, the evocation of a courage we did not know we owned, the detailed apprehension of another human existence, the full realization of the cost and precariousness of life.⁷⁷

By revaluing and fostering motherhood and capacities of women, Rich initiates a revolution of consciousness and envisions a radical change in which women repossess their own bodies. In her closing remarks of the book she writes:

The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society....We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body. In such

⁷⁴ Adrienne Rich. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995.), p. 13

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 14

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 280

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 280

a world women will truly create new life, bringing forth not only children (if and as we choose) but the visions and then thinking, necessary to sustain, console, and alter human existence-- a new relationship to the universe. Sexuality, politics, intelligence, power, motherhood, work, community, intimacy will develop new meanings; thinking itself will be transformed.⁷⁸

Rich states only when the institution of motherhood is destroyed, can these possibilities come true. In addition to Rich, the feminist reassessment of mothering took a new direction by Dorothy, who analyzed the effects of motherhood not only on women but also upon society. Underlining that mothers are in charge of childcare almost in every society, she analyzes what influences this fact has on personality development of men and women as well as on the development of the culture. Following the works of Melanie Klein, Dinnerstein focuses on the experiences mother and infant and how the latter forms consciousness, sexuality and personality from this profound experience. According to Eisenstein the core of Dinnerstein's analysis is as follows: "the child's first experiences both of intense joy and pleasure and of extreme anger and dissatisfaction were felt in relation to the person who was initially his/her entire universe. From this fundamental fact of the first human relationship, many consequences flowed."⁷⁹ Referring to the infant's first experience with mother, Dinnerstein states that the first physical world that we encounter is our mother's body and this makes her an indispensable part of our lives since our later life and feeling for her involve this unique relationship. Dinnerstein says that, besides the pleasurable and bodily satisfaction during breast feeding, being washed or changed, the infant also develops anger, anxiety, frustration and discomfort. This ambivalence and contradiction towards the mother affects the adult life of the infant. As a consequence of their experiences with the mother in infancy and the sensations she arose as unpredictable, ambivalent and out of control within their psyche, Dinnerstein suggests men seek to dominate women and their autonomy in the areas of work, home, personal affairs and even in sexual relationships. That's why, for Dinnerstein, men become attached to many women and tend to be polygamous. As a result of their early memories of childhood, men find their need for and dependence

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 285-286

⁷⁹ Hester Eisenstein. *Contemporary Feminist Thought*. (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co. ,1983.), p. 81

on women so threatening. Therefore, the unconscious fear of losing the early love object results in their control over women and their sexuality. Conversely, Dinnerstein suggests that daughters experience the loss of the mother with less difficulty, for they carry in themselves a sense of maternal feeling and as they become mothers themselves. “For this reason, Dinnerstein hypothesized, a woman was likely to be less devastated than a man by sexual rivals, and could tolerate male infidelity, as long as the men always acknowledged his need of her and returned to her in the end.”⁸⁰

However, in her discussion of mothers and daughters, Adrienne Rich thinks completely differently from Dinnerstein, for she regards the daughter’s loss of her mother or mother’s loss of her daughter as “the essential female tragedy.”⁸¹ Referring to the mother-daughter myth of Demeter and Kore, which tells of the abduction of the daughter from the mother and their reunion, Rich writes that under the rules of patriarchy and male power, many women feel “unmothered” and may look for their mothers in their personal relationships all their lives. She suggests “[p]erhaps all sexual or intimate physical contact bring us back to that first body.”⁸²

Like Adrienne Rich and Dorothy Dinnerstein, Nancy Chodorow, one of the most important theorists, investigates the controversial issue of mothering and mother-daughter bonding. In an effort to find an answer to the simple but fundamental question “Why do women mother?” Chodorow applies Freudian and object relations models in her influential work *The Reproduction of Mothering*. She raises questions about the “reproduction” of mothering, its effects on the gender roles and the different psychic development that occurs in boys and girls. She rejects the ideas that women are suited to mothering by nature or that their mothering is in some sense innate. She also refutes the idea that women are forced to mothering by the pressure of patriarchy or sex-role stereotyping or that it is because of girls’ identification with their mothers:

[T]he mothering that women do is not something that can be taught simply by giving a girl dolls or telling that she ought to mother. It is not something that a girl can learn by behavioral imitation, or by

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 83

⁸¹ Adrienne Rich. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995.), p. 237

⁸² Ibid, 243

deciding that she wants to do what girls do. Nor can men's power over women explain women's mothering. Whether or not men in particular or society at large-- through media, income distribution, welfare policies, and schools--enforce women's mothering....unless she *to some degree and on some unconscious or conscious level*, has the capacity and sense of self as maternal to do so.⁸³

For her, "women's mothering reproduces itself cyclically" and "is most eminently a psychologically based role."⁸⁴ By using psychoanalytic theory about the unconscious working of the mind to construct a new understanding of mothering, she argues that women's mothering capacities and abilities to get gratification from this experience are internalized and psychologically as well as developmentally established in the feminine psyche. Therefore, she claims that women are psychologically prepared for mothering since they are mothered by a woman. It is not only women's mothering, but also sexual-division of labor which reproduces itself cyclically according to Chodorow. She writes that "[w]omen's maternal role has profound effects on women's lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproduction of particular forms of labor power. Women as mothers are pivotal actors in the sphere of social reproduction."⁸⁵

For her, the mother's relation to her son and daughter results in different but significant stages of psychological developments which cause formation of separate self, personality, gender identity and sexual orientation. In the linchpin of her argument, Chodorow claims that due to their own gender identity, mothers treat and experience their sons and daughters differently, and this, in turn, results in different gender identities.⁸⁶ Devoting much of her work to mother-daughter relationship, Chodorow claims that the mother unconsciously replays her own experience of daughterhood with her own mother in her relation to the daughter. Because of having a "double identification" with her own mother as a child and with her daughter as a mother, she tends to relate to her daughter more as an extension of herself rather than as a separate person. However, this sense of continuity is absent

⁸³ Nancy Chodorow. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. (Berkeley: California U.P.,1978 .), p.33

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 7- 32

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 11

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.98

in mother-son relationship according to Chodorow for she claims that mothers treat sons as separate beings thus encouraging their autonomy.⁸⁷

As a result of the different treatment by the mother, Chodorow says that the boy and the daughter develop different sense of identity. Pointing to the difference in boy's and girl's attachment to their mother in the pre-oedipal period, she writes that "[a]s long as women mother, we can expect that a girl's preoedipal period will be longer than that of a boy and that women, more than men, will be more open to and preoccupied with those very relational issues that go into mothering."⁸⁸ This new standpoint of female development explains why "women's lives are embodied in relationships. Their identities are formed, nurtured, sustained and understood in connection with other people."⁸⁹

In her explanation of women's lack of autonomy, Chodorow emphasizes Freud's notion of pre-oedipal and oedipal phases in boys and girls. That the mother remains as the first object of love for boys and girls is once more expressed by Chodorow. Nevertheless, she also underscores different experiences of boys and girls in the preoedipal period, which result in differences in their personality development. According to her, because of her own gender identity, the mother does not identify with her son as much as with her daughter. Unconsciously, she tends to sexualize her relation to him; hence she pushes him into a relation of opposition seeing him as other. Consequently, in contrast to a girl, the boy tends to separate his identity from his mother easily. Iris Young sums up Chodorow's elaboration of boy's pre-oedipal development saying that the boy develops rigid ego boundaries defining himself not merely "as a different person, but a different *kind* of person," and goes on explaining that the boy's sense of separate identity "entails cutting off a sense of continuity and empathy with others."⁹⁰

Unlike that of a boy, the girl's relationship to her mother during this phase involves different characteristics. Chodorow writes that the girl's pre-oedipal

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 107-109

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 110

⁸⁹ Sally Browder. "I thought You Were Mine: Marsha Norman's 'Night Mother' in *Mother Puzzles. Daughters and Mothers in Contemporary American Literature*. Edited by Mickey Pearlman (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.) p. 111

⁹⁰ Iris Young. "Is Male Gender Identity the Cause of Male Domination?" in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory* edited by Joyce Trebilcot (Savage: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers., 1983.), p. 131

attachment to her mother lasts throughout all periods of infantile sexuality. She says that this attachment is also ambivalent and intense in nature as “the child [is] still preoccupied with issues of dependence and individuation.”⁹¹ While boys develop a different sense of self by separation and difference, the girl’s sense of sameness and continuity with the mother result in their never experiencing separateness as a component of self-development. For Chodorow, since they are mothered by a person the same gender as they are “girls come to experience themselves as less separate than boys, as having more permeable ego boundaries.”⁹² As a consequence, unable to achieve a sense of completeness and differentiation, girls remain dependent, which leads to their boundary confusion and lack of sense of separateness. Experiencing themselves as continuous with others and remaining preoccupied with ongoing relations, feminine sense of self is connected to the world while that of masculine self is different. To put it differently in Chodorow’s words:

Masculine personality, then comes to be defined more in terms of denial of relation and connection (and denial of femininity), whereas feminine personality comes to include a fundamental definition of self in relationship. Thus, relational abilities and preoccupations have been extended in women’s development and curtailed in men’s.⁹³

The differences in boys’ and girls’ pre-oedipal period also affect their resolution of the Oedipus complex with clashing outcomes. Driven by connection, sense of continuity and regarding herself as an extension of her mother, “the girl,” writes Chodorow, “does not ‘resolve’ her Oedipus complex to the same extent as a boy.”⁹⁴ Concerned with internalized and external object relations, in Chodorow’s view, the girl primarily remains attached to the mother though Freud sees the “turn to father” as a hostile reaction to the mother. Chodorow acknowledges that since the father’s role towards the daughter is not sufficiently powerful as the mother is, the daughter does not replace her first love object with the father, but only adds him to her object world defining herself in a relational triangle.⁹⁵ Neither does she change

⁹¹ Nancy Chodorow. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. (Berkeley: California U.P.,1978.), p.97

⁹² Ibid, p. 93

⁹³ Ibid, 169

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 196

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 167

her first love object, nor does she become exclusively attached to her father. Concluding that masculine inner object world is less complex and less ambivalent than that of the female, Chodorow suggests that women are in a solemn effort to fulfill their need to be loved, to complete their relational triangle and “to reexperience the sense of dual unity they had with their mothers.”⁹⁶ For Chodorow, the differences in boys and girls deriving from their being mothered by a woman are responsible for sexual division of labor as well as the reproduction of mothering. In her conclusion remarks, she writes:

Because women are themselves mothered by women, they grow up with their relational capacities and needs, and psychological definition of self-in-relationship, which commits them to mothering. Men, because they are mothered by women, do not. Women mother daughters who, when they become women, mother.⁹⁷

Presenting a solution for a change and social advance in the future, like Adrienne Rich did, Chodorow suggests that should men learn to be “equal” parents, the division of personality by gender or women’s parenting can be broken down by “transforming the social organization of gender and eliminating sexual inequality.”⁹⁸ Focusing much of her attention on the complexity of mother-daughter relationship, Chodorow’s work provides one of the most detailed and influential explorations of the place of motherhood in women’s identity development, social order and division of labor. By attaching high value to women’s mothering, she makes it very clear that many consequences flow out of women’s mothering.

Especially in the context of American culture, it is vital to speak of black feminist thought and its reflection of motherhood in black culture. Since the focus of this work is the elaboration of Zora Neale Hurston’s own experience with her mother and that of her female protagonists, what motherhood means to black women and how mother-daughter relationships develop in black culture need particular attention. All the point of views mentioned above generally defines motherhood and mother-daughter bonding in white middle class family. However, the analysis of motherhood requires a broad and comprehensive exploration by referring to

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 200

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 209

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 219

interrelated paradigms of race, class, and gender. As Robert Staples writes in his book *The Black Women in America* that black women suffer “double subjugation: being Black and female” is a widely known fact.⁹⁹ Not only do they face this dual subjugation but they also suffer from intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender and sexuality. Victimized by racism, sexual discrimination and poverty, black women have served as mediators between public and private binary since slavery times in contrast to their white middle class counterparts who have the advantage and comfort of domesticity. As the domains of power that constrain black women are far more severe than those that restrict white women, their struggle to find voice and claim autonomy as self-reliant, empowered women preoccupies one of the core themes of black feminist thought and Afro-American women writers.

Patricia Hill Collins, one of the leading Afro-American feminist writers, devoted much of her work to “regaining her voice” as well as to helping empower African-American women. Noting that much feminist theorizing about motherhood has failed to recognize different aspects of mothering, she attempts to reflect the common themes and issues of Afrocentric ideology of motherhood and their effects on Black mother-daughter dyad. She says that common themes that are implicit in white perspectives on motherhood are problematic and at odds with Black women’s experience. First of all, she claims that the assumption that mothering occurs in private and domestic sphere is not truly relevant to black families. Deprived of economic security and sufficient resources to maintain family households, black mothers and children do not have the benefits that white nuclear families have. Secondly, as Robert Staples also witnesses, she says that strict distinctions between private and public spheres are less commonly found in Afro-American families since black women are “burdened with the dual role of laborer and mother”.¹⁰⁰ Finally, Collins makes it clear that Afro-American mothers do not have a chance to be “good-enough” mothers because “the full-time occupation of mothering is less

⁹⁹ Robert Staples. *The Black Woman in America: Sex, Marriage, and the Family*. (Chicago: Nelson Hall Publishers, 1973.), p. 3

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 14

applicable to Black family life.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, criticizing Eurocentric and Western feminism as they are mainly concerned with white, middle-class women’s issues, Collins elaborates Black women’s self-definitions and the meaning of black womanhood and motherhood.

She proposes that black women attain their self definitions through their communal experiences in their jobs. According to Collins, given jobs primarily in agriculture and domestic work, black women gain their “outsider-within locations” especially in their white families, where they are responsible for childcare and housework. Moreover, she interrogates the contradictions between white ideologies of American womanhood and devalued status of black women. She asks “[i]f women are allegedly passive and fragile, then why are Black women treated as ‘mules’ and assigned heavy cleaning chores? If good mothers are supposed to stay at home with heir children, then why are U.S. Black women on public assistance forced to find jobs and leave their children in day care?”¹⁰²

Focusing on black motherhood and its pivotal role in black family life and in the construction of black womanhood, Collins states that black mothers did not have a chance for “privatized motherhood as a stay-at-home occupation” because of slavery.¹⁰³ As a result of this fact, shared mothering and communal child-care arrangements have been one of the striking characteristics of black mothering. Rather than individual maternal care, cooperative childcare by the help of “othermothers” has become the core issue of Afrocentric ideology of motherhood. Grandmothers, sisters, aunts, friends, neighbors act as othermothers in charge of childcare and looking after each other’s children. This “women-centered networks of community-based childcare,” Collins states “provided a foundation for Black women’s social activism.”¹⁰⁴ She explains that othermothers became “community othermothers” and, in turn, became community activists who felt their responsibility

¹⁰¹ Patricia Hill Collins. “The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother- Daughter Relationships” in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. Edited by Patricia Bell-Scott(Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.), p. 43-44

¹⁰² Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. (New York: Routledge, 2000.), p. 11

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 50

¹⁰⁴ Patricia Hill Collins. “The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother- Daughter Relationships” in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. Edited by Patricia Bell-Scott (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.), p. 47-49

for other members of the black community. Therefore, she notes that motherhood is a symbol of power for black women since their status in their communities derives from their roles as mothers as well as from their assistance and contribution to the development of black community.

In addition to African perspectives on motherhood, Collins also mentions the Eurocentric views of black mothers and motherhood. Unlike the virtues of “the cult of true womanhood” assigned to white middle class women, Collins explains that the controlling images assigned to Black women were the images of “Mammy,” “Matriarch,” “the Welfare Mother,” and “the Jezebel.” The mammy image represents the faithful, obedient, devoted domestic servant and is the ideal black female for whites. Portrayed as overweight, dark and asexual, she is suitable for becoming a surrogate mother to the white children. The second image, on the other hand, represents the mother figure in black homes. In other words, we can say that the mammy is the mother in white homes and the matriarch is the one in black homes. Thus, the former represents “the ‘good’ black mother,” whereas the latter “symbolizes the ‘bad’ black mother.”¹⁰⁵ For the dominant white group, the matriarch since she rejects submissiveness, hard work and devotion represents the negative aspects of the mammy. Likewise, the image of the welfare mother is stigmatized as bad mother. She is portrayed as the one who makes use of welfare benefits and as being content with this situation. Unlike the mammy, both the matriarch and the welfare mother are sexual women. However, matriarch is regarded as a sexually aggressive woman, emasculating her spouse and preventing him from acting as a black patriarch. Because she refuses to be subordinate and passive she is stigmatized. The final image, the jezebel represents the black women’s sexuality and oppression. During slavery times, the widespread image of black women as sexually aggressive formed a basis for the sexual subjugation of the slave women by their white masters. All in all, these prevailing images of black womanhood account for their devalued status within the perspectives of dominant white group.

¹⁰⁵ Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. (New York: Routledge, 2000.), p. 75

These images try to define black women's roles, selfhood, and sexuality without truly addressing the characteristics of black womanhood and motherhood, black women and mothers try hard to traverse boundaries so as to claim their empowerment, autonomy and voice. Their story, thus becomes the story of resistance. Further, their insistence on self-reliance and empowerment is passed on from generation to generation by the unique mother-daughter relationship. Daughters are encouraged by their mothers to become self-empowered and self-reliant. Noting that the mother-daughter relationship is essential for black women, Collins says that black mothers always strive for empowering their daughters and passing on their "taken-for-granted knowledge shared by African-American women growing from [their] everyday thoughts and actions" to their daughters so that they will not suffer from similar oppression¹⁰⁶ Affirming one another in their daily conversations, Afro-American sisters, friends, mothers and daughters claim "one another's humanity, specialness and right to exist."¹⁰⁷ Consequently, it is significant among black women's community that one "really" listens to one another because of the need for finding a voice.

Collins also states that black mothers have to deal with a troubling dilemma while raising their daughters as self-reliant and assertive. They want their daughters to go farther than they were allowed to go; however, "[t]o ensure their daughter's physical survival, they must teach their daughter to fit into systems of oppression."¹⁰⁸ She also says that "affection must wait until the basic needs of physical survival are satisfied."¹⁰⁹ Encouraging their daughters to develop skills to resist oppression, black mothers see education as a source of self-affirmation and advancement. Torn between the issues of "conformity" and "resistance," as Collins argues, black mothers want their daughters to sit on the "high" and "jump at the sun".¹¹⁰ In this sense, "[b]lack daughters must learn how to survive in interlocking structures of race, class, and gender oppression while rejecting and transcending

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 34

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.102

¹⁰⁸ Patricia Hill Collins. "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother- Daughter Relationships" in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. Edited by Patricia Bell-Scott (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.), p. 53

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 55

¹¹⁰ This view will be applied to Zora Nelse Hurston's autobiography and novels in the following chapter.

those very same structures. To develop these skills in daughters, mothers demonstrate varying combinations of behaviors devoted to ensuring their daughter's survival."¹¹¹ To sum up, as Collins brilliantly elaborates, black motherhood and mother-daughter relationship involve partially similar, but mostly clashing ideologies with white motherhood. The notions that shape black motherhood are the power of self-definition, the importance of self-empowerment and self-reliance, the necessity of affirmation and shared recognition and construction of individual and collective racial identity to "uplift the race." Obviously, as bloodmothers, othermothers, social activists, role-models, mummies, matriarchs, and oppressed women characters, black women have served as key figures in the development of their community as well as in the formation of their self-definition.

To sum up, in spite of the fact that some feminists have regarded motherhood as a source of sexist oppression and a handicap for autonomy, empowerment and self-definition, motherhood has always been sacred, significant and indispensable not only for the infant's development and survival but also for women's affirmation of their status, role and separate identity in their family and communities. The significance of earliest ties to mother, symbiotic origins of mother-infant bonding and lifelong yearnings for (re)creating the infantile experience through interpersonal relations all justify our mothers and us as being mothers and finally our daughters as potential mothers-to-be. No matter how stern and unfair charges are made against motherhood, as Adrienne Rich clearly states we are all "of woman born" and nothing can change this highest virtue.

¹¹¹ Patricia Hill Collins. "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother- Daughter Relationships" in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. Edited by Patricia Bell-Scott (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.), p. 54

CHAPTER TWO

ZORA NEALE HURSTON: “THE QUEEN OF THE NIGERATTI”

2.1. A Brief Introduction to Zora Neale Hurston’s Life and Fiction

Widely recognized as one of the most prolific and accomplished black women writers, Zora Neale Hurston is closely associated with the Harlem Renaissance and is known to be a central figure in black feminist literary tradition. Although she achieved moderate success during her time, she gained her reputation as an outstanding writer years after her death. After years of neglect, her works and the significance of her contribution to African-American literature have been acknowledged thanks to her biographer Robert Hemenway and Alice Walker, who set out on a journey to “look for Zora.”¹¹² Moreover, with the advent of black consciousness and black feminism, many contemporary African-American women writers and feminist critics have begun to revive her life and her works to reclaim her rightful place in Afro-American literary canon. In addition to her novels, nonfiction works, numerous short stories, plays, magazine articles and essays, she is known to be the first black American to collect and write about African American culture and folklore. Thus, not only is she a novelist but also a folklorist and anthropologist. Honoring her as a literary grandmother of her contemporaries, Alice Walker states that besides her work “we love her for herself. For the humor and courage with which she encouraged a life she infrequently designed, for her absolute disinterests in becoming either white or bourgeois, and for her *devoted* appreciation of her own culture, which is an inspiration to us all.”¹¹³

Although there is no exact record of her birth date, Hurston is known to be born on 7 January 1891 in all-black town of Eatonville, Florida, which later became a setting for most of her fiction. Her growing up in a secure black environment free from racial conflict is sometimes regarded as a reason for her indifference to racial themes and protest literature. Harshly criticized especially by her male

¹¹² Alice Walker in her article entitled “Looking For Zora” tells her journey to find Hurston’s unmarked grave.

¹¹³ Alice Walker (Ed.). *I Love Myself When I am Laughing and Then Again When I am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*. (The Feminist Press: New York,1979.), p.2

contemporaries like Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, all of whom are canonical racial protest literature writers, Hurston faces what Mary Helen Washington calls “the intellectual lynching.”¹¹⁴ Cheryl A. Wall also notes that Hurston is mainly interested in black cultural traditions rather than interracial themes or black-white conflict. Wall writes that “[a]ffirmation, not protest, is Hurston’s hallmark.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, John Lowe, who devotes most of his research to Hurston’s oeuvre, argues that many of her critics fail to get the important messages she sought to express:

Dismissing her and her characters as simple or romantic, they underread and undervalue a profoundly serious, experimental, subversive, and therefore unsettling artist who found the complex humorous traditions of her culture worthy of presentation in their own right, but also useful in furthering her preferred method of writing by indirection.¹¹⁶

Leaving her hometown which left a remarkable mark on her life and fiction, Hurston begins wandering from relative to relative and from town to town. After her mother’s death, which disrupts her life more than any other fact, she is taken out of school and forced to fend for herself. Rejecting to live with her father and stepmother, she puts up a good fight for life-time struggle and survival. She works at different odd jobs in the hope of completing her education. Luckily, she graduates from Morgan Academy in Baltimore and then she enters Howard University, again working hard to pay for her expenses. At Howard, her literary career begins. Working with Alain Locke, she joins a literary society and has a chance to have her first story “John Redding Goes to Sea” published. She later studies anthropology at Barnard College and Columbia University, where she meets Franz Boas, an influential Black scholar and anthropologist. During these years, she writes her short stories “Drenched in Light,” and “Spunk,” which helps her attract the attention of publishers and scholars, and she arrives “in New York with \$ 1.50, no job, no

¹¹⁴ Mary Helen Washington. “A Woman Half in Shadow.” In *Zora Neale Hurston*. Edited by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House. 1987.), p. 132

¹¹⁵ Cheryl A. Wall. “Zora Neale Hurston: Changing Her Own Words.” In *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates and K. A Appiah. (New York: Amistad Press. 1993.), Pp.77

¹¹⁶ John Lowe. *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*. (Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1994), p.2

friends, and a lot of hope” to pursue her dreams.¹¹⁷ There, she meets many of the leading writers of the New Negro Movement and after she has been given a fellowship, she goes back to south to collect about the Afro-American culture, folklore, tales, customs, lies, jokes, superstitions and hoodo rituals. The years she spends in collecting Afro-American cultural heritage shapes her oeuvre. Much of the information she gathers is included in her first book of folklore, *Mules and Men* (1935), which celebrates the art of community by “lying sessions,” “porch talking,” and vernacular tradition. By portraying every day lives of black people, their sense of humor and their reactions to events, she devotes herself to show the beauty and richness of her culture. In so doing, rather than write about their oppression and misery, she cherishes their cultural heritage and illustrates a range of black southern verbal art. Contrary to northern black writers of protest literature, Hurston centers on the affirmation of cultural heritage and personal fulfillment. She writes in her 1928 essay “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” that she is not interested in political protest:

But I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it.... No, I do not weep at the world --I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.¹¹⁸

In her first novel *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* (1934), Hurston also focuses on these social rituals, porch talking and daily lives of black people while revolving this vernacular tradition around John Pearson, a Baptist preacher and his devoted wife Lucy Potts. Regarded as a semiautobiographical novel, *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* reveals Hurston’s own childhood experiences and the relationship of her own parents. The plot centers on John and Lucy’s courtship and marriage, John’s rise from “over the creek nigger” to a respected minister and town leader, his hypocrisy, infidelity, and Lucy’s ultimate struggle to make her husband “live clean.”¹¹⁹

Hurston continues to reveal the spirit of black culture in her most accomplished novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Called one of the best

¹¹⁷ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers,1991.), p. 122

¹¹⁸ Zora Neale Hurston *Zora Neale Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.) p.827

¹¹⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers,1991.), p.75

novels of the period and fully realized as a feminist text, *Their Eyes* tells the story of an adolescent girl's self awareness under the blossoming pear tree into the womanhood of vigor, virtue, wisdom, speech and passion. In its celebration and exploration of woman's consciousness, quest for voice, fulfillment and self-empowerment, *Their Eyes* deserves all the praise it receives. Moreover, the lying sessions at Joe Clark's front porch, the fictional portrait of rural black Florida at the turn of the century, and the brilliant expression of southern dialect add to the journey of questing heroine, Janie Crawford.

Their Eyes is followed by the publication of *Tell My Horse* (1938), which is Hurston's second book of folklore. Nevertheless, it was not as successful as *Mules and Men*; so it did not sell well. It is based on the material Hurston collected while living with the descendants of black slaves in the Caribbean studying black magic, native religion, and hoodo influences in Jamaican culture. Facing financial difficulties, Hurston, in addition to her writing career, works as a drama instructor and a story consultant. Despite increasing hardship both in finance and health, she continues to write articles, essays, short stories, and an unfinished play. It is during this time that she writes her third novel *Moses, Men of The Mountain* in 1939. Although it is one of the two undervalued novels by her, the other being *Seraph on the Suwanee*, *Moses* is a successful combination of fiction, folklore, religion and comedy. As a reinterpretation of the Old Testament story, it tells of the legend of Moses, but this time he is not Hebrew but Egyptian and thus black. As an extension of her interest in folklore, black culture, hoodoo rituals and black dialect, it encompasses the origins of African-American culture, black history as well as group dynamics, father-son relations, sibling rivalry and spiritual power. As a work of myth and allegory, *Moses, Men of The Mountain* deserves critical attention even though many critics have regarded it as a failure.

Unlike *Moses*, Hurston's autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) sold well and won literary award for its contribution to race relations. Although it does not please many of the critics including Alice Walker, who thinks that Hurston was under pressure and dependent on others while writing it, *Dust Tracks* contributes to Hurston's success and reputation as a widely recognized black woman writer. Due to her popularity, she is offered to write articles for different magazines. However,

her controversial position over the race problem cause propaganda against her. Her celebration of cultural heritage instead of reflecting the reality of black life with the misery of segregation and racial riots is judged by Black critics.

Her last novel, *Seraph on The Suwanee* (1948) also adds to the controversies about her and her fiction. It puzzles readers as well as critics since it is about white folks of southern Crackers. Now, not only is Hurston accused of not writing about racial issues but also criticized for fully alienating the black community. Since she is in need of money, she is thought to have written this novel so as to please white publishers and readers. Owing to its radical change in focus and its portrayal of a weak-willed, neurotic white heroine, Arvay unlike vigorous Janie in *Their Eyes*, *Seraph on the Suwanee* is regarded as Hurston's least successful work of fiction and as a decline in her literary ability. However, most of the critics fail to observe Hurston's insights into the issues of sexuality, womanhood and motherhood.

In addition to severe criticisms over her motivations and themes she chooses in her works, Hurston is charged with and arrested for committing an immoral act with a ten-year-old boy. Fortunately, she is proven not to be guilty and is acquitted of all charges. Devastated and disappointed, Hurston leaves New York and enters a period of depression by isolating herself from public life. From then on, she keeps on struggling to survive by working at different jobs. She is reduced to poverty and her health also remains poor. She tries her last chance to publish her last literary work but has to endure rejection by publishers. After having a stroke, she starts living in a welfare home and dies penniless on 28 January 1960. She is buried in an unmarked grave till Alice Walker sets out to search for it and identifies it for ensuing recognition.¹²⁰

Zora Neale Hurston also achieves a moderate success with her collection of short stories, most of which won awards in addition to her novels, works of folklore and numerous articles. Not only in her novels but also in her short stories, we can find the elements of rich black culture and her recurring themes of heroine's quest for voice, self-affirmation in addition to the dynamics of relationships between a husband and a wife. Moreover, like her novels, her short stories also reflect Zora's

¹²⁰ See Robert Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston : A Literary Biography* (Chicago: Illinois U.P., 1977.) for details of Hurston's life.

own experiences and innermost feelings. The central character of her story “Drenched in Light” Isie, in one way or another, resembles the young Zora. As both John Lowe and Susan Edward Meisenhelder propose in their books, there are quite a lot of similarities between Isis, Zora and also Janie in *Their Eyes*. Telling the story of a young girl, “Drenched in Light” revolves around a lively, imaginative black girl whose energy and quest are sought to be silenced by her grandmother. As Hurston herself reveals in her autobiography, she does not have a friendly relation with her grandmother. She confesses in *Dust Tracks* that she was making herself “a crow in a pigeon’s nest” that it was hard for her family and others to get on well with her.¹²¹ Similarly, Isie and her grandmother, like Janie and her grandmother Nanny in *Their Eyes*, do not have a close relationship. Susan Meisenhelder states that Isis’ dancing and her “joyousness” are a response to her grandmother’s model of womanhood as they are at odds with each other. By refusing to accept a model of womanhood defined by subordination, devaluation, dehumanization and restriction, Isis’ act of sexual and racial rebellion against the restraints of black female is portrayed in her dancing.¹²² Regarding her story as an act of triumph since Isie is able to escape her grandma’s brutal whipping and heads towards the horizon she has always dreamed of, Meisenhelder suggests that Isie “emerges from the story finally, not as a racial dupe, but as figure (like her African goddess namesake) of formidable power and magical words.”¹²³ Underlining Hurston’s frequent use of the name “Isis” for her characters, Meisenhelder also mentions the Isis and Osiris myth. She says that in this myth Hurston sees a model of identity for her male and female characters to suggest a kind of social rebirth when there is a reciprocal and mutual relationship between equally powerful women and men.

[Hurston] examines the interaction of race and gender in the lives of black people by focusing on the question whether black people will draw their racial and sexual identities from a white world or from the models of positive within a black one; whether they will live as imitation white women and men, merely recreating the oppressive hierarchies of Jim Meserve’s world, or worshipping gods like

¹²¹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.), p.25

¹²² Susan Edward Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U.P., 1999.), p. 6-7

¹²³ *Ibid*, p. 7

Damballah and Erzulie, Isis and Osiris, create a healthy black world in their image.¹²⁴

Like John Lowe, who draws a parallel between Zora, Isie, and Janie in their relation to the gatepost, horizon and road, Meisenhelder also draws a connection between them for their quest for broader possibilities of self-definition and self-empowerment.

In her award-winning 1925 story, “Spunk”, Hurston illustrates her recurrent theme of communal humor and the importance of community in shaping a character’s feelings and behavior. A story about a macho sawmill worker, Spunk, who has power over his folk by manipulating and intimidating them and his lover Lena and her coward, old husband, Joe, “Spunk” brilliantly shows Hurston’s mastery of using southern dialect and the richness of Eatonville’s folk beliefs. Joe, driven by the community’s cruel humor, seeks revenge, but is killed by Spunk in the end. What makes the story outstanding, however, is Spunk’s tragic death. Spunk, convinced that Joe has returned to haunt him under the guise of a black bobcat, is killed in an accident at the town mill. As Hurston skillfully illustrates the community, as a source of humor, torture and superstition, places an important role in the acts of these characters.

Hurston’s common treatment of relationships between male and female to exemplify the complex interaction of race and gender in the lives of black people is once more revealed in another contest winner story “Muttsy.” By using the elements of black popular culture during the Harlem Renaissance such as gambling, blues music and night life, Hurston focuses on her recurrent gender theme in this story. The tragic relationship between Muttsy and his innocent wife Pinkie, and the imbalance between them are illustrated in this story as well as in most of her major works such as *Jonah’s Gourd Vine*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Seraph on the Suwanee*. As a critique of black men’s dependence on white models of identity, Hurston portrays Muttsy in “Muttsy” as well as John in *Jonah*, Joe Starks in *Their Eyes*, and Jim Meserve in *Seraph* in order to show that imitations of white notion of male and female relationship bring nothing but a disaster to the relationship between

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.9

a black man and black woman by destroying the mutual and reciprocal male and female union reflected in the Isis and Osiris myth. In addition, as Meisenhelder also states, Hurston also portrays how dehumanized, objectified, dependent and self-annihilated women can be under these circumstances despite their marriage and wealth.

Hurston, in her story "Sweat," illustrates the dehumanization and oppression of a female character, too. However, this time Delia Jones, the heroine, who earns her living by washing clothes for white people, is portrayed as strong, proud and independent. Although she is beaten brutally and treated badly by her husband, Sykes Jones, who has adulterous affairs, Delia emerges as a woman of vigor and triumph in the end. Sykes attempts to show and prove his masculinity by abusing his wife and frightening her with a snake. Delia, who is afraid of snakes, is lucky enough to escape the deadly snake Sykes has put in an attempt to kill her. Nevertheless, he is trapped by his own act and bitten to death by the snake. Hurston, using the snake, a phallic commonly in her works, shows that men's obsession with and abuse of their phallic power eventually kill them both literally and figuratively

Hurston's themes and the characteristics of relationships are also manifested in another story "The Gilded Six Bits." Concerned with a young married couple Missie May and Joe Banks, the story portrays a marriage of mutual joy and laughter through jokes, games and rituals, which foreshadows the marriage of Janie and Tea Cake in *Their Eyes*. However, this portrayal of happiness, ends in Missie May's adultery with Slemmons, who likes showing off his false prosperity. Missie May asks for forgiveness and their marriage continues, but without the previous joy and laughter. When she gives birth to a son who looks like Joe months later, proud Joe buys candy kisses for her and signals his forgiveness by throwing money in the doorway. Returning their early rituals and joy, this young couple exemplifies the concept of marriage Hurston uses continuously in her oeuvre.

As her short stories and novels reveal, rather than writing about oppression, misery and discrimination black people suffered in conflict with whites, Hurston prefers to illustrate the complexity of gender issues, marital problems, the role community and humor play in shaping individual's feelings and attitudes and also the quest for spiritual fulfillment. In brief, she concentrates on the conflict between

men and women in addition to the conflict between the dreams of an individual and the demands, restrictions of the community. All the themes, motifs, symbols she uses and all the characters she has fictionally created have their origins in Hurston's own childhood experiences, and in the deep chambers of her heart. As an adolescent young girl, Hurston herself sets out on a both physical and spiritual journey. To attain wisdom and to affirm her self-reliance necessary for the fulfillment of her psyche and emotional life, she never gives up and puts up a lifetime struggle. Describing Hurston's emphasis on individual achievement, strength, competition and her empowering legacies, Deborah G. Plant writes that "her greatest legacy is that of a resistance. This legacy declares it imperative to continually resist all that is limiting, confining, victimizing, and dehumanizing. It emphasizes the need to resist all ideologies of exclusion that vitiate the struggle for achievement and empowerment of the self."¹²⁵

Therefore, what was hidden in the chambers of Hurston's heart that made her a woman of "resistance," self-affirmation and independence? Why was she interested in the relationship between men and women rather than racial themes? Why did she create heroines who are after voice, self-empowerment on their journeys to horizon? And finally, why do we, as readers, witness repeated mother-daughter speech at deathbed or a heroine who is determined to live her own life? All the answers to these questions lie in the simple but vital response that Zora, with her inside and outside, was driven by a yearning for her mother, whom she lost when she was nine. Always keeping her mother in her mind and always trying to be voice for her as part of her promise to her mother, Zora Neale Hurston, with her own experience and with her subtle portrayal of mother-daughter relationship, presents a paradigm for the discussion in this thesis. She helps us understand how vital the mother is in the daughter's personality development and sense of self. Moreover, she also demonstrates how the loss of a mother at a crucial time causes the daughter's sense of abandonment, her tragic separation and individuation phase and her yearning for a reunion with the lost mother.

¹²⁵ Deborah. G. Plant *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1995.), p. 182

In the light of psychoanalytic and feminist models, theories and discussions that are mentioned in the previous chapter, Hurston's own experience with her mother provides a paradigm for the girl's experience of self and others. In her autobiography, Hurston describes how she identified with her mother although she "looked [more] like [her father] than any child in the house."¹²⁶ She also writes that "all good traits and learnings come from the mother's side."¹²⁷ It is not only Zora but also her mother Lucy Ann Potts that identifies with her daughter. When there is conflict between Zora and her father, Hurston writes that her mother always stood between and stated that Zora was her young one while Sarah, Zora's sister, was his.¹²⁸ Unfortunately, this symbiotic union between Zora and her mother comes to an end when Lucy lies at deathbed giving instructions to her little daughter that she should not let the others perform the death rituals. Yet, little Zora fails to keep her solemn promise to her mother. She describes that her failure put her into a lifelong misery: "I was to agonize over that moment for years to come. In the midst of play, in wakeful moments after midnight, on the way home from parties, and even in the classroom during lectures. My thoughts would escape occasionally from their confines and stare me down."¹²⁹ Believing that her mother depended on her for voice, Hurston was affected by her mother's death and the promise she gave her. She describes her feelings of loneliness, abandonment, fear of loss after her mother's death as follows.

It seemed as she died that the sun went down on purpose to flee away from me.

That hour began my wanderings. Not so much in geography, but in time. Then not so much in time as in spirit.

Mama died at sundown and changed a world. That is, the world which had been built on her body and her heart. Even the physical aspects fell apart with a suddenness that was startling.¹³⁰

Always a wanderer, Hurston writes about distances, horizon, mobility and journeys of spirit. That she was always ready for a journey to the horizon is clear, but it must be also underscored that her quest for horizon and sun clearly

¹²⁶ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.), p.19

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 13

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 13

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 64

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 65

demonstrates that Hurston was always in search of her mother. Anna Aragno briefly elaborates on the significance of the primal love object in daughter's life: "No matter how separate, how individuated and different, how distanced and removed from her mother a daughter may believe herself to have become, throughout a woman's life at the periphery of female consciousness and at the core of her psyche, there continues to loom long shadow of mother's influence."¹³¹ After her mother's death, she is sent to Jacksonville to her brother for her education. There she sees a woman on a porch who looks like her mother, she thinks that she is her mother. She describes the scene like this: "Maybe it *was* Mama! Maybe she was not dead at all. They had made some mistake. Mama had gone off to Jacksonville and they thought that she was dead. The woman was sitting in a rocking-chair just like Mama always did. It must be Mama!"¹³² However, she has to "accept her bereavement" after realizing that that woman is not her mother, then she understands that they "could touch each other in the spirit if not in the flesh."¹³³

Describing the following five years after her mother's death as "haunted" for she "was shifted from house to house of relatives and friends and found comfort nowhere," she affirms her being a wanderer.¹³⁴ When she gets a letter from her brother saying that he is sending for her to come, Zora describes her joy and hope for having a home again, which also means that she can go back to school. Leaving the loneliness, frustrations, defeat and misery behind, she gets on a train and describes the scene of sunset and horizon as they arise different feelings of sentiments in her. "There have been other suns that set in significance for me, but *that* sun! It was a book-mark in the pages of a life."¹³⁵ The sun which has previously fled away from her after her mother's death seems come back with an opportunity; but no sooner does she arrive at his brother's house than she understands that frustrations are not gotten rid of yet. Her enthusiasm to feel the home again disappears when she understands that she is needed in the house, which means that

¹³¹ Anna Aragno. "Die So That I May Live!" A psychoanalytic Essay on the Adolescent Girl's Struggle To Delimit Her Identity." in Gerd H. Fenchel, (Ed.). *The Mother-Daughter Relationship. Echoes Through Time.* (London: Jason Aronson, 1998.) p. 86

¹³² Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road.* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers,1991.), p125

¹³³ Ibid, p. 69

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 85

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 93

she cannot go to school at once. However, her real disappointment is not due to her not going to school again. When she understands that she will no more have a comfortable home again, she starts to have a way of life “inside” her. In her analysis of mother-infant bonding, mother loss and the intrapsychic drama of a child referring to of Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, Barbara Ann Schapiro says that these characters seek to “find the ideal comfort and home of the womb” and the symbiotic reunion with the mother.¹³⁶ She goes on explaining that “[a] ‘comfortable home’ is indeed connected with the mother, but also suggests being ‘at home’ or at one with the self.”¹³⁷ We can say that the same is true for Hurston herself. Her relentless traveling and journeys, her avoidance of intimate relationships with her two husbands, for one of whom she was passionate, all explain her inner distress and discomfort within her own internal object world and her search for reunion with her mother.

It is very clear that the loss of her mother affects her more than any other fact in her life. However, knowing that she has nobody but only herself to survive, Hurston, as a way of healing and restoring, develops a spirit of resistance that enables her to recover from her mother’s death. What is striking is the legacy of struggle and resistance is passed on Zora by her mother, who “exhort[s] her children at every opportunity to ‘jump at de sun.’”¹³⁸ She says that even if they may not be able to land on the sun, they can at least get off the ground. In so doing, Lucy Ann Potts thus encourages her children to traverse the boundaries and to seek self-fulfillment. Therefore, Hurston, inspired by her mother, follows her dreams for gratifying both her mother’s wish and her own desires. Further, that’s why she creates characters that are after self-fulfillment, self-empowerment, voice, independence and autonomy. They are also on their journey to the sun and horizon as Zora herself is.

We can detect Hurston’s favorite motifs and symbols such as horizon, sun, moon, gates, roads and huge chinaberry in her works of fiction. As she writes in her autobiography, Zora has always been in harmony with nature. She says that she was

¹³⁶ Barbara Ann Schapiro. *Literature and the Relational Self*. (New York: New York U.P., 1994.), p.53

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 54

¹³⁸ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers,1991.), p13

happy playing in the woods among trees. Her particular friendship with a huge chinaberry tree, which she named “the loving pine,” her jealousy and anger at “[t]he unfaithfulness of the moon” upon realizing that it is not only her “private-playing moon” but also her other friends’ playmate, and her fascination with snakes all prove that Zora was a distinguished child.¹³⁹ Further, her attraction to the horizon reveals much about her personality and her dreams. She describes how enchanted she was upon seeing it as follows:

. . . I had a stifled longing. I used to climb to the top of one of the huge chinaberry trees which guarded our front gate, and look out over the world. The most interesting thing that I saw was the horizon. Ever way I turned, it was there, and the same distance away. Our house then, was in the center of the world. It grew upon me that I ought to walk out to the horizon and see what the end of the world was like.¹⁴⁰

Once, she decides to set out on a journey with her friend to discover what the end of the world will be like when they get there. However, her friend, disloyal to her, gives up the idea of their journey to the horizon. Disappointed, Zora fights with her, but does not give up the idea of her journey. Thus, in most of her works we can see the theme of spiritual journey to the horizon, which represents the quest for self-fulfillment. Zora’s unconventional character is also manifest in her asking for a riding horse as a Christmas present from her father, which causes her father’s explosion. “It’s a sin and a shame! Lemme tell you something right now, my young lady; you ain’t white. Riding horse! Always trying to wear de big hat! I don’t know how you got in this family nohow. You ain’t like none of de rest of my young’uns.”¹⁴¹

As it is understood from her father’s response, the relationship between Zora and her father is not as intimate as she has with her mother. Deborah G. Plant states that while “Hurston’s mother can certainly be seen as one source of Hurston’s self-confidence, self-determination and achievement,” her father John Hurston is shown “as a negative force in both Zora’s and her mother’s life.”¹⁴² She also writes that John Hurston, however, is both “good and ill” for Hurston. Although Hurston is

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 26

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p.27

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 29

¹⁴² Deborah G. Plant. *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1995.), p.144

generally at odds with her father, she admires him, his physical strength, his poetry and his sense of freedom. She says that her tendency to travel and wander around was not, as her mother thought, due to “travel dust” sprinkled around the doorstep when Zora was born. Rather it was a result of her taking after her father although she was her mother’s child. Moreover, she looks like him more than her siblings. Feeling alienated, jealous and outside, Hurston reveals that her sister, Sarah was his favorite child. She thinks that on the day she was born her father felt like tying her in a sack and dropping her in the lake. It is a pity for her that she does not have the chance to experience the father-daughter bonding she longs for. She always wanted to touch in her father’s heart and wanted her heart to be touched by him as well. She writes that when her mother dies she wishes that she could look into her father’s heart to find out what and how he felt. Even though Hurston claims that her father’s neglecting her and favoring her sister Sarah by doing whatever she wants “did not matter so much to” her, she has to repress her love, longing and admiration for her father. Consequently, all these put Zora in an “outsider-within” position even in her family. Her mother’s death, her father’s physical and literal unavailability, her rivalry with her sister all result in her own words her “cosmic loneliness.”¹⁴³

As her internalized and repressed loving objects, her parents form the basis for Hurston’s dealing with gender issues. Why she usually handles marital issues, marriage problems, and how a good marriage should be derives from her parents as role models. Therefore, her first novel *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* is rich with the portrayal of Hurston’s own experiences. The protagonists John Pearson and Lucy Potts are mainly based on Hurston’s own parents. As the treatment of conflicts between black men and women is common among African American women writers, Hurston is also interested in the same notion by underlying the oppression of black women by black and white men and their resistance to it. Intertwined interactions of race, class, gender have played a big role in domination on black women; moreover, false models of masculinity in African-American malehood arising from the imitation of white values have also oppressed black women. Therefore, Hurston makes critique of the notion of black masculinity that is based on the ideologies of white people through John Pearson and his relation to Lucy Potts. We witness John’s ascent to

¹⁴³ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.), p. 43

ministry as Baptist preacher from “over the Big creek.” We also see his decline and fall because of his lust, adultery and hypocrisy. In her autobiography Hurston writes that her “Papa and Mama, in spite of his meanderings, were really in love.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, she portrays John and Lucy in love with each other. Both fictional and the actual Johns threaten to kill their wives if they ever start out the door to leave them. Paradoxically, it is they who always start out the gate to leave their wives. Throughout the novel, John’s adultery and infidelity are made manifest. Even before he crosses the Big Creek, he dreams of girls lustily, and on his first night there after he joins the young folks’ play, Hurston writes that “John never forgot that night. Even the strong odor of their sweaty bodies was lovely to remember.”¹⁴⁵ Ironically, John’s mother, Amy Crittenden, who is a strong black matriarch, warns her son not to get a snake bite while he is crossing the Big Creek. Foreshadowing and symbolizing his lust, adultery and destructive sexuality, the “snake” symbol is one of the phallic metaphors in this novel in addition to the train symbol. When he first sees a train, John is terrified by this “panting monster.” Ironically, he is killed in a train accident. His sexuality, therefore, not only kills his devoted wife but also himself. Just as Alf Pearson, the white master, calls him a “walking orgasm” and advises him to “clean himself” so as not to lose his wife, Lucy also tells her husband to live clean: “Youse livin’ dirty and Ahm goin’ tuh tell you ‘bout it. Me and mah chillum got some rights. Big talk ain’t changin’ whut you doin’. You can’t clean yo’self wid yo’ tongue lak uh cat. . . . Mark mah words. Youse in de majority now, but God sho don’t love ugly.”¹⁴⁶

As it is understood from the passage quoted above, Lucy is always guiding instructing John. As Hurston’s mother encourages her children to “jump at the sun” Lucy also exhorts her husband in the same way: “Cover the ground you stand on. Jump at de sun and eben if yuh miss it, you can’t help grabbin’ holt uh de moon.”¹⁴⁷ When they start to live in Eatonville, Lucy advises John to be a carpenter since people want houses to be built there. As John calls her “so big-eyed” for her vision,

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 11

¹⁴⁵ Zora Neale Hurston. *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* in *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995), p. 19-20

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p.109

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p.82

Sam Mosely, one of the black folks, earnestly confesses that Lucy is the woman he has been looking for since he says “[a]nybody could put himself on de ladder wid her in de house.”¹⁴⁸ Even after his constant infidelities, Lucy goes on guiding him when people want him to stop preaching due to his hypocrisy and adulterous affairs with Delphine, Hattie and other women. Lucy still supervises him: “You preach uh sermon on yo’self and you call tuh they remembrance some uh de good things you done. . . . Dat what comes from de heart will sho reach de heart again.”¹⁴⁹ Her endless devotion to John so as to make him “a great big man” and “to uphold [him] in everything” is apparent from the very beginning.¹⁵⁰ That’s why his folks call him the “wife-made man.”¹⁵¹ Although sometimes John declares that he is fed up with her hovering, it is very clear that “John [has] to be pushed and shoved and there [is] no one to do it but Lucy.”¹⁵² He blames Lucy for being full of opinions and says that he does not need her guidance anymore since he is a “grown man.” Similar to his namesake in the flesh, he is tired of the “conquering feeling” Hurston describes in her autobiography:

I know now that that is a griping thing to a man – not to be able to whip his woman mentally. Some women know how to give their men that conquering feeling. My mother took her over-the-creek man and bare-knuckled him from brogans to broadcloth, and I am certain that he was proud of the change in public. But in the house, he might have always felt over-the-creek, and because that was not the statue he made for himself to look at, he resented it.¹⁵³

As Meisenhelder states Lucy’s motivation for guiding and nurturing her husband makes John behave “like an irresponsible child.”¹⁵⁴ Parallel to John’s behaving like a child instead of being a “grown man,” Lucy acts like a mother to John rather than a wife. “Lucy’s constant hand-holding often makes her sound like a

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 94

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.104

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 83

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 98

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 100

¹⁵³ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers,1991.), p. 67.

¹⁵⁴ Susan Edward Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick*. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston. (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U. P., 1999.), p. 41

mother walking a timid child through his first paper route.”¹⁵⁵ John Lowe states that “her loving forgiveness of sins simultaneously creates a never-ending source of guilt. His infidelity in some ways seems a rebellion against both her authority and her charity.”¹⁵⁶ However, although John seems not to bear the heavy burden of Lucy’s mothering, he cannot be happy with Hattie, who refuses to protect and instruct him unquestioningly as Lucy did. She does not let him “be uh big nigger over [her] bones”; hence, John leaves her and finds another mother figure for himself.¹⁵⁷ In search of Lucy, “like a lost child,” he decides to move to another town.¹⁵⁸ There, he meets Sally, his third wife, who recreates the mother-child affection for John. “[L]aying with his head in her lap sobbing like a boy of four” John becomes a child again; likewise, Sally playing the role of a mother in place of Lucy “ran her fingers soothingly thru John’s curly hair,” which ends in John’s falling asleep on her knees.¹⁵⁹ Finally, admitting his mistake and affirming Lucy’s sheltering power, he realizes that he himself destroyed his “gourd vine.” Both John Lowe and Susan Meisenhelder state that John, with his destructive sexuality acted like a worm destroying Lucy, the gourd vine.¹⁶⁰

Hurston critiques masculinity which is childlike, irresponsible and which is based on the white values. She also criticizes Lucy’s overabundant love and devotion to John. Cheryl Wall states that “[l]oving John too much, she has acquiesced in her own oppression.”¹⁶¹ Similarly, Meisenhelder says that Lucy, emotionally destroyed due to her excessive devotion to John, “finally understands

¹⁵⁵ John F. Kanthak. “Legacy of Dysfunction: Family System’s in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Jonah’s GourdVine*.” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=5&sid=5a4dd17e-4b38-4d58-b844-a9b7da8569f3%40sessionmgr14> p.120 (18 November 2007)

¹⁵⁶ John Lowe. *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*. (Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1994), p. 87-88

¹⁵⁷ Zora Neale Hurston. *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* in *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995), p. 122.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.153

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p.158

¹⁶⁰ John Lowe. *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*. (Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1994), p. 94. Susan Edward Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick: Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U.P, 1999.), p. 40.

¹⁶¹ Cheryl Wall. “Zora Neale Hurston: Changing Her Own Words.” In *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates and K. A Appiah. (New York: Amistad Press. 1993.), p.88

the price of her selflessness.”¹⁶² Central to the discussion of this thesis, we see Lucy preaching her own sermon to her daughter, Isie at her deathbed. Recalling a similar scene from *Dust Tracks*, we see a black mother who guides, encourages, and inspires her daughter for self-empowerment, self-love and self-reliance. “Don’t you love nobody better’n you do yo’self.”¹⁶³ Moreover, she wants her to get all the education she can in order to keep herself from being trampled upon under people’s feet. Even though Cheryl Wall proposes that Lucy is not “a fully realized character” like Janie in *Their Eyes*, she comes to realize everything finally at deathbed.¹⁶⁴ She tells her neighbor Mrs. Clarke not to worry about her: “Ah done been in sorrow’s kitchen and Ah done licked out all the pots. Ah done died in grief and been buried in de bitter waters, and Ah done rose again from de dead lak Lazarus. Nothin’ kin touch mah soul no mo’.”¹⁶⁵ She admits her mistake in loving John too much and forgiving his infidelity all the time. Dinnerstein’s hypothesis can shed light on John and Lucy’s mutual dilemmas: Dinnerstein says that men’s being polygamous and women’s constant forgiveness are due to their relation to their mothers. John, unconsciously threatened by his dependency and need for his mother, (here not his biological mother Amy, but his surrogate wife/mother Lucy) thinks that devotion to one woman may endanger his sexuality and strength. Therefore, fearing the trauma of losing his love object over and over again, he cheats on Lucy, and Sally – the latter being another mother figure – with other women. Lucy, by carrying in herself the “maternal richness” in Dinnerstein’s words, is not as traumatized by the loss of her mother as John; therefore, knowing that John will return to her in the end, she forgives him and shuts her eyes to John’s infidelities. Explaining his notion of the mother-complex in boys Jung proposes that men seek their mothers in their relations with women. Likewise, John as a “walking orgasm” runs from woman to woman both as an escape from and in search of his wife-mother, Lucy.

¹⁶² Susan Edward Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston.* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U.P. , 1999.), p. 56

¹⁶³ Zora Neale Hurston. *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* in *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories.* (New York: The Library of America, 1995), p. 110

¹⁶⁴ Cheryl Wall. “Zora Neale Hurston: Changing Her Own Words.” In *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present.* Edited by Henry Louis Gates and K. A Appiah. (New York: Amistad Press. 1993.), p.89

¹⁶⁵ Zora Neale Hurston. *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* in *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories.* (New York: The Library of America, 1995), p. 112

Concerning his blood mother Amy, his Oedipal rivalry with his stepfather Ned Crittenden shapes his relationship with her. At the very beginning of the novel, we see that Ned and John are at odds with each other. Ned, always displeased by John's being "a punkin-colored" "house nigger," complains about John's learning how to read and write and his crossing over the creek to join the choir practices. After a usual argument, one day, John threatens to kill Ned if he ever raises his hand to him. In return, Ned also threatens John to shoot him with his gun. Their Oedipal struggle does not end in blood, yet John abuses and emasculates Ned with his words: "Youse all part of uh pig! You done got me jus'ez hot ez July jam, and Ah ain't got no mo' use fuh yuh than Ah is for mah baby shirt. Youse mah race but you sho ain't mah taste."¹⁶⁶

Amy Crittenden, on the other hand, is portrayed as "a masculinized female" a particular type of black women that Robert Staples defines.¹⁶⁷ He says that the cultural image of the Black women in America is generally associated with a domineering attitude in the family. She looks after not only her children but also her husband. As a model of full-time worker, mother, wife and homemaker, the Black woman has the heavy responsibility of her family on her shoulders. Therefore, Amy, as a strong "matriarch" figure and as "a masculinized female" stands for the strong, self-reliant "black lioness" who defends herself and her children at any cost.¹⁶⁸ She is always ready to fight with Ned both verbally and physically. She is also ready all the time to "be right dere tuh back [her children's] fallin'."¹⁶⁹ As a woman who grew up in slavery time, she tells Ned that they must treasure their young ones:

We black folks don't love our chillun. We couldn't do it when we wuz in slavery. We borned 'em but dat didn't make 'em ourn. Dey b'longed tuh old Massa. . . . But we's free fols now. De big bell done rung! Us chillum is ourn. Ah doan know, maybe hit'll take some of us generations, but us got tuh'gin tuh practice on treasurin' our younguns.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 43

¹⁶⁷ Robert Staples. *The Black Woman in America: Sex, Marriage, and the Family*. (Chicago: Nelson Hall Publishers, 1973.), p. 10

¹⁶⁸ Zora Neale Hurston. *Jonah's Gourd Vine* in *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995), p.4

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 5

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 6-7

On the other hand, Emmeline Potts, Lucy's mother, however echoes Nanny in *Their Eyes*. Unlike Amy or Lucy, Emmeline does not encourage her daughter to "jump at de sun." Facing the "troubling dilemma" Patricia Hill Collins has explained, Emmeline stands for "the strict, assertive mothers so central to" their daughters' lives.¹⁷¹ For her, the priority is to satisfy the basic need of physical survival and protection. She does not want her daughter to make a friendship with John, for, she says, she has no girls "tuh throw way on trash."¹⁷² In her prayers to God, she wants her children to be "humble," "obedient" and meant to "serve" and begs Lord to make Lucy and John "set five feet apart."¹⁷³ Foreshadowing Nanny, she opposes their marriage and wants Lucy to get married to Artie Mimms, who has wide sixty acres and two mules. In so doing, she thinks that her daughter "is jumpin' up."¹⁷⁴ Obviously, Lucy Ann Potts' exhortation "to jump at de sun" and Emmeline Potts' notion of "jumping" are completely different from each other.

In short, Zora Neale Hurston, inspired by her own parents, portrayed John and Lucy to criticize black masculinity characterized by white ideologies and black femininity which surrenders to oppression and advocates self-cancellation and dependence. The ideal relationship or marriage she wants to portray and seeks to have is the one grounded on true communion and harmony based on mutual support, equality and emotional reciprocity. What's more, her loyalty to her mother is the most determinant influence in her life and in her oeuvre. Trying not to fail her, she leads a life of "resistance." Echoing Lucy's speech at deathbed in *Jonah*, Hurston makes a comment on her own life when she looks back: "I have stood on the peaky mountain wrappen in rainbows, with a harp and a sword in my hands."¹⁷⁵ With a "sharp knife" or "sword" in one hand and with a "harp" on the other, she has her own way of dealing with difficulties. Therefore, to understand her legacy and not to

¹⁷¹ Patricia Hill Collins. "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother- Daughter Relationships" in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. Edited by Patricia Bell-Scott (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.), p. 55

¹⁷² Zora Neale Hurston. *Jonah's Gourd Vine* in *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995), p.59

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 63

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 66

¹⁷⁵ Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks On A Road*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.), p. 205

misread and misinterpret her works, it is vital to have a psychoanalytic reading of Hurston's life, desires, motivations and conflicts hidden deep in her heart.

CHAPTER THREE

HURSTON'S QUESTING ORPHANS

3.1. *Seraph on the Suwanee: On the Way to the Horizon*

This thesis attempts to shed light on the issues of mother-infant bonding, particularly by focusing on the dynamics of mother-daughter relationship with its ambivalences, contradictions and unique aspects. In the light of psychoanalytic models and theories in addition to feminist perspectives on motherhood, Zora Neale Hurston's own experience with her mother and how this pivotal relationship shaped and influenced her life and the mother-daughter symbiosis in her novels are scrutinized. Besides her autobiography *Dust Tracks On A Road*, and her semiautobiographical novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, her last novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee* provides a rich source in the discussion of mother-daughter dyad since it presents a portrait of diverse mother-daughter relationship possibilities. Although contrary to many African-American women writers who deal with the same issue explicitly in their works the theme of mother-daughter bonding as one of the basic constituents of black femininity is not the major objective of Hurston, *Seraph on the Suwanee* is definitely the story of a woman whose intertwined roles as a mother, daughter, and a wife makes her the focus of this work. This chapter will analyze the harshly criticized protagonist of *Seraph*, Arvey Henson Meserve's childhood terrors, internal object world, experiences of abandonment, frustration and her deeply problematic maternal relationship as a source of her emotional and psychological distress with references to psychoanalytic and feminist theories.

Set in various parts of Florida in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the novel proves to be loyal to Hurston's recurrent themes of marital relationships and emotional journey of the heroine to find voice and autonomy. It mainly centers on Arvey Henson, an impoverished "Cracker born" white woman from Sawley and her tragic interpersonal relationships with her parents Brock and Maria Henson, her sister Lorraine and her husband Reverend Carl Middleton, and finally with her husband Jim Meserve, who is Black Irish in ancestry. She also has an affectionate bonding neither with her children Earl, Angie, Kenny nor with the Kelseys, a black

family that help the Meserves in their family business and the Portuguese Corregios, who moved to their backyard in place of the Kelseys. Throughout the novel, we witness Arvay's internal disturbance, sense of inferiority, weak ego boundaries and low self-esteem, all of which derive from her inadequate, unresponsive "good-enough mothering environment." Thus, Arvay is the very epitome of how insufficient and problematic parenting, particularly mothering, results in the child's sufferings, inconsistencies, masochism and divided sense of self. Nevertheless, many critics, having failed to understand Arvay's internal conflicts, have regarded her as a weak-willed woman who chooses submission, servitude and domesticity, for she internalizes her ultimate role as a mother at the end of the novel. Unlike Janie, who has achieved self-fulfillment and empowerment, Arvay, as Carter-Sigglow suggests, is claimed to be "an embarrassment to all intelligent women."¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, Carter-Sigglow continues that "[t]he great disappointment is the conclusion to which she comes, that for a woman true fulfillment is to be found in servitude."¹⁷⁷

It is not only Janet Carter-Sigglow that sees Arvay and *Seraph* as disappointment and Hurston's failure and shortcoming. Defining *Seraph* as Hurston's "worst" novel, Mary Helen Washington claims that "[t]he result is an awkward and contrived novel, as vacuous as a soap opera."¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Karla Holloway, comparing Arvay to Janie, says that *Seraph* is a "somber story," in which Arvay is depicted as "barren and soulless" inside since she has no community to claim.¹⁷⁹ Cheryl Wall is also among those who agree that Arvay cannot attain her identity by engaging in her community and folk culture as she has no community to engage in. She states that Arvay "has no words of her own to speak" though she searches for self and identity like Janie.¹⁸⁰ Looking from a different perspective, Frank G. Slaughter of *The New York Times Book Review* regards Arvay as "a

¹⁷⁶ Janet Carter Sigglow. *Making Her Way With Thunder. A Reappraisal of Zora Neale Hurston's Narrative Art.* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994.), p. 141

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149

¹⁷⁸ Mary Helen Washington. "A Woman Half in Shadow" In *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Edited by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House, 1987.), p. 136

¹⁷⁹ Karla F. Holloway. *The Character of the Word: The Texts of Zora Neale Hurston.* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.), pp. 42, 117

¹⁸⁰ Cheryl Wall. "Zora Neale Hurston: Changing Her Own Words." In *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present.* Edited by Henry Louis Gates and K. A. Appiah. (New York: Amistad Press, 1993.), p. 95-96

textbook picture of a hysterical neurotic,” claiming that Hurston “took a textbook on Freudian psychology and adapted it to her needs.”¹⁸¹ This is somewhat a superficial analysis of the novel, for as Lowe states his is a “cursory reading.”¹⁸²

In addition to harsh criticisms of Arvey for she is not a “feminist” heroine like Janie, there has been a general tendency among literary critics that Hurston, by writing a novel about white people, turned her back on her racial heritage and abandoned her black cultural tradition. Since she features the explicit racial problems that appeared steadily in African-American writings of the thirties and forties neither in her previous works nor in *Seraph*, Hurston is undervalued and misjudged unanimously. However, Lillie Howard asserts that Hurston does not abandon the issue of black and folk culture and her persistence in a woman’s search for identity. She proposes that “[Hurston] does change the color of her characters but she does not change her themes of environment in any significant way. Although Arvey Henson, the novel’s heroine, is white, she, like all Hurston protagonists, search for self-actualization and love, for life-affirming rather than life-denying experiences.”¹⁸³ Similarly, Carol P. Marsh-Lockett, thinking that *Seraph* is a “mother’s story,” claims that many critics including Hurston’s biographer Robert Hemenway have misread the novel by stating that Hurston abandoned black life as a source of artistic inspiration. For her, “[t]o read and dismiss this text in terms of its failure to portray black life and culture, however, is to dismiss the salient portrayal of the sexual politics which renders it as relevant to gender issues at the end of the twentieth century as it was in 1948.”¹⁸⁴ As a response to the prevailing view of *Seraph* as a least successful, flawed and misguided work of Hurston, Janet St. Clair similarly affirms that although thought to be “riddled with weaknesses, inconsistencies, and authorial capitulation and cowardice, . . . as a narrative of resistance and self-discovery that exists not between the lines but solidly on every

¹⁸¹ Frank G. Slaughter “Freud in Turpentine” In *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates and K. A. Appiah. (New York: Amistad Press, 1993.), p. 34-35

¹⁸² John Lowe. *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*. (Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1994), p. 94

¹⁸³ Lillie Howard “*Seraph On The Suwanee*.” In “*Zora Neale Hurston*”, <http://www.galenet.com.proxy.lib>. (6 June 2007)

¹⁸⁴ Carol P. Marsh-Lockett “Whatever Happened to Jochebed? Motherhood as Marginality in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on the Suwanee*” in *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women’s Writing*. Edited by Nagueyalti Warren and Sally Wolff. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. P., 1999.), p.101

page,” *Seraph on the Suwanee* “is the story of Arvay’s faltering efforts to reject both oppression and more importantly, the mental submission to oppression.”¹⁸⁵ Unlike Holloway and Wall, St. Clair feels that Arvay “finds freedom, meaning, a sense of community, and the potential for growth in her discovery of an active, inclusive, unconditional love,” and that she finally “resists victimization, throws off oppression, chooses the burden that she will carry, and takes it up with courage, dignity, and delight.”¹⁸⁶ Finally, as a justification for Hurston’s most criticized novel, John Lowe, who addresses the issue of humor as lying at the heart of the novel and Arvay’s problems, enlists the novel’s strengths and achievements by arguing that “it explores contemporary problems of race, class, gender while providing a Freudian case study of the consequences of rejection.”¹⁸⁷ Moreover, he states that Hurston by writing a “white novel” had an opportunity to have a more intense focus on gender and class issues. Therefore, in order not to misread and undervalue the novel as capitulation to the expectations of white publishers and wider white readers, and as an abandonment of racial heritage as well as feminist sentiments, St. Clair puts forward one should be aware of Hurston’s characteristic themes, assertions, legacies, and her “principles, processes, and publications.”¹⁸⁸

As for her main principles and characteristic themes due to her maternal loyalty and internalized object relations, Hurston treats the issues of gender, marriage, and self-fulfillment in her works. She portrays to us how mother-daughter bonding and the loss of a mother influenced all her life and her fiction. In other words, she is, in fact, an “emotional orphan” busy with as Mickey Pearlman says “solving mother puzzles”.¹⁸⁹ Thus, “while motherhood is not an explicit theme and is not central to Hurston’s writing, it is a problematic stretch in the fabric of her

¹⁸⁵ Janet St. Clair. “The Courageous Undertow of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on The Suwanee*.” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=73b0a73f-5d68-4da-9007-95c379e94a1f%40sessionmgr11> p. 38 (22 November 2007)

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 38-39

¹⁸⁷ John Lowe *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*. (Urbana: Illinois U. P., 1994), p.261

¹⁸⁸ Janet St. Clair. “The Courageous Undertow of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on The Suwanee*.” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=73b0a73f-5d68-4da-9007-95c379e94a1f%40sessionmgr11> p. 39 (22 November 2007)

¹⁸⁹ Mickey Pearlman. *Mother Puzzles. Daughters and Mothers in Contemporary American Literature*. (New York: Greenwood Press,1989.), p.8

fiction.”¹⁹⁰ Like in *Dust Tracks* and in *Jonah*, we can find the treatment of motherhood and daughterhood in *Seraph on the Suwanee*.

As many pivotal psychoanalytic thinkers and feminists argue, the mother-daughter relationship is perhaps the most ambivalent and unique relations of human kind. According to Adrienne Rich, “there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other. The materials are here for the deepest mutuality and the most painful estrangement.”¹⁹¹ Hence, Hurston with her own experience and with her portrayal of Arvay as a narcissistically wounded daughter portrays this ambivalent cathexis between mother and daughter. The idea that not only the loss of a mother at a crucial point in the development of personality but also the emotional absence and inadequacy of mother while present affect the psychic structure of a daughter can be explicitly analyzed via Hurston’s illustration of maternal identification and different contexts of mother daughter relationship.

If we look beneath the surface of the novel, we do not fail to detect its investigation of the nature of mother-daughter relationship, erotic love, latent wishes and impulses. As Claudia Tate puts *Seraph on the Suwanee* into the group of novels which she called “anomalies,” for they resist the conventional racial paradigms, she hypothesizes that there are “*conscious, preconscious and unconscious discourses*” of the novels.¹⁹² To analyze unconscious textual desires in her selected novels, Tate refers to basic Freudian, object relations, and Lacanian theories and says that “by *unconscious discourses*” she means “those longings that are inscribed in the novel’s most deeply encoded rhetorical elements.”¹⁹³ Therefore, an analysis of Arvay’s, and thus in turn *Seraph*’s unconscious yearnings, longings, and strivings will also negotiate the tension between Arvay and her interpersonal relations as well as the

¹⁹⁰ Carol P. Marsh-Lockett “Whatever Happened to Jochebed? Motherhood as Marginality in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on the Suwanee*” in *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women’s Writing*. Edited by N. Warren and S. Wolff. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. P, 1999.), p.100

¹⁹¹ Adrienne Rich *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995.), p. 225-226

¹⁹² Claudia Tate. *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race*. (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1998.), p.13

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 13

tension between Hurston and her displeased critics. As Marriane Hirsch states in her analysis of discourses of motherhood and daughterhood similarly, for a fuller picture of a novel telling about maternal portraits an especially the devastating ones “[w]e need to look at what function the mother’s absence, silence, and negativity –the mother’s repression– plays for developing heroine and for the structure of the fiction itself. We need to look at what eliminating the mother makes possible for the heroine’s development and allegiance, at what fictional and social structure it supports.”¹⁹⁴ Only then can we get the real source of Arvay’s inner disturbance and in turn understand *Seraph*’s implicit, deep meaning and the social critique behind.

According to general arguments of object-relations theorists, mother is the source of both pleasure and frustration for the infant. Mainly concerned about the primacy of relations and the causes of disorders in the infant’s psyche, they put a great emphasis on the maternal role and the influence of environment. For them, and especially for Fairbairn, the root of psychopathology lies in maternal deprivation, and inadequate parenting, and for Winnicott it lies in not having a “holding environment.” Having their unanimous hypothesis in mind that “parents who are emotionally absent, intrusive, chaotic and inconsistent pose a considerable dilemma for the child,” what I aim to do is to analyze Arvay’s inadequate maternal environment as a main reason for her fragmented, wounded self as well as defense mechanism she develops to deal with them.¹⁹⁵ From the very beginning of the novel, it is very clear to observe that “Arvay [has] turned from the world.”¹⁹⁶ Thus, to unravel the reasons for her sense of displacement I should outline the novel.

Seraph begins in the first decade of the twentieth century in Sawley, a poor white Florida town, where “there was ignorance and poverty.”¹⁹⁷ The opening incident in the novel indicates the troublesome relationships of Arvay with her family and her folks. Now that she is twenty years old, she is expected to have already been married. However, Jim Meserve, who is very handsome and who has

¹⁹⁴ Marriane Hirsch. *The Mother/ Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. (Bloomington: Indiana U. P., 1989.), p.50

¹⁹⁵ James Grotstein and Donald Rinsley, (Eds.). *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. (New York: Free Association Brooks, 1994.), p.79

¹⁹⁶ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 601

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 599

“stirred the hearts of practically every single girl in town,” is now “scorching” Arvey, whose “unattainability” and “complete silence” have nerved many young men before.¹⁹⁸ That’s why, “Sawley was boiling like a big red ant’s nest that had been ploughed up.”¹⁹⁹ Arvey and Jim’s courting to and from church is something that people have to see. Echoing the opening scene of *Their Eyes*, in which “Mouth-Almighty” is eager to hear about Janie’s story, Sawley’s people all “wanted to see and to know” and “to be in the fun.”²⁰⁰ Therefore, “timid” Arvey under the pressure of eager and inspecting eyes has many reasons to feel insecure, nervous and unsafe inside.²⁰¹ Because of her low-self esteem and sense of inferiority, Arvey thinks that “this pretty, laughing fellow was too far out of her reach” because “she was born to take other people’s leavings.”²⁰² Although she “desire[s] to take refuge in this man,” she believes that “somehow God has denied her happiness, love, normal relationships and common joys of the world.”²⁰³ Moreover, to make matters worse, we learn that Arvey, driven by the sense of guilt for having a mentally adulterous relationship with her brother-in-law Reverend Carl Middleton, has been having spasm fits for the last three years like her mother used to have.

In addition to her sufferings for secretly loving Carl, the theme of sibling rivalry, which recalls us Hurston’s own experience with her sister, causes Arvey’s insecurities and having a secret life inside her. When her sister Lorraine, who takes after her father’s side of the family whereas Arvey looks like her mother’s side, announces that she is engaged to be married to Carl, Arvey , who has “shone inside at Middleton’s very presence,” starts to have strange dreams and spasms and makes a plan “to get herself sent far off to some foreign land.”²⁰⁴ Although Arvey, unlike her sister, can play music and is more attractive than her with her “long light yellow hair,” “Gulf-blue eyes,” and “a fine made nose,” she cannot help herself believing that she is inferior, and does not deserve to love and to be loved.²⁰⁵ Unfortunately neither the Sawley people nor her parents “suspect that the general preference for

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 604 -605

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 601

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 606

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 607

²⁰² Ibid, p.620

²⁰³ Ibid, pp. 620,607

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p.608

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 602

Larraine, Arvay's more robust and aggressive sister, [has] done something to Arvay's soul across the years."²⁰⁶ Desperately in need for affirmation and acknowledgement by others and especially by her parents, Arvay wants to be a missionary and longs to be sent away somewhere in the world to save it from the heathens. Her decision in giving her whole heart and life to the work of God sound as an escape from her inner distress, sense of guilt and "cosmic loneliness" that has also haunted Hurston herself. Having nowhere to shelter, and "no one to whom she could open her feelings" including her parents, she turns to religion as a form of "substitutive satisfaction."²⁰⁷ As Fairbairn suggests, when there is failure in emotional relationships with outer objects, the individual develops these "substitutive satisfactions" as compensate for these failures.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, Chodorow by referring to Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, says that "Freud talks about the turn to religion as an attempt to recreate the lost feeling of oneness."²⁰⁹ Thus, Arvay as a compensation for her failed relationships seeks to find satisfaction which will help her cure her wounded ego through religion.

What's more, her father Brock Henson, who is "known to be a hard man to handle" and who has "cutting edges on his spirit" is also another source of problem for Arvay.²¹⁰ He teases and humiliates Arvay by asserting that she should get herself a husband and accept Jim Meserve's courting immediately. "If you had the sense that God give you a june bug you'd feel glad that he feels to scorch you to and from. Ain't you never going to have sense enough to get yourself a husband? You intend to lay round here on me for the rest of your days and moan and pray?"²¹¹ These are apparently not the words that a daughter wants to hear from her father who is expected to protect her.

Moreover, what is worse, her mother, Maria Henson, who is "overly religious," "meek and mild" by nature, agrees with her husband and says that

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 606.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 608.

²⁰⁸ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 66.

²⁰⁹ Nancy Chodorow *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. (Berkeley: California U.P., 1978.), p. 79.

²¹⁰ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 605

²¹¹ Ibid, p. 610.

“Arvey ain’t acting with no sense at all.”²¹² As a most needed love object, Maria Henson fails to provide a mutual support and “good-enough mothering environment” for her daughter; thus, causes her to assume “the role of martyr and outcast” by living in injured isolation and alienation.²¹³ In spite of the fact that her inadequate and troublesome relations with her father and sister have affected her sense of self, what is the most disappointing and devastating for Arvey is the “absence of the mother while she is present.”²¹⁴ It is true that, as St. Clair describes, Arvey “is a woman without allies.”²¹⁵ However, what she really needs is her mother’s alliance, support, acknowledgement and above all her love. However, Maria Henson, incapable of showing empathy and affirming Arvey’s self, fades into background and puts an insuperable obstacle to Arvey’s development of cohesive self. Thus, Arvey, because of her internalized insecurities, wants to take the role of missionary to make the world appear safer; in addition, she wants to belong somewhere for, like Hurston, she is in the “outsider-within” position in her family. Therefore, she desperately needs “a powerful and idealized object” and also needs “to be affirmed by such an idealized object.”²¹⁶ She is like a little child who craves her mother’s affection, attention and love. To explain her neediness and lack of self-esteem in broader sense, we can recall Fairbairn’s theory of personality which Grotstein and Rinsley explain as follows:

The basic need of the child is for a satisfactory relationship with an object. There is a need to relate as a whole person to a whole person. Inasmuch as there is failure in the emphatic responsiveness of the mother to her child, the child turns to other forms of substitutive satisfactions. According to Fairbairn, it is only then – if the basic needs have not been met – that pleasure principle arises as a secondary and deteriorative principle because of this failure. Thus, in Fairbairn’s theory, the self develops and is structured in the context of

²¹² Ibid, p.603,610

²¹³ Janet St. Clair. “The Courageous Undertow of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on The Suwanee*.” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=73b0a73f-5d68-4da-9007-95c379e94a1f%40sessionmgr11> p. 45 22 November 2007

²¹⁴ Barbara A. Schapiro. *Literature and the Relational Self*. (New York: New York U. P.,1994.),p.48

²¹⁵ Janet St. Clair. “The Courageous Undertow of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on The Suwanee*.” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=73b0a73f-5d68-4da-9007-95c379e94a1f%40sessionmgr11> p. 49 22 November 2007

²¹⁶ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p. 3

the relationship with the mother, and is affected by the actual vicissitudes of that relationship.²¹⁷

Arvay's situation throughout the novel so closely fits this description, because her need to be loved and acknowledged primarily by her mother then by her surroundings is not met. The failure in her relationship with her mother results firstly in her sense of self as deficient and secondly in her unfortunate relationship with the people around her. Thus, her story sounds more like rejection and abandonment rather than as many critics have suggested cowardice and impotence. Her parents try to get rid of her by marrying her off. Moreover, the common idea that "marriage [will] straighten her out" as it does many young girls explains the control and domination not only over Arvay but also women in general.²¹⁸ According to Meisenhelder, "Hurston" by portraying such a scene "suggests, in the social milieu of the novel, marriage as an institution means the repressing of a woman's sexual powers, the taming of her passion."²¹⁹

Alienated and rejected by her family, folk, and by Carl Middleton, whom she fell in love and at whose presence she "felt wanted and warm and secure and important to someone for awhile," Arvay, like Hurston, finds happiness and sense of security under the mulberry tree, where she "used to play doll-house" and which is "a cool green temple of peace."²²⁰ Even after her marriage, she frequently retreats to her temple of refuge" which is "[n]ot a happy laughing place," but which is at least "safe from all hurt, harm and danger."²²¹ Therefore, the mulberry tree as a symbol of "sacred place and temple of refuge" stands for her unresponsive, insufficient mother whose protection and affection Arvay craves. As it is stated before, Jung associates the mother-archetype with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness. He says that "a ploughed field, a garden" as well as "a rock, a cave, a tree, a spring" and so on can be attached to mother archetype because of their implied protection,

²¹⁷ James Grotstein and Donald Rinsley, (Eds.). *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. (New York: Free Association Brooks, 1994.), p.225

²¹⁸ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 603

²¹⁹ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. *Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U.P., 1999.), pp. 100-101

²²⁰ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 631-632

²²¹ *Ibid*, p.799

fertility and fruitfulness.²²² Moreover, we can name Winnicott's notion of "transitional objects" here. Defining these objects as belonging to the intermediate area between the inner reality and external world, Winnicott suggests that these "first not-me possession[s]" stand for "a protection against anxiety or loneliness" and become vitally important for they help the child control the inner distress.²²³ Deprived of her mother's love and support, Arvay thus seeks nurturance, acceptance and affection under the branches of the mulberry tree, that is the mother as Nature. To indicate her insufficient and failed relationship with her mother, Hurston describes the tree and its new green leaves "punctuated by tiny fuzzy things that looked like green, stubby worms. Those were the young mulberries coming on."²²⁴ Thus, it can be concluded that the inadequate symbiosis between Arvay and her mother Mary is clearly presented even by the mulberries which are not ripe and fruitful yet. This means that Arvay and Mary have still the long way ahead to form the strong attachment and symbiosis characteristic of a mother-daughter dyad.

From a different point of view, Susan Edwards Meisenhelder regards Hurston's first description of the mulberry tree as a central metaphor which implies "[t]he wild imbalance between male and female in this novel."²²⁵ Comparing Arvay's mulberry tree to Janie's "blossoming" pear tree in *Their Eyes*, which is an "emblem of an ideal, balanced relationship between women and men," Meisenhelder thinks that it "prefigures the pervasive rape imagery and the female violation at the novel's core."²²⁶ She goes on asserting that the tree is not a symbol of triumph as Arvay thinks, for "it is in fact the place of her first defeat and the beginning of her spiritual death at Jim's hands."²²⁷ The fact that Arvay is raped under the mulberry tree and "knew a pain remorseless sweet" there makes her "tree of life," that is her mother, ambivalent and contradictory with its dual aspects. The tree is therefore both a refuge and shelter for Arvay and a symbol of defeat as

²²² C. G. Jung. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. (New York: Princeton U. P., 1968.), p.81

²²³ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p.76.

²²⁴ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p.632

²²⁵ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U.P., 1999.), p.95

²²⁶ *Ibid*, p.95

²²⁷ *Ibid*, p.102

Meisenhelder states. Similarly, her mother is both “good” and “bad” for Arvay since she is paradoxically key to both Arvay’s triumph and defeat.

Arvay’s insecurity, sense of inferiority and need for love deriving from her inadequate relationship with her mother mainly affect her marital relationship. Jim, throughout the course of their marriage, has always complained about Arvay’s “contradictory behavior” and “stand-still hap-hazard kind of love.”²²⁸ Although he claims that it did not take him long to understand how she is made and that he knows how to “handle” her,²²⁹ he misses the point that “he became the inheritor of her relation to her mother.”²³⁰ As it is explained before, Freud’s realization of the importance of the girl’s pre-oedipal attachment to her mother made him highlight that the girl’s relationship to her father and her later relationships to men in general is preceded and affected by her pre-oedipal attachment to her mother. As Juliet Mitchell refers to Freud’s awareness of the all-powerful pre-Oedipal mother, she says that “behind every girl’s love for the father, there lurks her love for mother; for every ‘normal’ woman who chooses her husband on the acceptable model of her father, the difficulties that ensue are just as likely to echo those that arose with the love and hate for the mother.”²³¹ In a similar vein, Jung, in his discussion of the dynamics of marriage and love relationships, also states that “[t]he one who is grounded on a positive relationship to the parents will find little or no difficulty in adjusting to his or her partner, while the other may be hindered a deep-sealed unconscious tie to the parents.”²³² Consequently, Arvay, preoccupied internally with her mother, transfers her wounded sense of self to her relationship with Jim.

As the opening incidents in the novel and Arvay’s portrayal as “wordless” and “useless” prefigure Arvay’s later disturbances, her courtship with Jim presented at the beginning of the novel foreshadows their course of marriage.²³³ From the very beginning of her relation to Jim, Arvay has always felt inferior, insecure and

²²⁸ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p.636, 837

²²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 614

²³⁰ Sigmund Freud. “Female Sexuality.” In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. Edited by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (New York: W. W. Norton and Company.1990.), p. 328

²³¹ Juliet Mitchell. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.), p. 111

²³² C. G. Jung. *Aspects of the Feminine*. (London: Ark Paperbacks,1986.), p. 46

²³³ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), p.607, 610

devalued. Thinking that she is not a good match for him, she presumes Jim is making game of her “for folks to poke fun at.”²³⁴ Although “her ego [is] nourish[ed] by the envious looks from single woman and courting girls,” she thinks that after Jim makes a public show of her, he will get himself a regular girl and thus make Arvay “look like a fool at a funeral.”²³⁵

In addition to her own sense of inferiority and insecurity, Jim’s way of “handling” her adds more to her low self-esteem. Self-assured and chauvinistic, Jim expects Arvay’s submission, servitude and loyalty. Even before their marriage he wants to show Arvay who the boss is: “You need my help and my protection . . . You have made me seen into something that I don’t reckon you understand your ownself. I have to stand with you and stand by you and give my good protection to keep you from hurting your ownself too much.”²³⁶ Moreover, by “treating her like she was some precious play-pretty that might break in two,” and by calling her “baby-child,” “baby-wife” and “Little-Bits” he implies her weakness and need for protection.²³⁷ In so doing, not only does he degrade her, but also he convinces his own higher status by behaving “like a king.”²³⁸ Both Meisenhelder and St. Clair say that Arvay may seem like a Cinderella figure, who is rescued from poverty into glorious, ideal life.²³⁹ However, they also state that it is just Jim’s side of the story. For Meisenhelder, Hurston portrays Jim and Arvay as a critique of relationship between white men and women: “In contrast to the vigor and equality of Janie and Tea Cake’s love, marriage in this world involves male repression and control of female sexuality as well as female emotional service to men.”²⁴⁰ Regarding their marriage as “a master-slave relationship,” she proposes that “[i]n a less repressive environment and with a less oppressive male, planted in the more fertile soil of

²³⁴ Ibid, p. 612

²³⁵ Ibid, pp. 616, 614

²³⁶ Ibid, p. 613

²³⁷ Ibid. pp. 616, 665, 701

²³⁸ Ibid, p.617

²³⁹ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston.* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press,1999.), p.96. Janet St. Clair. “The Courageous Undertow of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on The Suwanee.*”

<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=73b0a73f-5d68-4da-9007-95c379e94a1f%40sessionmgr11> p. 42 22 November 2007

²⁴⁰ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston.* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press,1999.), p.96

Their Eyes Were Watching God with a bee-man like Tea Cake, even Arvay, Hurston suggests, might have blossomed.”²⁴¹ Further, to indicate Jim’s mastery over Arvay, many critics have noted that his surname “Meserve” implies that Jim is the master who demands for submission and servitude. “The literal meaning of the hero’s name ‘Meserve –‘me serve’ or ‘serve me’– underscores the demand for Arvay’s obsequiousness, for attending to Jim Meserve’s need is Arvay’s most consistent objective.”²⁴²

In addition to Jim’s verbal attacks on Arvay by putting her in a position of submission and objectification, he harnesses her sexually and forces her to surrender. Their first sexual encounter under the mulberry tree promises that she is going to be victimized and passified sexually. Echoing Jody Starks in *Their Eyes*, Jim’s perception of women requires women’s degraded status, oppression and emotional service: “Women folks don’t have no mind to make up nohow. They wasn’t made for that. Lady folks were just to made to laugh and act loving and kind and have a good man to do for them all he’s able, and have him as many boy-children as he figgers he’d like to have.”²⁴³ He also claims his superiority and difference by saying to Arvay that “I see one thing and understand ten. You see ten things and can’t even understand one.”²⁴⁴ Since he is not satisfied with Arvay during their engagement, he consults to Joe Kelsey, who is Jim’s “right hand man” and “pet negro.”²⁴⁵ Joe’s advice also fosters Jim’s perception of women. He tells Jim: “Most women folks will love you plenty if you take and see to it that they do. Make ‘em knuckle under. From the very first jump, get the bridle in they mouf and ride ‘em hard and stop ‘em short. They’s all alike, Boss. Take ‘em and break ‘em.”²⁴⁶ Consequently, Jim, the next afternoon after Joe’s advice, takes Arvay to her “sacred place” and gets her to assure that she has been raped and she is “going to keep on

²⁴¹ Ibid, p. 99-100

²⁴² Claudia Tate. *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race*. (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1998.), p.151. See also, Christopher Rieger. “The Working-Class Pastoral of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on the Suwanee*.”

<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=87ad2b65-6a8c-4d26-b3e740f97ecc17dd%40sessionmgr11> pp. 118-119 22 November 2007

²⁴³ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanee* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p.621

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 836

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 653

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p.640

getting raped.”²⁴⁷ Thus, not only verbally but also physically harnessed and humiliated, Arvay retreats “her old feeling of defeat and inadequacy.”²⁴⁸ She thinks that another hurting joke has been played on her and she has been taken for a fool.²⁴⁹ Hence, fearing that “he might somehow vanish away from her arms” she “locks” her arms around Jim’s neck and presses her body tightly against his so that he cannot leave her again.²⁵⁰ What makes her situation more pathetic is her underwear is left hanging on the mulberry tree’s branches, and Arvay, looking back at her drawers swinging on it regards it “as a kind of sign and symbol.”²⁵¹ Since she wants “cleansing of her sacred place,” by removing Carl and all her sinful thoughts about him under that mulberry tree, she believes that her secret sin has been forgiven on high as she has paid it under the tree.²⁵²

It is true that, as Meisenhelder states, Arvay’s first sexual experience affirms her objectification and submission.²⁵³ Although she seems to consent to her compliance, devaluation and degradation, it would be harsh to put all the blame on Arvay. She is aware that she has no one to “turn for refuge.”²⁵⁴ She can turn neither to her folks nor to her family. Although her parents have witnessed Arvay’s sexual harassment, they also watch it compliantly. We see Maria Henson’s maternal impotence once more as she complains to her husband:

Something that don’t mean us no good, I’ll bound you. Could be dragging our girl off somewhere to rape her and leave her here on our hands. A yound’un without no name for us to look after and to feed and raise. All that money, nigh on to forty dollars that we done spent already on things to marry her off in, too. Brock Henson, youse the biggest fool I ever did see in all my born days! If you was any man at all, you’d take that shot-gun and get on your horse and overtake ‘em. Make him marry her before the sun go down.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p.650

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p.645

²⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 622, 645

²⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 646-647

²⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 646-647

²⁵² Ibid, pp. 632,650

²⁵³ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston.* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U.P.,1999.), p.102

²⁵⁴ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories.* (New York: The Library of America,1995.), p.645

²⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 648

These words evidently do no fit in the expected “good enough mothering environment.” As Ronald Katz refers to the infant’s schema, the internalized mother-child relationship, he defines the “good-enough mother” as follows: “A ‘good enough mother’ functions as a soother, comforter, and regulator of affects during intense affectionate states. The mother responds in a way to help the child regain control and equilibrium. The child internalizes this ability and in identification with the mother is able to perform this function for herself.”²⁵⁶ Obviously, Maria Henson fits into the “bad” aspects of the mother, causing her daughter’s emotional and sexual vulnerability. What’s more, Brock Henson’s indifference to his wife’s worries makes the situation more poignant. He just sits down, scooges the chair not to look at his wife, and smokes.²⁵⁷ Arvay has neither a guarding father who “acts as a protection against the dangers of the external world” nor an emphatic mother who “protects [her] against the dangers that threaten from the darkness of [her] psyche.”²⁵⁸ As a result of this fact, Jim grabs Arvay like a predator, which symbolizes his violent nature of sexuality: “He was growling like a tiger which had just made a kill and was being challenged.”²⁵⁹

Contrary to what Arvay and her mother fear, Jim heads to the courthouse after the unfortunate event under the mulberry tree and they get married. With this more, their prey-predator or “master- slave” relationship is sealed. Their marriage goes on happily for a while when they move to a turpentine camp where Jim works. Although their house is not in good condition, it looks beautiful to Arvay since it belongs to her and in turn she belongs to somewhere. However, what frustrates Arvay is Lorraine and Carl’s frequent visits, because it keeps her guilt over her lust for Carl alive and active.²⁶⁰ Moreover, the theme of sibling rivalry becomes more intense since Arvay starts to have nightmares. Once, she sees Lorraine’s neck is cut and that the long sharp knife is in her own hand. Another night she dreams her sister is killed by a fierce tiger. Upon having these strange dreams, Arvay understands

²⁵⁶ Ronald Katz. “Mothers and Daughters -The Tie that Binds” in *The Mother-Daughter Relationship. Echoes Through Time*. Edited by Gerd H. Fenchel. (London: Jason Aronson,1998.), p. 251

²⁵⁷ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), p.649

²⁵⁸ C. G. Jung. *Aspects of the Feminine*. (London: Ark Paperbacks,1986.), p. 86

²⁵⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), p.648

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 654

how hateful she has been towards her sister for years. Pointing out the “egoism” and “wish-fulfillment” in dreams, Freud says that “[w]henver anyone in the course of one’s life gets in one’s way . . . a dream is promptly ready to kill that person, even if it be father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife.”²⁶¹ Fearing that her sister might tell about Arvay’s “secret passion of the past” to Jim, Arvay retreats into religion and “let[s] the Bible fall open and reading the chapter where it opened as a source of message.”²⁶² When, one night, the story of the killing of Abel by Cain opens in Genesis, Arvay and Jim have their first quarrel. Upon Jim’s claiming that Cain’s first crime is not having a sense of humor, Arvay says that there are no jokes in the Bible. Thus, Jim thinks that Arvay considers him “a sinner and a scoffer” while Arvay thinks that Jim sees her as “a trifle dump.”²⁶³ Then Arvay refuses Jim’s goodnight hug and turns her back on him for the first time. This scene reveals that both Arvay and Jim have “things inside them that they usually concealed.”²⁶⁴ From the very beginning of their marriage, they have their own secret life which they are afraid of revealing to each other. In this sense, what actually makes Arvay to refuse Jim’s goodnight hug and to turn inward is the story of Abel and Cain – the Biblical rival siblings – as a reminiscent of her rivalry with her sister. Like Cain, Arvay is driven by jealousy and hatred toward her sister and unconsciously wishes for her death. Thus, this story and Jim’s comments on it touch deep in her heart since she is unable to reveal her true feelings about her sister. Therefore, although they have “the proper papers” to get married they “have never been really married and their bond has never been consecrated.”²⁶⁵

By portraying Jim and Arvay, Hurston underscores the issue of how an ideal marital relationship should be, a concern from her earlier novels. However, this time she uses a negative portrayal of a marriage which lacks mutual understanding, equality, and empathy. Jim and Arvay’s definition of marriage (ie, Jim’s definition of marriage since Arvay tries to play the role assigned to her by Jim) is far from the

²⁶¹ Sigmund Freud. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. Edited by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966.), p. 252

²⁶² Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), pp.655, 658

²⁶³ Ibid, p.659

²⁶⁴ Ibid, p.659

²⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 841

one between Janie and Tea Cake. The former couple seems not to come to the point of mutual understanding and love, as they are always at odds with each other. When they move to Citrabelle, Jim goes through a desperate struggle to support his wife and their first born child, Earl. He has terrible three weeks until he fixes things.²⁶⁶ He uses his head and starts to improve as an enterprising businessman but neither does Arvay ask for the story behind nor is Jim eager to offer her the information.²⁶⁷ In the following years, when he makes a good deal of money from bootlegging, he again excludes Arvay from his activities. He, moreover, wants the swamp which is near their house cleaned off because “[i]t’s dark and haunted-looking and too big and strong to overcome” for Arvay.²⁶⁸ However, he never reveals his true intentions that he is doing all these things for the sake of Arvay. He expects Arvay to realize it and to appreciate it.

It is out of this expectation that one day he gets a big rattlesnake in his hand though he knows that Arvay is petrified of snakes. “[H]e was expecting her to admire what he was doing. Just like a little boy turning cartwheels in front of the house where his girl lived.”²⁶⁹ Nonetheless, it ends with Jeff’s, Joe Kelsey’s son, saving Jim from the snake since Arvay goes into “a kind of coma standing there” when the snake attacks Jim.²⁷⁰ After this event, Jim blames Arvay for her cowardice and says: “I’m sick and tired of hauling and dragging you along. I’m tired of excusing you because you don’t understand. I’m tired of waiting for you to meet me on some high place and locking arms with me and going my way. I’m tired of hunting you, and trying to free your soul.”²⁷¹ Although it seems that it is Jim, who is the victim of the snake incident and in a broader sense of their marriage, this event “encapsulates the cruelty, childishness, selfishness, condescension, and insensitivity that characterize him throughout the novel’s subversively feminist substory.”²⁷² He

²⁶⁶ Ibid. p.665

²⁶⁷ Ibid. p.667

²⁶⁸ Ibid. p.671

²⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 829

²⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 830

²⁷¹ Ibid. p. 840

²⁷² Janet St. Clair. “The Courageous Undertow of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on The Suwanee*.” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=73b0a73f-5d68-4da-9007-95c379e94a1f%40sessionmgr11> p. 49 (22 November 2007)

also accuses Arvey of loving like a coward and not taking steps at all.²⁷³ However, he misses the point that he himself causes her cowardice and insecurity.

Therefore, it is in fact Jim, who is the predator and the victimizer and Arvey, who is the prey, the victim. Her sexual submission is once more underlined in a bedroom scene. Arvey wants to leave the football game and the party where Kenny, their son, is a drum-major for the band because she feels “out of the place” and “awkward” due to her sense of inferiority.²⁷⁴ Jim drives home very fast while Arvey is sobbing and crying. When they get into their bedroom, Jim, “[i]nstead of coming to her and trying to soothe her feelings,” just stands and looks down on her “as if she were a chair.”²⁷⁵ Arvey, frightened, feels “like a mouse under the paw of a cat.”²⁷⁶ Jim tears her clothes and affirms her vulnerability, objectification and submission once more: “Don’t you move! . . . You’re my damn property and want you right where you are, and I want you naked.”²⁷⁷ The power dynamics of their bedroom scene and Arvey’s “passive, . . . receptive and dream-like” sexuality is also affirmed in another bedroom scene. When Jim says that it is enough for her to mourn after Earl’s death since it has been nearly a month that Arvey has not been “sweet” with him, Arvey cannot resist him:²⁷⁸ “And at that moment, Arvey hated herself because for the life of her she could not move away from Jim, nor could she fling his hand away. She found herself softening, relaxing, and then throbbing under Jim’s hand. She hated the man violently, and she hated him because she had so much power over her.”²⁷⁹ Although in this scene there is no physical harassment, Arvey’s internalization of victimization is so apparent that she becomes once more subservient and objectified.

However, what must be underscored in both scenes is that although Jim sounds like a “growling tiger” in the beginning, soon after he turns into a mild cat. In the former scene when Arvey confesses that she “can’t stand this bondage,” which Jim gets her in and finishes her speech in “agonizing scream of desperation,”

²⁷³ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p.837

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 789

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 793

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 794

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 795

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 740

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 740

Jim abandons his former victimization and gives up his role of a predator: “For an answer Jim kissed Arvay with a kind of happy arrogance, then snuggled his head down on her breast in that way he had that Arvay thought was so much like a helpless child, and went off into peaceful sleep.”²⁸⁰ Then Arvay, upon seeing Jim like that, buries her hand in his hair as she loves to do so.²⁸¹ Similarly, in the latter scene, Jim lays his head on Arvay’s breast and goes into sleep with Arvay’s fingers running through his hair, and she herself goes to sleep with her hands tangled in his hair.²⁸² Therefore, their sexuality and “love bondage” transfer into another symbiotic relationship which echoes Lucy and John Pearson’s marriage. Arvay becomes a “hovering” mother for Jim, which is apparently what he really expects from her.

In spite of his constant complaints about Arvay’s acting dumb, Jim gets used to the comforts of a “home” through Arvay, and “her tender and loving care.”²⁸³ Even though he does not want to reveal his own neediness and dependence on Arvay, he actually craves her nurturance and love and compensates his dependence and weakness via his sexuality. He thinks of quitting her several times but gives up this idea upon realization of the origin of his love for Arvay:

There was something about Arvay that put him in mind of his mother. They didn’t favor each other in the face, but there was something there that was the same. Maybe that was what had caught his attention the first time that he had laid eyes on Arvay. Maybe that was why he had never missed his family since he had married her. All the agony of his lost mother was gone when he could rest his head on Arvay’s bosom and go to sleep of nights.²⁸⁴

In this sense, his attraction to Arvay’s gulf blue eyes, which have some strange power on him reveals his innermost feelings and latent wishes. “Each time that she succumbed to his love making, Arvay’s eyes gradually changed from that placid blue to a misty greenish-blue like the waters of the sea at times and at places. It warmed him, it burned him and bound him.”²⁸⁵ Associating her eyes with the sea, the symbol for the womb of a mother, Jim reveals his own infantile neediness,

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 797

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 795

²⁸² Ibid, p. 741

²⁸³ Ibid, p. 694

²⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 694

²⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 695

dependence and insecurity. Therefore, Hurston once more presents infantile aspect of male sexuality as she has illustrated it before via John Pearson. Susan Edwards Meisenhelder also acknowledges Jim's infantile sexuality: "Jim is no 'bee' in search of a 'blossom' but a child seeking uncritical and undivided maternal devotion. . . . This need for 'hovering' rather than a vigorous sexual partner requires that he harness Arvey's sexual energy, making her his sexless seraph and nurturing mother."²⁸⁶ Similarly, Claudia Tate proposes that Jim's sadism "originates in his intense feeling of maternal loss, associated with the sexual repression of the son's desire for the mother during the oedipal stage and his bereavement over his mother's death."²⁸⁷

In their unconscious, both Arvey and Jim represent to each other their lost mothers they long for reuniting with. Although we see them at odds with each other many times, even after their arguments they end up in their bedroom. They are sexually attracted to each other, which explains their yearning for their mothers. That couples express their neediness for primary intimacy and merging with their mothers through a sexual relationship is reinforced by many psychoanalysts. Michael St. Clair refers to this notion by citing Edith Jacobson's view. "In sexual experiences of adults, the whole self can seem to merge with the partner, and the pleasure of the sex act may partly be from the sense of emotionally restoring the lost original union with the mother."²⁸⁸ Likewise, Jung says that

[n]ormal sex life, as a shared experience with apparently similar aims, further strengthens the feeling of unity and identity. This state is described as one of complete harmony, and is extolled as a great happiness ("one heart and one soul") – not without good reason, since the return to that original condition of unconscious oneness is like a return to childhood. . . . Even more is it a return to the mother's womb, into the teeming depths of an as yet unconscious creativity.²⁸⁹

Jung also proposes that the anima archetype in man is generally projected upon a woman. He says that since the mother is the first bearer of the soul-image,

²⁸⁶ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston.* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U.P.,1999.), p.105

²⁸⁷ Claudia Tate. *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race.* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1998.), p.172

²⁸⁸ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology.* (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p.100

²⁸⁹ C. G. Jung. *Aspects of the Feminine.* (London: Ark Paperbacks,1986.), p. 44

the soul-image is then borne by those women who arouse men's feelings, whether it is positive or negative.

The consequence is that the anima, in the form of the mother image, is transferred to the wife; the man as soon as he marries becomes childish, sentimental, dependent, subservient, or else truculent, tyrannical, hypersensitive, always thinking about the prestige of his superior masculinity. . . . Therefore, his ideal of marriage is so arranged that his wife has to take over the magical role of the mother. Under the cloak of the ideally exclusive marriage he is really seeking is his mother's protection.²⁹⁰

Therefore, Jim, like Arvey, also longs for her mother's nurturance and love. He is just as needy for approval, acknowledgement, and union as Arvey. His scream of rage at Arvey after the snake scene confirms his neediness. He blames Arvey for "her stand-still, hap-hazard kind of love," and says that he is "as hungry as a dog for a knowing and doing love."²⁹¹ What he expects from Arvey is in fact protection, approval and care just as a child expects the same from his mother. After the snake scene, he says to Arvey that she has missed "the biggest chance in the world to make a great woman out of [herself]. A Past Grand Noble chance."²⁹² This "great woman" is of course his mother, whose nurturing capacities he transfers to Arvey. He expects Arvey to take the role of a protective mother, but when Arvey refuses to play the maternal role and do not save him from the snake, Jim has to be satisfied with Jeff's "hovering": "Jeff hovered and guarded just as if Jim had been an infant child."²⁹³ In an intention "to do something big and brave and full of manhood, thinking maybe he might win admiration out of [her] and compliments and a big hug around his neck," he plans such an event; however, it ends with a disappointment since Arvey does not come and put her arms around him feeling appreciated.²⁹⁴ Therefore, Arvey's refusal to serve him like a mother leads him to search for another mother substitute for himself: he leaves her the following day and goes to "sea" for his shrimping business. Always fascinated by the sea, Jim unconsciously seeks union with his mother through the calm waters of the Atlantic:

²⁹⁰ Ibid, pp. 86-87

²⁹¹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p.837

²⁹² Ibid. p.835

²⁹³ Ibid. p. 831

²⁹⁴ Ibid. pp. 836, 838

Jim sat on his stool at the wheel and contemplated the ocean of sea around him. The colors charmed and pleased him. There was the delicate green close at hand, and flipping inward toward the faint outline of the Florida coast. To starboard and infinity, it took on a blue-green, and where the sun rested on it, it seemed to be over-laid by a silvery veil. . . . That was another thing that fascinated Jim about the sea, the seemingly infinity of form. No matter how much you saw, the sea had still other marvels of shape and color. He would never, never tire of the sea.²⁹⁵

Thus the origin of his attraction to Arvey's "gulf-blue eyes," and his love for the sea make it clear that "he is consumed by a desperate, desiring need for his mother."²⁹⁶

Jim also reveals his infantile neediness and dependence by physical body contact with Arvey. He always wants Arvey to "hug his neck" which is an indicator of his preoccupation with attachment and body contact with the mother.²⁹⁷ Thus, Jim behaves like a child who wants to keep close to his mother with a demand of clinging, and body contact. Like Arvey's "substitutive satisfactions," he develops "false comforters" to reestablish the original relation with his mother. "His adult sexual needs were masking his infantile, clinging ones and a rapacious need for body contact, to maintain the partial satisfactions that he had known."²⁹⁸

His appetite and appreciation of Arvey's cooking also signal his infantile neediness. Before Arvey goes to Florida to meet Jim and to make a final resolution for their marriage, she prepares some food for the journey. When she arrives, Jim says that he is "hungry as a dog for some of that tater pone."²⁹⁹ He also makes a similar explanation on the boat after Arvey finally appreciated him and said how proud of him she is. Upon hearing it, Jim says that he is "hungry as hell."³⁰⁰ Recalling Freud's hypothesis on the developmental stages of the infant, we can say that Jim's "primary autoerotism" and "primary narcissism" manifest in his need for

²⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 802

²⁹⁶ James Grotstein and Donald Rinsley, (Eds.). *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. (New York: Free Association Books, 1994.), p.229

²⁹⁷ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), pp. 740, 796, 836

²⁹⁸ Eleanore M. Armstrong-Perlman. "The Allure of the Bad Object" in *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. Edited by James Grotstein and Donald Rinsley (New York: Free Association Books, 1994.), p.230

²⁹⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), p. 891

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 901

food imply that his ego strives for a relationship with his love object. Perceiving Arvay as both a good mother and a bad, rejecting and hating mother, he wants to feel like a little child rather than a husband in Arvay's lap:

Arvay's arms went up in a languorous curve and clasped tightly around Jim's neck, and without being urged, she kissed him fondly time and again. Jim was gripping her shoulder so hard until it hurt her, and trembling like a child trying to keep from crying. Like a little boy who had fled in out of the dark to the comfort of his mother. After a while, Jim sighed deeply, and his head slid down and snuggled on her breast. From long habit Arvay's fingers began to play through his hair in a gentle way. Almost immediately, Jim sighed and went off into a deep and peaceful sleep.³⁰¹

Although Jim pretends to have domination on Arvay and tries to control and "handle" her verbally and sexually, contrary to many critics's (mis)reading of the novel it is Jim at the end of the novel who submits to Arvay's maternal power. For instance, Meisenhelder says that "Arvay slips into maternal role Jim assigns her" which confirms her "spiritual defeat," and "self annihilation."³⁰² However, we should not miss the point that Arvay is now aware of her power and transformation. Her decision to serve Jim and take the role of all embracing mother in the end is not because of her failure of will and empowerment. As Christopher Rieger says, "Arvay's decision to embrace the role of the mother is of course, her own choice," and "this kind of service should not be confused with subservience" as it is "a willful commitment to serve rather than a proscribed servitude."³⁰³ Similarly, Janet St. Clair states that Arvay does not submit to Jim's demands but to the power of love and the logic of order. Saying that Arvay emerges as "a woman who affirms her individual identity, restores the unity of her family on a new and durable foundation and replaces the crippling elements of old cultural ties" St. Clair asserts that "Arvay affirms her separate identity by *choosing* her own direction and refusing any longer

³⁰¹ Ibid. p. 917

³⁰² Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston.* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999.), pp.107-108

³⁰³ Christopher Rieger. "The Working-Class Pastoral of Zora Neale Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee*"

<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=87ad2b65-6a8c-4d26-b3e740f97ecc17dd%40sessionmgr11> p.123 (22 November 2007)

to be victimized.”³⁰⁴ Therefore, giving Jim the “hovering” that he needed is not capitulation to the demands of patriarchy, but is a realization of her value as a nurturer, which affirms her self- confidence and personal equilibrium.

It was funny that she had never known Jim in full until this night. Jim was not the over-powering general that she had took him for. Oh, he had that way with other folks and things. No matter of doubt about it. From a teppentime shack to his own fleet on the ocean was a long, long road to travel. But that was the outside Jim. Inside he was nothing but a little boy to take care of, and he hungered for her hovering. Look at him now! Snuggled down and clutching onto her like Kenny when he wore diapers. Arvay felt such a swelling to protect ad comfort Jim that tears came up in her eyes. So helpless sleeping there in her arms and trusting himself to her.³⁰⁵

As the passage quoted above illustrates, Arvay now conscious of her strength and potential, transforms her weakness, cowardice, sense of inferiority and dependence into a story of newfound wisdom, self confidence, empowerment and personal enlightenment. The passage is also important to underscore Jim’s duality. He has an “outside” and “inside” self which are completely different. Echoing John Pearson, he is strong outside, but weak at his wife’s presence. Jung describes this state of duality and contradiction of men in terms of anima archetype in men. “The social ‘strong man’ is in his private life often a mere child where his own states of feelings are concerned; his discipline in public . . . goes miserably to pieces in private. His ‘happiness in his work’ assumes a woeful countenance at home.”³⁰⁶ This situation, Jung goes on, also leads to the “game of illusion” in which the wife becomes inferior so as to affirm that it is not the hero who is weak and inferior in private but she with her own uselessness.³⁰⁷ That’s why, Arvay has felt many times inferior, useless and inadequate and has been excluded from many important family matters, including her daughter’s marriage.

However, at the end of the novel, both confirm their mutual insecurity and meet each other at middle point “on high.” Their mutual dependence deriving from

³⁰⁴ Janet St. Clair. “The Courageous Undertow of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on The Suwanee*.” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=73b0a73f-5d68-4da-9007-95c379e94a1f%40sessionmgr11> pp. 54-55 (22 November 2007)

³⁰⁵ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanee* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 919

³⁰⁶ C. G. Jung. *Aspects of the Feminine*. (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1986.), p. 83

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 84

their mutual insecurity and neediness affirms that “each is a self-object for the other, a missing part of the self.”³⁰⁸ Because of their need to feel acknowledged and confirmed as well as their need for maternal love, by transferring their roles from husband/wife to mother/child, they satisfy their neediness. At the end of the novel by mirroring for each other the missing part of the self, they form a cohesive self together. Each is the means for each other to restore and recover the idealized symbiosis and union with their mothers. As Arvay points to the “bondage” they are in, she says: “I can’t never feel satisfied that I got you tied to me, and I can’t leave you, and I can’t kill you nor hurt you in no way at all. I’m tied and bound down in a burning Hell and no way out that I can see.”³⁰⁹ Thus, the “bondage” they are in, in fact, can better be defined as the mother-infant bonding rather than the love between lovers. Arvay satisfies her concealed wish to repair her mother’s inadequacy and to find “the good-enough-mother symbiosis” by taking the role of “good-enough-mother” for Jim. Similarly, Jim (re)creates and gratifies his need for ambivalently loved oedipal object via Arvay. He names his daughter after his mother and when Arvay gets jealous the oedipal bonding between Jim and Angeline, he says to Arvay that she is wrong to think like that: “Yes, I love the child . . . because she’s yours that I love her so? I’m loving you through her and her through you.”³¹⁰ In fact, it is a euphemism for his unconscious desire. The fact is that he is loving Arvay through his mother and his mother through Arvay. To make it much clearer, Eleanore M. Armstrong-Perlman says that “if the individual finds an object or a person that remembers his mother in her duality of aspects but in another guise, this will provide a relationship that can reestablish the lost unity of the self.”³¹¹ All in all, Jim seems to find his lost love object that will put him together again. His resolution comes to an end in a straightforward way; he meets his idealized mother figure and satisfies his infantile need through her. On the other hand, Arvay’s resolution takes a longer period of time since hers is more complicated and difficult than Jim’s.

³⁰⁸ Barbara A. Schapiro. *Literature and the Relational Self*. (New York: New York U. P.,1994), p. 49.

³⁰⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), p. 797

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 678

³¹¹ Eleanore M. Armstrong-Perlman. “The Allure of the Bad Object” in *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. Edited by James Grotstein and Donald Rinsley (New York: Free Association Brooks, 1994.), p.238

It is true that their marriage is sustained as a result of Arvay's taking the role of a mother in the end. As Freud points out, a marriage sometimes cannot be "made secure until the wife has succeeded in making her husband her child as well and in acting as a mother to him."³¹² However, her embracing the role of a surrogate mother for her husband is not only necessary to keep her marriage going. What must be underlined is that as a result of her internalization of her mother, she takes on the role of a mother so as to repair the failed relationship she has had with her own mother. Unlike many critics suggest she carries out the maternal role because of her urgent need for a mother herself not because of her "self-annihilation," lack of voice or cowardice. Despite all the obstacles around her and though it takes her long she manages to form a unified, integrated self. She is no longer fragmented and at odds within her psyche as she was in the beginning. In the end, we see her as a self-aware woman who realizes how "she [has] improved and changed."³¹³ Conscious of her transformation and healing, she says to Jim that she can read his writing now.³¹⁴ She is also aware that it is not only she who has "sweated mightily" all these years but also Jim with his doubts, insecurities, and weaknesses. "She was not the only one who had trembled all these years and time. Jim had been feeling his way towards her and grasping at her as she had been towards him. This was a wonderful and powerful thing to know, but she must not let him know what she had perceived."³¹⁵ Thus, although Jim and many critics think that Arvay is "planted" there forever as a mother doing just what Jim says and wants her to do, Arvay achieves her revolution, as Adriene Rich suggests, by transferring motherhood as "institution" to an all-powerful, creative "experience" in which she repossesses her own body. In her new found wisdom and dignity, she is aware of her potential as an all powerful, omnipotent mother:

And just like she had not known Jim, she had known her own self even less. What she has considered her cross, she now saw as her glory. Her father and Lorraine had taken from her because they felt that she had done something to take from and to give out of her

³¹² Sigmund Freud. "Femininity" In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. Edited by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1990.), p. 361

³¹³ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 916

³¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 916

³¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 916

fullness. Her mother had looked to her for dependence. Her children, and Jim and all. Her job was mothering. What more could any woman want and need? No matter how much money they had or learning or high family, they couldn't do a bit more mothering and hovering than she could. Holy Mary, who had been blessed to mother Jesus had been no better off than she was.³¹⁶

Her metamorphosis is also acclaimed by John Lowe, who refers to “Arvay’s new birth and the pieta-like pose” we see at the end of the novel.³¹⁷ He claims that “Arvay, alternating between self-imposed and self-pitying exile and a semisecure place in her family, finally throws off Hagar identification, finds her identity and a matching/resultant sense of humor and becomes Sarah, whose rejuvenation is signified by laughter.”³¹⁸ Always feeling inferior, weak and lonesome, Arvay has always needed a sense of belonging and usefulness which she ultimately finds in her “temple of refuge.” When she learns a year later that Jim gave his consent to Angeline’s marriage to Hatton and was there when they got married, she retreats within herself to her temple of refuge.

Why, she asked herself, should she be surprised at being ignored like this? It has always been that way as long as she could remember. She had been never counted and necessary. . . . She didn’t belong where she was, that was it. Jim was a Meserve, Angeline was a Meserve. Kenney was a Meserve, but so far as they concerned she was still a Henson. She had married a Meserve and borned Meserves, but she was not one of them. A hand-maiden like Hagar, who had found favor in the mater side. They didn’t have to count her when anything important was to be done. Just go right ahead and ignore her. Took her for dumb and ignorant.³¹⁹

Her need for sense of belonging and love is once more revealed when she empathizes with Belinda, the Kelseys’ little daughter and playmate of Kenney. When the passerby truck driver asks Kenney and Belinda whose children they are, Belinda lies that she is Arvay’s little daughter. Arvay, so as not to hurt her feelings,

³¹⁶ Ibid. p. 919

³¹⁷ John Lowe. *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*. Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1994.), p. 332

³¹⁸ Ibid. p.332 For further reading of these Biblical personages and The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah, see John Lowe pp. 293- 296. Lowe says that Arvay identifies with Hagar, who experiences abandonment and rejection although she bears a son, Ishmael, who is represented by Earl in *Seraph*, and later with Sarah, whose late conception and laughter indicate a final wholeness Arvay seeks.

³¹⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), pp. 779-780

acclaims that this is so: “Arvay saw Belinda about to cry and understood Belinda valued her and counted on her care and wanted to be loved by her. Arvay knew that feeling.”³²⁰ Further, unconsciously, Arvay may have empathy with Belinda because of her similar position of lack of underwear. Kenney and Belinda attract the passengers’ interest at the train station by their performance in which Belinda stands on her head. However, having no idea of nakedness, both are innocent for they do not pay attention to Belinda’s lack of underwear. After the event although Arvay initially blames the Kelseys and Belinda, she resents that once she too was innocent of underwear under the mulberry tree. What makes her angry and irritated is in fact that Belinda’s innocence of underwear reminds her own humiliation, powerlessness and “deep embarrassment” under her sacred place.³²¹ Thus, she puts herself in Belinda’s shoes, and acknowledges her need for acceptance and love.

As a symbol for Arvay’s urge for sense of belonging, the sleeping porch added to her house in Citrabelle stands for her need to possess someone or something and to be possessed as well. In the beginning, she feels that she does not deserve to be there or to own such a thing, because, for her, only “high-toned” people can own it, and “that kind of a thing [is] a mighty high kick for a low cow.”³²² Nevertheless, she changes her mind later and sees it as “a kind of throne room.”³²³ What causes her to change her mind is Angeline’s mother-in-law Mrs. Howland’s, and her other friends’ envious expressions for her porch. After she notices a change in their manner with her, the porch starts to belong to her and she starts to belong to it.

It built Arvay up and made her feel more inside of things. It was a kind of throne room, and out there Arvay felt she could measure arms and cope. Just looking around her gave courage. Out there, Arvay had the courage to visit the graveyard of years and dig up dates and examine them carefully. It was long, long way from the turpentine woods to her sleeping porch.³²⁴

The porch gains importance, for it helps Arvay to cure her wounded narcissism and sense of inferiority. Thanks to her friends’ compliments and envy for

³²⁰ Ibid. p. 703

³²¹ Ibid. p. 646

³²² Ibid. p. 810

³²³ Ibid. p. 811

³²⁴ Ibid. p. 811

the porch that she finds a chance for what she needs: approval, appreciation, and acknowledgement from others. Therefore, at every opportunity when people appreciate what she has done or what she has, Arvay's frightening abyss within her psyche gets smaller and disturbs her less. As a result of this, she becomes less disturbed and enjoys the beauties around her. Moving from her porch to the house Arvay looks around her and has one of the rare, gratifying moments in her life.

As she went, the perfume from the flowers surged around her. The moon was rising, and some mocking-birds in a tangerine tree began to trill sleepily. The whip-poor-whill was still sending out his lonesome call. Arvay paused in the door and looked back on the softly lighted porch. It was to her the most beautiful and perfect scene in all the world. She was as near the complete happiness as she had ever been in her life. The porch told her that she belonged. Slowly she turned away and went on to the bath.³²⁵

A similar time of gratification also happens when Joe Kelsey and his friends give a serenade to Jim and Arvay outside their bedroom window when they get married. As it is stated before, since she has a chance to get away from her old "home" of restraints and troubles, in her new house she takes pleasure in possessing something and being possessed. Therefore, when the music plays outside, she feels things that are unfamiliar to her:

The music outside did something strange and new to Arvay. The strains include pictures before her eyes. They conjured up odors and tastes. Streams of colors played across the sky for her, and she tasted exotic fruits. Looking out into the white moonlight of the night she saw the trees and the woods for the first time inside.³²⁶

However, this heaven like idleness is in sharp contrast to the "Big Swamp" near their house. In contrast to the mulberry tree and the sleeping porch, the swamp causes frightening and disturbing sensations within Arvay's psyche. Frightened of its size and strength, she associates it to a "big old varmint or something to eat you up."³²⁷ In fact, with its hugeness and power which make it hard to overcome, the swamp stands for the dark abyss in her psyche. The damages her mother and her family have done her caused a big "swamp" in her unconsciousness. Her childhood

³²⁵ Ibid. p. 813

³²⁶ Ibid. p. 652

³²⁷ Ibid. p. 671

terrors haunted her life and resulted in her impaired self-esteem. In other words, as Christopher Rieger claims “the swamp represents the morass of Arvay’s psyche and her deep-seated feelings of guilt and shame from the past.”³²⁸ However, the big damage done to her is not because of her lust or for her “poor white trash” Crackers ancestry.³²⁹ She is trapped in her swamp because her mother failed to satisfy and nourish Arvay emotionally and psychologically. Therefore, the “varmints, bears, and pant’ers and wild-cats and gators and rattlesnakes” Arvay imagined to have been in the big swamp are the components of her unconscious symbolizing her low self esteem, sense of inferiority, feeling of abandonment and rejection, self-accusation and loneliness all of which are hard to overcome like these wild monsters.³³⁰ Only when she reaches a resolution with her mother can she become free of these obstacles.

That the girl’s core experience of self is primarily based on her relations to mother and the influence of early identification with the mother on the daughter’s personality have been underlined before. In the light of these facts, we see Arvay incapable of framing a structure of self with adequate defenses. Her inferiority complex, self-accusation, and all the wild monsters in her psyche stem from her “bad” love object. Recalling Fairbairn’s “endopsychic situation,” after the processes of splitting her mother into “good” and “bad” and internalizing her “bad” aspects, Arvay represses her mother’s badness and then she herself becomes bad. To put it differently, Eleanore Armstrong-Perlman refers to Fairbairn’s theory by saying that “[s]ince the child has successfully protected the object, the only way to cope with reality is by attacking the self.”³³¹ Therefore, Arvay, by attacking herself, thinks that she is inferior, useless, and unwanted. Armstrong-Perlman goes on explaining that out of an infantile need, the child searches for “an object to put him together

³²⁸ Christopher Rieger. “The Working-Class Pastoral of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on the Suwanee*” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=87ad2b65-6a8c-4d26-b3e740f97ecc17dd%40sessionmgr11> p.116 (22 November 2007)

³²⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanee* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), pp. 713

³³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 671

³³¹ Eleanore M. Armstrong-Perlman. “The Allure of the Bad Object” in *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. Edited by James Grotstein and Donald Rinsley (New York: Free Association Brooks, 1994.), p.226

again.”³³² In this case, Jim takes the role of putting Arvay together again by becoming a child and thus making Arvay a mother. Arvay, by mothering and “hovering” Jim, gratifies the need she lacks. As Chodorow explains “women get gratification from and fulfill maternal expectations,” so Arvay feels satisfied in the end (re)creating the experience of oneness and union with her own mother by mothering Jim.³³³

Arvay’s impaired sense is a result of a “false self” from not having “good enough mothering.” By referring to Winnicott, Michael St. Clair explains the development of Arvay’s pathetic situation and her false self: “When the mother’s adaptation is not good enough, the cathexis of the external object is not initiated, and the infant remains isolated and lives falsely. A false self reacts compliantly to environmental demands and builds up a false self of relationships.”³³⁴ Therefore, Arvay always feels unreal, futile and unnecessary and develops another substitutive satisfaction in order to compensate for her sense of uselessness. She serves with her hands, thus satisfies her need to be felt necessary and needed. She frequently oscillates between feeling unnecessary and needed. Her children, especially Earl, her first-born mentally-retarded child, satisfy her need to be felt needed. She gives all her time for caring and nurturing Earl. She identifies with Earl more than Angie and Kenny because she regards him as punishment for her lust and inferior Cracker ancestry. Thus, Earl helps Arvay to get gratification by her mothering since she gives all her time, care and affection to him. She feels more needed in the presence of him. However, her other children Angie and Kenny are more independent and separated; thus, she cannot identify with them and regard them as deserving while she resembles Earl to her Uncle Chester. Since she thinks that she has only her hands to offer for her children and husband, when they are gone or when nothing is required from her, she feels unnecessary, useless with her arms and hands empty.³³⁵ Since her need to be acknowledged and confirmed is not met by her mother, she satisfies this need via her servitude. She feels “empty-handed” when there is nobody for her

³³² Ibid. p. 228

³³³ Nancy Chodorow. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. (Berkeley: California U.P., 1978.), p.85

³³⁴ Michael St. Clair. *Object Relations and Self Psychology*. (Pacific Grove: Brooks, 1996.), p.75

³³⁵ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 778

to serve “to wait on and do for.”³³⁶ Thus, she satisfies her need with cooking and preparing delicious food for her family:

With Earl dead, Angeline married off and needing nothing, Kenney up there doing so well and not calling on her for a thing, Jim off from home so much with his boats, there was little for her serving hands to do. She felt like a damned-up creek. Green scums was covering her over. . . . She felt unnecessary. To take up the slack, Arvay decided to make a big potato pone for Jim. . . . The food chopper would have done it easier and in a third of time, but she wanted a feeling of doing. She peeled and grated with great care, fighting against that sluggish and lonesome feeling.³³⁷

Therefore, although her personal submission, servitude, and compliance to the needs of Jim and her family may be regarded as her weakness by many critics, her servitude is rather an attempt to create a “holding environment” for herself. Her submission to the need of others is perpetuated by the series of losses of relationships. She lost her mother, then her father and sister, then Carl and finally her child Earl. Thus in order not to lose Jim and her children, she accepts the role of servitude, for only then can she maintain her relationships. She represses her own need and adapts herself to the need of others, just as the good-enough-mother adapts to the changing needs of her child. Therefore, to possess someone or something or to be possessed and needed by someone means much to Arvay because it is the only way to love and to be loved. “Love to her meant to possess as she was possessed. To be wrapped around and held in an embrace so warm and so tight that the Booger man, the raw-head-and-bloody-bones at lonesomeness, could never come nigh her. An eternal refuge and everlasting welcome of heart to rest on and rely on.”³³⁸

Always preoccupied with his relationship with her mother and not achieving the necessary separation individuation process with her, Arvay is unconsciously in need of her mother’s protection, love and care to “rest on and rely on.” Therefore, “the hidden key to re-open the door of her happiness” is nowhere but back in Sawley, that is in her mother.³³⁹ Ironically, Maria Henson is the source of both Arvay’s destruction and salvation. Her maternal impotence is very vivid from the

³³⁶ Ibid, p. 820

³³⁷ Ibid. p.828

³³⁸ Ibid, p.759

³³⁹ Ibid, p. 842

very beginning of the novel. When Arvay has a hysterical and nervous spasm, Jim helps Arvay to get over the shock. Echoing Arvay's inability to save Jim from the snake, Maria cannot save and protect her daughter from her psychological turmoil. However, a very little glimpse of approval and acknowledgement from her side is enough for Arvay to feel good. When Arvay pays a visit to Sawley with Earl, she enjoys Lorraine's envious looks on her clothes, hairstyle and well-being. Moreover, to see the look of gloating pride on her mother's face "makes her feel much satisfied."³⁴⁰ Yet, she acquires real satisfaction when she gratifies her mother's dying wish. After Jim leaves her expecting the first move from Arvay, she does not know what to do and how to gain back his love. However, when she gets a message from her sister telling that her mother is ill, she perceives it as a sign from God. "He meant for her to go back home. This was his way of showing her what to do."³⁴¹ Seeing her mother's home in a terrible condition with insects and rats everywhere touches deep in her heart. However, she does not feel the same pity for "coarse-looking" Lorraine, her "mule-faced and ugly" daughters and "drab-creature" Carl.³⁴² When she enters her mother's room, she recognizes "the museum-like arrangement of the parlor" with the photos and presents the Meserves sent for her.³⁴³ Maria at her deathbed gives Arvay "a blissful smile" and tells her how she is pleased to see her "baby child."³⁴⁴ Echoing Hurston's mother's and Lucy's deathbed scenes, Maria makes a deathbed wish telling her daughter that she wants a mighty good funeral. Arvay says that she can put her "dying dependence" on her and sees the "great triumph" on Maria's face before she dies.³⁴⁵ Maria also tells how badly Lorraine treated her, and what good and kind children Arvay raised. Thus, Arvay eventually gets what she has longed for all those years. Hearing her mother's approval, acknowledgement and love for her in addition to her rival sister's decline, Arvay gains her confidence and self-esteem. Further, by gratifying her mother's dying wish, she succeeds in what Hurston has failed to do. As Claudia Tate also underlines Hurston's repeated reference to the daughter's desire to fulfill the mother's dying

³⁴⁰ Ibid, p.720

³⁴¹ Ibid, p. 845

³⁴² Ibid. pp. 848-849

³⁴³ Ibid, p. 849

³⁴⁴ Ibid, p.850

³⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.853-854

wish, she states that its repetition “indicates its centrality in her life.”³⁴⁶ Therefore, *Seraph* not only fulfils Zora’s failed promise but also illustrates how a fragmented daughter achieves a cohesive sense of self.

In addition to Maria’s acknowledgement of her need and dependence on her, Arvay acquires her confidence when she learns that Carl really loved her and Lorraine stole him from her. After Carl comes to the hotel demanding money from her, Arvay realizes that it is not only she who feels needy and inferior. “Maybe there were a lot of weak-feeling folks in the world. Weak as she herself was, it was strange to know that people had been depending on her. They must believe that she could hover them.”³⁴⁷ By getting rid of the obstacles that prevent her from forming a true self, “[s]he came away from her mother’s funeral changed inside. . . . They complimented her on being a fine wife and mother and seemed to find nothing wrong with her. Maybe she was not as bad as she had thought she was. It made her feel to hold up her head and to look upon herself.”³⁴⁸ Before she turns back from Sawley, she pays a last visit to her home with some groceries for Lorraine, but finds out that her sister and Carl have taken everything in the house except for the pictures of the Meserves and have left the town. Taking the compliment of her neighbor Miss Hessian saying that she was a good daughter and Maria was looking forward to see her before she dies, she gives the groceries to her and goes to the mulberry tree which has started to blossom with “[f]uzzy little green knots” which will turn out to be “juicy, sweet, purple berries.”³⁴⁹ In contrast to the description of the tree in the beginning, now the tree with its green leaves and blossoming berries is in harmony with the sky symbolizing Arvay’s tranquility and personal equilibrium.

However, there is one more obstacle that Arvay has to get rid of. From where she stands under the tree, Arvay looks toward the gate, and highway. “But between the tree and the world there stood that house.”³⁵⁰ Contrary to the feelings that the tree arose in her, the house which “was an evil, ill-deformed monstropolous

³⁴⁶ Claudia Tate. *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race*. (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1998.), pp.156,159

³⁴⁷ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), p. 867

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 869

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.877

³⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.877

accumulation of time and scum,” reminds her of all her repressed memories.³⁵¹ In order not to let it “hurt and disease her” anymore, she makes up her mind with “great deliberation” and burns the house. Now that it can no more stand “between her sign of light and the seeing world” Arvay watches the house in flames with great satisfaction.³⁵²

The dry old house burned furiously, and as Arvay watched the roaring and ascending flames, she picked herself over inside and recognized why she felt as she did now. She was no longer divided in her mind. The tearing and ripping and useless rending was finished and done. She had made a peace and was in harmony with her life. The physical sign of her disturbance was consuming down in flames, and she was under her tree of life.³⁵³

Offering her new-found sense of self by clearing the swamp in her psyche, Arvay is reborn from the ashes and, like a new-born child, craves for food. She goes directly to Miss Hessie’s house and eats “hungrily for a while.”³⁵⁴ John Lowe reads the fire scene as “a sign of her liberation” and proposes that “Arvay, by setting fire to the house that symbolizes her old self, replicates the action of the angel and thus frees her own limbs, so she may be the seraph herself.”³⁵⁵ Her psychological breakthrough which was foreshadowed by the clearing of the swamp into a futile land is finalized by immolation of the house. Eventually, she clears her own psyche and enjoys her new freedom. As a sign for her salvation and resolution, she decides to give away the land of her old house “for Sawley’s advancement.”³⁵⁶ She wants them to turn the land into a play and pleasure park where children can play. Believing that her mother would be glad for her decision, she also wants them to save the mulberry tree and give it every care. As Miss Hessie declares, her soul is now “blessed” because her “last string has done been loosed.”³⁵⁷

³⁵¹ Ibid, p.877

³⁵² Ibid, p.878

³⁵³ Ibid, p.879

³⁵⁴ Ibid, p.879

³⁵⁵ John Lowe. *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*. (Urbana: Illinois U. P., 1994.), p. 325

³⁵⁶ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 880

³⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 881

Arvey by repairing and working through the trauma of her childhood finally finds the “hidden key” for her salvation. Therefore, as Arvey herself notices, she was meant to go back to Sawley for her reconciliation and resolution. She gains her individual empowerment and self-affirmation by reevaluating her personal, familial and communal experiences. To achieve this, she returns to her mother so as to complete her separation and individuation process. Her revision of the relationship with her troubled love objects results in her self-discovery, which is necessary for her sense of separation and autonomy. In Winnicott’s terms, Arvey through “regression,” finds the opportunity to correct her past inadequate relationships. As Winnicott defines psychopathology as an “environmental deficiency,” and in order to overcome these deficiencies Arvey “regresses” to her first love object for reparation and self-cure. Greenberg and Mitchell, explaining Winnicott’s analysis of the infant’s maturation and development process, say that “regression is a search for missing relational experiences” and “represents a return to the point at which the environment has failed the child.”³⁵⁸ Therefore, Arvey, by creating an atmosphere of transference in which a therapist mirrors what the patient needs and fears, moves from her “false self” to “true self” and develops a whole identity. In so doing, as Hellen Adler states, “an opportunity to renew and finally master previously unresolved struggles around attachment and separation is provided.”³⁵⁹ Moreover, by mothering her own mother since she is helpless and dependent on her now, she not only gratifies Maria’s dying wish but also creates “a holding environment” she wants to have with her.

Now that she has achieved her reconciliation by breaking with her past traumas, Arvey turns back to her home in Citrabelle totally transformed within. When she arrives home, she embraces her life with all its good and bad sides. She does not let her old traumas hurt her anymore: “Now, it was just part of the life that had passed. A storm that she had weathered through.”³⁶⁰ Her metamorphosis is also

³⁵⁸ Jay R. Greenberg, and Stephan A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. (Cambridge: Harvard U.P.,1983.), p. 200

³⁵⁹ Helen Adler. “Ministering to the Dying Mother: Reparative and Psychodynamic Opportunities for the Female Patient.” in *The Mother-Daughter Relationship. Echoes Through Time*. Edited by Gerd. H. Fenchel (London: Jason Aronson, 1998.), p. 331

³⁶⁰ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America,1995.), p. 882

recognized by Jeff and his wife. Accepting the presents Arvey has bought for them they say that they feel proud and glad to work for her.³⁶¹ Thus, Arvey does not only reconcile with her family and community but also with the people with whom she has been at odds before. Yet, there is still one important person to reconcile with. Next morning she comes back from Sawley, she sets out her journey literally to Jim but figuratively to the horizon, to the sun and the ocean “with hope and determination.”³⁶²

On the boat which is named after her *Arvey Henson* she finds the chance to show Jim that she is no more loving cowardly. While crossing the bar, the boat battles with the waves of the Atlantic. A crew named the Mate, out of fear, tries to hold Jim from his leg but Arvey this time achieves what she had missed before. She prevents the man from attacking her husband and proves how she has changed. Thus, Jim at the wheel and Arvey behind him cross the “boiling and tumbling, grumbling and rumbling” waves of the ocean. The crossing scene implies that like the boat *Arvey Henson*, Arvey, Jim and their marriage have also trembled, but in the end, they have traversed the boundaries and enjoyed the splendid scenery of the horizon, the sun and the ocean by forming a mutual understanding. After the roaring waves of the sea, they meet the calm waters of the Atlantic. Enchanted by the harmony of the horizon and the ocean, Arvey realizes that Jim has dared to take the risk in order to show Arvey the sunrise on her first sight of the ocean. After they both appreciated what they have done for each other, they feel very hungry and eat “heartily,” symbolizing their rebirth at sea. Therefore, the waters of the ocean stand for the amniotic bliss of their mother’s womb. Their feelings recall the notion of what Freud calls “the oceanic feeling,” “a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded.”³⁶³ Thus, the association of the sea, or ocean with the mother – which calls to our mind the protagonist of Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier – is very clearly stated at the end of the novel. Jim says to Arvey that the sea is the “[b]iggest thing that God ever made. It’s pretty like you say, and then it can be ugly. It’s good and it’s bad. It’s something of everything on

³⁶¹ Ibid, p. 884

³⁶² Ibid, p. 886

³⁶³ Sigmund Freud. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. New York: Norton and Company, 1989.), p. 11

earth.”³⁶⁴ Thus, Hurston symbolizes the “good” and “bad” aspects of the mother and her ambivalence through the duality of the sea. Moreover, the fact that every infant wants to return to her/his mother or (re)create the symbiosis and union with her in one way or another is also illustrated by Hurston’s depiction of the journey of a drop of water.

Don’t you realize that the sea is the home of water? All water is off on a journey unless it’s in the sea, and it’s homesick, and bound to make its way home some. . . . You can’t kill it. Mix it up in anything, and in anyway that you will or may, sooner or later it separates itself out and heads back home to the sea. Falls on the ground, soaks down, gets to a tiny branch maybe, and that heads into a creek that runs into a river that maybe runs into a bigger river and all that millions-times multiplied drops of water marches like an army back to the sea. . . . Maybe it might get stopped up in a place like that for thousands and thousands of years, but the water never gives up. . . . [I]t will arrive back home again.³⁶⁵

Jim’s lengthy description of the journey of the water could not describe better Arvay’s and Zora Neale Hurston’s psychological journeys. Both daughters, from the very early years of their lives, seek their mothers. They fall both on soft ground and hard ground but eventually they jump at their sun, that is to their mothers. In the closing scene of *Seraph*, Arvay watches the sun rising in the horizon with a relief of completing her journey to the horizon and the sea.

It seemed to her that the big globe of light leaped up from a bed fixed on the eastern horizon and mounted, trailing the red covers of his bed behind him. Arvay pictured that he looked and saw the *Arvay Henson* with her and Jim on board . . . and see if she was carrying out her work. The sunlight rose higher, climbed the rail and came on board. Arvay sat up as best she could without disturbing Jim and switched off the artificial light overhead, and met the look of the sun with confidence. Yes, she was doing what the big light had told her to do. She was serving and meant to serve. She made the sun welcome to come on in, then snuggled down again beside her husband.³⁶⁶

Apparently, Arvay, by welcoming the sun, implies that she has succeeded in her resolution with her mother. She is no more at odds with her. She quits internalizing Maria’s bad aspects and welcomes her with her good sides. Moreover,

³⁶⁴ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 900

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 902-903

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 920

the mother imagery of the sun also demonstrates that Hurston through Arvey, shows us that she did her best and “carried out her work” by doing what the “big light” (her mother) had told her to do. As Claudia Tate claims “*Seraph* thus depicts the daughter’s success in keeping her promise to the dying mother.”³⁶⁷ She goes on explaining that the similar endings of the novels, *Seraph*, *Jonah*, *Their Eyes* and *Dust Track* with a scenery of the sun and horizon “inscribe desire gratified with the mother’s imaginary return, symbolized as the sun.”³⁶⁸ Therefore, as Tate claims Hurston in a way tries to work through the trauma of her mother’s death and her failed promise through Arvey, Lucy and Janie. Moreover, in addition to the reparation and mourning of her mother’s death via *Seraph* and other novels Hurston affirms what Addriene Rich and Nancy Chodorow claim: Motherhood as institution under the domination of patriarchal power cannot gratify female desire, thus results in women’s oppression. However, by changing and traversing the boundaries, as they claim, a kind of revolution is not a far-fetched salvation. Arvey, by burning the house, which is reminiscent of patriarchal rule, seems to achieve this kind of revolution. Hurston, thus, by writing that “[t]he tree, the servant of the sun, was being made out to be nothing by that ill-formed brute [house]” affirms that mother-daughter bond, and motherhood cannot improve efficiently under the constraints and oppressions of their fathers and husbands.³⁶⁹ In other words, Hurston implies that motherhood represented by the tree cannot blossom properly under the shadow of the patriarchy, signified by the “brute” house. Contrary to what Marsh-Lockett thinks, Hurston does not allow “motherhood to be marginalized and to survive only according to the dictates of a capitalist, patriarchal ethic.”³⁷⁰ Conversely, as a critique of “marginalization of motherhood,” Hurston not only gratifies her mother’s dependence on her for voice, but also all mothers’ and daughters’ quest for voice.

³⁶⁷ Claudia Tate. *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race*. Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1998.), p.158.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 160.

³⁶⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Seraph on the Suwanne* In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 878.

³⁷⁰ Carol P. Marsh-Lockett “Whatever Happened to Jochebed? Motherhood as Marginality in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on the Suwanee*” in *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women’s Writing*. Edited by N. Warren and S. Wolff. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. P, 1999.), p.101.

To sum up, Arvay, a psychological survivor of a troubled and long journey, and a woman of “resistance” like her creator, presents major dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship. Through her, we can see how the inefficiency and unresponsiveness of a mother may affect her daughter’s sense of self and result in her low self-esteem, inferiority and self-accusation. Further, we see how a daughter who fails to finish the separation and individuation process necessary for her autonomy and self-empowerment regresses to her mother to repair and work through the earlier injuries done to her ego. Last but not least, we see how the awareness of maternal power and capacity can transform the previous oppression and victimization to glory, fulfillment and liberation. Therefore, if we read her story as a story of reconciliation, recognition and self-awareness then it does not seem to be a story of submission, weakness, cowardice, failure and compliance. As Janet St. Clair quotes from *Mules and Men* “some stories ‘got a hidden meanin’ . . . Everybody can’t understand what they mean’ because most people cannot ‘seek out de inside meanin’ of words.’”³⁷¹ A story with full of hidden meanings *Seraph on the Suwanne* assures this truth.

³⁷¹ Janet St. Clair. “The Courageous Undertow of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on The Suwanee*.” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=73b0a73f-5d68-4da-9007-95c379e94a1f%40sessionmgr11> p 57. (22 November 2007)

3.2- *Their Eyes Were Watching God: A Parable of Voice*

Their Eyes Were Watching God, which has been recognized as Hurston's most important contribution to African American literature and Black literary feminism, is important not only because it tells a story of self-affirmation, endurance and search for voice but also it renews the critical acclaims about its frequently misunderstood and undervalued author. Thanks to her novel, which is rich in imagery and black oral tradition besides its portrayal of feminist accounts, Zora Neale Hurston and her oeuvre have become a focus of interest among literary and feminist critics. With the advent of tendency to "search for their grandmothers," contemporary black women writers have begun to recognize and reevaluate their "foremothers" legacies. Therefore, Hurston has recently come to the fore and begun to receive token recognition and appreciation by this movement. However, it seems that although she has been reclaimed by writers and critics such as Alice Walker, Mary Helen Washington, Robert Hemenway, Barbara Christian and such, general atmosphere of controversy over her works still lurks in some critics' evaluating of her work. As she suffers "intellectual lynching" during the course of her lifetime, her main intentions, attempts and assertions failed to be fully understood and recognized. Even *Their Eyes*, despite its many accomplishments and its self-affirmed protagonist, Janie Crawford, have had to endure unjust and fallacious arguments.

There have been numerous different vantage points towards Janie's development and psychological journey and towards whether she has really gained voice, empowerment or not in the end. Generally she has been cherished, but she has also been accused of for being an anti-feminist and a devoted wife. Her development from adolescence and self-realization under the "blossoming" pear tree to true womanhood and self-actualization by paying visits to the "store porch" in Eatonville and the "muck" in Everglades constitute the common point of arguments. The general priority is given to her three marriages and especially to the last one through which Janie has found her "bee" man, Tea Cake. However, in this chapter what is attempted to do is to examine Janie's development from a different angle. Rather than her marital relationships, her relationships with Nanny, her grandmother, and

with Pheoby, Janie's sole audience and listener are going to be scrutinized. Next, how her motherless and orphan status affected and determined her sense of self will form the main argument of the last part of this thesis.

Hurston, does not abandon her characteristic themes in *Their Eyes*. Her assertion in female empowerment, feminine authority and emphasis on women's breaking the rules of convention have always been essential to her, yet it is maybe in her widely-recognized novel *Their Eyes* that we see her mainly involved with making her heroine an emergent woman who frees herself of sexual and psychological constraints and oppressions. Although as Mary Helen Washington states she has been regarded as a "sentimentalist" and "deprived of the companionship of" other black writers, by writing a novel of powerful affirmation of black womanhood, she has succeeded in dominating the black literary canon.³⁷² Rather than being a "sentimental" novel, *Their Eyes* can also be read as "an emblem of Hurston's withdrawal from political concerns in favor of personal relationship."³⁷³ However, Janie's resistance and safe-guarding is also in a way a form of protest and rebellion. As Carla Kaplan argues "Janie's various refusals of public voice, self-revelation, and fighting back do constitute an important, if historically idiosyncratic, form of political protest."³⁷⁴ Hence, Hurston's way of critiquing is quite unique. She prefers celebrating her culture rather than portray it under the oppression of a domineering culture. Stating how impressed she is by Hurston's artistry, Alice Walker cherishes *Their Eyes* and writes that "[t]here is enough self-love in that one body –love of community, culture, traditions– to restore a world. Or create a new one."³⁷⁵ She also suggests that instead of thinking Houston as a political writer, we should regard her as an artist, and then it will make us understand better the richness and complexity of her works.³⁷⁶ In this vein, if we

³⁷² Mary Helen Washington. "The Darkened Eye Restored": Notes Toward a Literary History of Black Women." in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates. (New York: Penguin Books. 1990.), p.32

³⁷³ Missy Dehn Kubitschek. "Tuh de Horizon and Back': The Female Quest in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*." In *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Edited by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House, 1987.), p.19

³⁷⁴ Carla Kaplan. *The Erotics of Talk: Women's Writing and Feminist Paradigms*. (New York: Oxford U P.,1996.), p. 113

³⁷⁵ Alice Walker. "On Refusing to Be Humbled by Second Place" in *Modern Critical Views: Zora Neale Hurston*. Edited by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House,1987.), p. 104

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.104

look at Janie's journey as a product of artistry and celebration of black culture and dialect, we can better understand her story telling, immersion in the black community, self-affirmation and resistance to compliance.

Moreover, analyzing *Their Eyes* in the context of black female literary tradition instead of black protest fiction will broaden our appreciation of Janie's, thus Hurston's intentions. Lorraine Bethel states that black feminist literary criticism aims to raise consciousness for black women who are oppressed because of their skins and female bodies. Thus, manifestation of bonding among black people especially among black women provides a base for an establishment of positive definitions of black identity and black womanhood. Bethel explains that

Black women have a long tradition of bonding together in a community that has been a source of survival, information, and psychic and emotional support. We have a distinct Black-woman-identified folk culture based on our experiences in this society: symbols, language, and modes of expression that specifically reflect the realities of our lives as Black females in a dominant white/male culture.³⁷⁷

Therefore, by making Janie narrate her story to her friend Pheoby, Hurston establishes an example of black female bonding and black-woman-identified culture. In fact, the nine-year-old Zora's conversation with her mother at a deathbed and Lucy Pearson's sermon to her daughter in *Dust Tracks*, that is mother-daughter bonding, are nothing but an emblem of black woman identification. By passing on their stories, experiences, deeds, feelings, do's and don'ts to each other they show that female relationships, whether in the form of mother/daughter, sister or friend, are essential for women's self-definition, consciousness and empowerment. To put it in Mary Helen Washington's words "[w]omen talk to other women in this tradition, and their friendship with other women – mothers, sisters, grandmothers, friends, lovers – are vital to their growth and well-being."³⁷⁸

Having this in mind, if we look at the opening and final scenes of the novel we see that Janie and Pheoby have an intimate conversation at the back porch as an

³⁷⁷ Lorraine Bethel. "This Infinity of Conscious Pain" in *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Edited by Harold Bloom.(New York: Chelsea House,1987).p. 12

³⁷⁸ Mary Helen Washington. "The Darkened Eye Restored": Notes Toward a Literary History of Black Women." in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates. (New York: Penguin Books. 1990.), p.35

indicator of female bonding. The novel starts with Janie's return to Eatonville from "burying the dead."³⁷⁹ The townspeople or as Janie calls them "Mouth-Almighty," sit in judgment and envy and want to hear eagerly what Janie's story is: Why she is not wearing a black dress, why her hair is swinging down like a young woman, what has happened to her young lover Tea Cake and the money her second husband, Joe Starks left for her are all what they want to learn. However, because as Janie states "[a]n envious heart makes a treacherous ear," she does not let them hear her story.³⁸⁰ She looks for someone who will listen to her wholeheartedly and who will understand what she tells. Luckily, unlike Arvay, who has no one to tell what is hidden inside her, Janie finds an "ideal listener to her tale."³⁸¹ Pheoby, with a bowl of mulatto rice in her hand, visits Janie and they start their conversation, which frames the narration of the novel. There are different approaches to this narrative and the issue of gaining voice: whereas some critics, pointing that the novel is not narrated in the first person, have argued that Janie fails to find a voice in the end, others have claimed Janie finds her voice although she does not narrate herself. Robert Stepto, who is dissatisfied with the narrative structure and its third-person narrator, thinks that "Janie has not really won her voice and self after all."³⁸² On the other hand, critics such as Kubitschek, Racine, Reich, Meisenhelder, Clarke, Awkward, Lowe all claim Janie in the end emerges as a woman who gains her voice and liberation. Kubitschek proposes that Janie "discovers her own soul only through the art of story telling."³⁸³ Similarly, Meisenhelder suggests that "Janie does find her voice – the woman whose words kill Joe Starks and inspire Pheoby, who speaks so directly in the opening and closing frames."³⁸⁴ Alice Reich also regards *Their Eyes* as a female myth and asserts that "Janie finds her self and her voice by working

³⁷⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 175

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 179

³⁸¹ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999.), p.82

³⁸² Robert Stepto. "Ascent, Immersion, Narration" in *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Edited by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House, 1987).p.7

³⁸³ Missy Dehn Kubitschek. "Tuh de Horizon and Back': The Female Quest in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*." In *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Edited by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House, 1987.), p.19

³⁸⁴ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999.), p.82

through and finally transcending the limiting images of woman as servant, as wife, as romantic lover. She finds herself through relationship with others and she finds her voice, finally, through Pheoby's hungry listening."³⁸⁵

As Meisenhelder and Reich both agree, Janie's achievement of finding voice is apparent in telling her story to Pheoby. Both Janie and Pheoby are eager to share intimacies, thus, they affirm each other by narrating and listening and gain voice in the end.

They sat there in the fresh young darkness close together. Pheoby eager to feel and do through Janie, but hating to show her zest for fear it might be thought mere curiosity. Janie full of that oldest human longing – self revelation. Pheoby held her tongue for a long time, but she couldn't help moving her feet. So Janie spoke.³⁸⁶

Thus, Janie by saying "mah tongue is in mah friend's mouf" and Pheoby with her "hungry listening" become "kissin" friends.³⁸⁷ Janie refuses to tell her story to Mouth-Almighty because she wants someone whom she can depend on for voice and thought. Echoing Lucy Pearson and Hurston's mother's dependence on their daughters for voice, Janie wants Pheoby to "see the fur." When Pheoby tells her that it is hard for her to understand what she means, Janie tells her "'taint no use in me telling you somethin' unless Ah give you de understandin' to go 'long wid it. Unless you see de fur, a mink skin ain't no different from a coon hide."³⁸⁸ Then she starts to tell her life story.

To make Pheoby fully understand her intentions, Janie starts her story with her childhood memories, not with her marriage to Tea Cake. Therefore, we understand that she is not as some critics have claimed an infatuated lover who devoted herself to her husband. Contrary to what they think, her marriage with Tea Cake is only one of the branches of her life. As Hurston writes "Janie saw her life

³⁸⁵ Alice Reich. "Pheoby's Hungry Listening." *Women's Studies*. Vol. 13, (1986) <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=2&hid=9&sid=c5765c75-04000-4e99-b56a-78e4d50f93d%40sessionmgr13> p.163 (22 November 2007)

³⁸⁶ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 180

³⁸⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 179,180,182

³⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 180

like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Dawn and doom was in the branches.”³⁸⁹

We learn that Janie is brought up by her grandmother, Nanny. She meets neither her father nor her mother. We also learn that her childhood passes among white folks since her grandmother works for them. Janie thinks that she is white until she recognizes herself in a photo when she is six years old. Her “former blindness” and lack of true sense of self are also confirmed by her nickname “Alphabet.” However, she becomes self-conscious “under a blossoming pear tree in the backyard” of her Nanny’s house.³⁹⁰ Spending most of her time under the tree, Janie seeks self-affirmation, voice, vision and identity. Watching the “dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom” she searches for a similar harmony.³⁹¹

She had glossy leaves and bursting buds and she wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to elude her. Where were the singing bees for her? Nothing on the place nor in her grandma’s house answered her. She searched as much of the world as she could from the top of the front steps and then went on down to the front gate and leaned over to gaze up and down the road. Looking, waiting, breathing short with impatience. Waiting for the world to be made.³⁹²

As Janie regards the union of “bee” and “bloom” as marriage, it is generally thought that she finally finds the harmony and mutual understanding through Tea Cake. However, Carla Kaplan comments that the pear tree metaphor does not stand for marriage, husband or sex, rather it symbolizes “the experience of conversation the act of story telling and self-narration.”³⁹³ She suggests that Janie fulfills her quest for satisfaction, which she looked for under the pear tree by telling her story to Pheoby; thus, Kaplan writes, “in this sense Pheoby, whose ‘hungry listening helps Janie to tell her story,’ is the ‘bee’ to Janie’s ‘blossom.’”³⁹⁴ Kaplan’s hypothesis may sound reasonable as Janie’s voice finds an audience only through Pheoby. However, I would propose further that this metaphor stands for something

³⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 181

³⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 182

³⁹¹ Ibid, p. 183

³⁹² Ibid, p. 183-184

³⁹³ Carla Kaplan. *The Erotics of Talk: Women's Writing and Feminist Paradigms*. (New York: Oxford U.P., 1996.), p. 101

³⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 101

more fundamental and that Janie, in fact, is in pursuit of the unique symbiosis between mother and daughter in her act of story telling.

Janie experiences abandonment as a child. Nanny, an ex-slave woman who had to bear the double burden of being black and female, tells her granddaughter that although she wanted to “make de sun shine on both sides of the street for Leafy”, Janie’s mother, she hated the way Janie was born.³⁹⁵ Leafy, raped by her school teacher at the age of seventeen, abandons her daughter after giving birth and becomes a wanderer. Nobody knows where she is. Her father, whose name is not remembered, runs away the night he rapes Leafy. As her name suggests, Leafy goes from place to place like a leaf drifting in a storm. Yvonne Johnson, underlining Hurston’s use and knowledge of myths, also says that in many Roman and Greek myths, sexually assaulted women are named after by a plant or an animal.³⁹⁶ Therefore, Janie, never experiencing the Oedipus triangle, more importantly the unique pre-oedipal attachment to a mother becomes an “emotional orphan.” The importance of pre-oedipal attachment to a mother has always been underscored by psychoanalysts. Freud, recognizing the significance of this bonding albeit late, states that the girl’s attachment to a mother is different from that of a boy in form and length, and possibly there are numerous women who “remain arrested in their original attachment to their mother.”³⁹⁷ Therefore, Janie unconsciously looks for a maternal figure or the primal union. The “tree” and “bee” union, thus, stands for the primal oneness, which Janie wants to have.

Marianne Hirsch, in her book *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, analyzes the orphan status of a heroine. What the motherlessness, maternal absence or silence mean to a daughter and how these conditions affect the psychological development of a female protagonist make up her main argument. Underscoring the necessity for the separation/individuation process, and pointing to the Demeter myth, she quotes

³⁹⁵ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 190

³⁹⁶ Yvonne Johnson. *The Voices of African American Women: The Use of Narrative and Authorial Voice in The Works of Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neale Hurston, and Alice Walker*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999., pp.58-59

³⁹⁷ Sigmund Freud. “Female Sexuality.” In *Freud on Women: A Reader*. Edited by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001.), p. 323

from Luce Irigaray: “The bond between mother and daughter, daughter and mother, must be broken so that the daughter can become a woman.”³⁹⁸ Only then can maturity and autonomy be achieved. Similarly, for Freud, the hostile break from the mother and turn to father as a love object result in the resolution of the Oedipus complex for girls to gain heterosexual, identity and individual maturation. Hirsch, by using the notion of “family romance,” treat mother-daughter relationship in the nineteenth and twentieth century plots, and argue that patterns of family romances can vary and be “based on the heroines’ refusal of conventional heterosexual romance and marriage plots, and furthermore, on their disidentification from conventional constructions of femininity.”³⁹⁹ She claims that the heroine desires disidentification from the fate of other women and especially from their mothers. Moreover, this desire, she says, can be reinforced by the heroine’s artistic ambitions or desire for distinction. In this sense, we can say that Janie, with her storytelling artistry and her disidentification from her grandmother and her mother appears as an alternative heroine of a family romance. Resisting the conventional constructions of femininity, she wants to tell her own story and follow her own way. Therefore, Janie, as Hirsch writes, “is an orphan, attempting to cut herself off from a constraining past, to invent a new story, her own story, and eager to avoid the typically devastating fate of her mother.”⁴⁰⁰

Throughout the novel Janie and Nanny’s contradictory world views are easy to observe. Nanny, despite her good intentions to protect her grandchild, cannot understand Janie’s vision. Upon seeing Janie accepting Johnny Taylor’s kiss under the pear tree, she rushes to get her married to Logan Killics, who has enough land and mules to provide for Janie’s protection and maintenance. Her oft-quoted exclamation “[d]e nigger woman is de mule uh de world” is an expression of the limited choices before a black woman. As such, if she marries Logan, Nanny thinks, Janie can avoid the oppression that her mother and she herself have

³⁹⁸ Marianne Hirsch. *The Mother/ Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. (Bloomington: Indiana U.P.,1989.), p. 43.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.46.

experienced.⁴⁰¹ Having experienced slavery first hand, she wants Janie to have empathy: “Ah wanted you to look upon yo’self. Ah don’t want yo’ feathers always crumpled by folks throwin’ up things in yo’s face. . . . Have some sympathy fuh me. Put me down, easy, Janie, Ah’m a cracked plate.”⁴⁰² Although Nanny had also “wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sitting on high” and invent her own story, she says that “they wasn’t no pulpit for [her].”⁴⁰³ As Patricia Hill Collins states in her analysis of black mothers and daughters, so as to secure Janie’s survival Nanny, like all assertive mothers, wants her “to fit into systems of oppression” though this may mean “the high cost of [her] emotional destruction.”⁴⁰⁴ Rather than encourage Janie to be self-reliant and assertive, as Lucy Pearson does, Nanny fails to understand the significance of psychological and emotional fulfillment. Although Janie knows that “[t]he vision of Logan Killics was desecrating the pear tree”, she marries him and understands that “marriage did not make love.”⁴⁰⁵

Janie, always aware of her “inside” and “outside,” goes through many “silent rebellions.”⁴⁰⁶ She is in conflict not only with her grandmother but also with her two husbands, Logan Killics and Joe Starks. However, albeit the contradictions between her internal and external worlds, as a self-assured and self-confident woman, Janie knows “how not to mix” her inside and outside.⁴⁰⁷ Although she suffers “under the weight of lonesomeness,” she waits for “a bloom time,” “green time” and “orange time.”⁴⁰⁸ Always in search of horizon, Janie affirms what Hirsch proposes. She wants to break with the constraints of the past and set out for new possibilities to live as she wants. By following her own wishes and desires, she has started all over with Tea Cake and given up her grandmother’s way:

⁴⁰¹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 186

⁴⁰² *Ibid*, p. 190

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 187

⁴⁰⁴ Patricia Hill Collins. “The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships.” In *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. Edited By Patricia Bell Scott. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.), p. 53

⁴⁰⁵ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), pp. 185, 194

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 218

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 233, 218

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 246, 194

Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means tuh live mine. . . . She was borned in slavery when folks, dat is black folks, did't sit down any time dey felt lak it. So sittin' on porches lak de white madam looked uh mighty fine thing huh her. Dat's what she wanted for me. . . . So Ah got up on de high stool lak she told me, but Pheoby. Ah done nearly languished tuh death up there. Ah welt like de world wuz cryin'extry and Ah ain't read de common news yet.⁴⁰⁹

Therefore, blaming Nanny for taking the "horizon" from her, she realizes that she has hated her all those years. "She hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love. Most humans didn't love one another nohow, and this mis-love was so strong that even common blood couldn't overcome it all the time."⁴¹⁰ Determined to live on her own way, Janie is ready for her great journey to the horizon to "utilize" [herself] all over."⁴¹¹ Therefore, her grandmother's death does not deeply affect her heart although Nanny is the only family member she had. She tells Pheoby that "mourning oughtn't tuh last no longer'n grief."⁴¹² That's why, she does not wear black after Joe's death. Moreover, she burns all her head rags and lets down her hair as a sign of her sexual and emotional liberation.

Janie achieves her autonomy and empowerment not only by loosening her ties to her grandmother and her two dominant husbands. To affirm her own sense of self, there is also one tie that she must break with, that is, with her mother. For a woman to be mature and individuated, the resolution of the separation/individuation process is a must. Although it is demanding and sometimes impossible for girls to resolve their preoccupation with their mothers, to maintain their own sense of self, not only daughters but also mothers must be differentiated and individuated. As Nancy Chodorow points to the differences between boys' and girls' different processes of separation, she explains that since girls are mothered by women, they see themselves as an extension of their mothers, thus are more concerned with relational issues than boys.⁴¹³ Similarly, by treating their sons and daughters differently, Chodorow argues, mothers also experience their daughters as more like

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 267

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, p.247

⁴¹¹ Ibid, p.266

⁴¹² Ibid, p.250.

⁴¹³ Nancy Chodorow. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. (Berkeley: California U.P., 1978.), p. 97,103

and continuous with themselves, which causes the issues of merging and separation to become ambivalent.⁴¹⁴

The inevitability and the necessity of separation can be illustrated via the emblematic relationship between Demeter and Persephone in archetypal Greek myth. The abduction of the daughter, Persephone, and the male intervention, Hades' rape, initiate the breach. Demeter, the devoted mother, grieves over losing her daughter and searches for her everywhere. Resolution comes when Demeter and Persephone reunite cyclically at definite times of the year. Therefore, the myth elaborates both the necessity of separation and reunion of the mother and the daughter. While remaining connected, both lead their own lives as individuated women. In this sense, although unlike Persephone and Arvay, who are abducted from their mothers, Janie also experiences the breach and abandonment. In her story, it is not the daughter but the mother who is abducted and sexually assaulted. Leafy, by male intervention and abduction, abandons her mother and daughter leaving her motherless. Nevertheless, Janie's motherlessness does not prevent her from developing an integrated, unified self. Contrary to Arvay, who has achieved her separation and individuation process very late, Janie's conscious life as a self-aware, individuated woman starts at the age of sixteen under the pear tree.

As Marianne Hirsch explains, motherlessness and orphan status of a heroine can lead to female powerlessness and prevent her from developing her identity or passage into true womanhood. On the other hand, it can also provide the heroine "the freedom necessary to circumscribe her own developmental course."⁴¹⁵ Janie, who "[has] been to the horizon and back" fits in the latter representation.⁴¹⁶ In order to avoid her mother and her grandmother's fate, she pursues her passions and desires and controls her own destiny. In so doing, "she breaks out Nanny's hierarchy, refusing to be the mule" according to Meisenhelder.⁴¹⁷ Moreover, by marrying a man almost half her age, Janie claims her disidentification from the

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, p. 166

⁴¹⁵ Marianne Hirsch. *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. (Bloomington: Indiana U.P.,1989.), p. 44

⁴¹⁶ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 332

⁴¹⁷ Susan Edwards Meisenhelder. *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick. Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*. (Tuscaloosa: Alabama U.P.,1999.), p.68

conventional constructions of womanhood. She also avoids being laughed, pitied and taken for fool like Annie Tyler, who is a widow and who is cheated by a young lover. In a world where sexual and racial oppression restrict women from gratifying their desires, Janie resists conventional rules and defines her own fate. Although she has no strong, resistant female models from whose exhortations and experiences she can learn, she fends for herself and achieves her independent identity. As an act of rebellion against her grandmother and mother, she wants to be a person in her own right.

What Janie actually resists is her maternal deprivation and sense of abandonment. According to Jung, one of the consequences of mother-complex in girls is “resistance to mother.” He writes that this outcome “is the supreme example of the negative mother-complex. The motto of this type is: Anything, so long as it is not like Mother!”⁴¹⁸ Jung explains the characteristics of this situation as follows:

This kind of daughter knows what she does *not* want, but, is usually completely at sea as to what she would choose as her own fate. All her instincts are concentrated on the mother in the negative form of resistance and are therefore of no use to her in building her own life. Should she get as far as marrying, either the marriage will be used for the sole purpose of escaping from her mother, or else a diabolical fate will present her with a husband who shares all the essential traits of her mother’s character.⁴¹⁹

Janie, therefore unconsciously develops such a complex by resisting her mother and her grandmother as a surrogate mother. Thus, always driven by her desire to live her own fate, she sees marriage as an escape from her grandmother’s conventions, and unconsciously from maternal deprivation. For deep in her psyche, Janie is angry with her mother for she has abandoned and rejected her.

Though she feels the “cosmic loneliness” Hurston herself feels, when she asks “lonesomeness some questions” lying in her bed after Joe’s funeral, she gives the answer herself even at the high cost of remaining lonely.⁴²⁰ Although she has a chance to go and look for her wandering mother, she prefers getting ready for her

⁴¹⁸ C. G. Jung. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. (New York: Princeton U. P., 1968.), p. 90

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 91

⁴²⁰ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 246

own journey to the horizon: “She asked if she wanted to leave and go back where she had come from and try to find her mother. Maybe tend her grandmother’s grave. Sort of look over the old stamping ground generally. Digging around inside of herself like that she found that she had no interest in that seldom-seen mother at all.”⁴²¹ Determined to live as she pleases, she breaks the chains with her past ties and looks for new opportunities.

Moreover, her remaining childless though she has three marriages can also be the indicator of her “resistance to mother.” As Jung goes on explaining, he states that resistance to mother can also be manifested via uterus. For Jung, menstrual disturbances, excessive vomiting during pregnancy, abhorrence of pregnancy and rejection of maternity are representatives of resistance to mother as a consequence of mother complex.⁴²² Nowhere in the novel does Janie indicate that she wants to have a child. What’s more, Jung says that intellectual development or superior knowledge can be consequences of daughter’s purposeful interest in breaking her mother’s power over her.⁴²³ In this sense, we can propose that Janie’s artistry in storytelling and her mastery of speech despite Joe’s discouragement and embargo is unconsciously due to her maternal betrayal. Further, it can be suggested that “storytelling” is Janie’s “substitutive satisfaction” as a compensation for her maternal deprivation. Just as Arvay’s missionary work, Janie by her being a “born orator” and skill in story telling tries to substitute the lack of bonding with her own mother. Having never experienced such an intimate conversation in which she can satisfy her need to be acknowledged, she tries to heal this infantile wound by creating a “call-and-response” tradition in which she can share voices, perspectives, intimacies and inspirations.⁴²⁴

In a broader sense, to recreate or compensate the loss of a primal relationship and attachment, Janie seeks a perfect union and symbiosis she is deprived of through marriage. Nanny fails to provide such an intimate and mutual atmosphere for Janie.

⁴²¹ Ibid, p.247

⁴²² C. G. Jung. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. (New York: Princeton U. P., 1968.), p. 91

⁴²³ Ibid, p. 91

⁴²⁴ For further readings about call-and response tradition in *Their Eyes* see John F. Callahan “Mah Tongue Is In Mah Friend’s Mouff: The Rhetoric of Intimacy and Immensity in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*” In *Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Edited by Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House. 1986.), pp. 87-97

Her mother rejects her, and thus, leaves her unprotected and vulnerable. Therefore, Janie, looking for “a bee for her bloom,” asks herself: “Did marriage end the cosmic loneliness of the unmated? Did marriage compel love like the sun the day?”⁴²⁵ Regarding marriage as a “psychological relationship” and “a highly complex structure,” Jung says that the choice of husband or wife is unconsciously influenced by the strength of the bond to parents.⁴²⁶ The motives deriving from parental or maternal influence are also explored by Hirsch. Using the notion “the-man-who-would-understand,” in Adrienne Rich’s term of fantasy, Hirsch says that heroines in “family romances” try to compensate for the loss of mothers by replacing men, who combine maternal nurturance with paternal power.⁴²⁷ Tea Cake is; therefore, both “a bee to a blossom” and “a-man-who-would-understand.” Grateful for the chance Tea Cake has provided “for loving service,” Janie satisfies what she needs. She eventually finds a mate who will end her loneliness and who will create the primal union she needs.

Tea Cake represents both maternal and fraternal capacities. They experience joyful moments most of the time. They go fishing at night and Janie feels like “a child breaking rules.”⁴²⁸ Although she is expected to mourn after her second husband Joe’s death, Janie goes on a picnic with Tea Cake in pink linen.⁴²⁹ Moreover, his musical ability is a source of their spending enjoyable time. Tea Cake can play the guitar and the piano, which relaxes Janie. He creates a “holding environment” for Janie in which she compensates her maternal repression. Between Janie and Tea Cake there is reversal of roles. Tea Cake, rather than a husband or a lover, acts as a soother, a nurturer, and a career for Janie. In one of the scenes in the novel, we see Tea Cake taking the role as a mother and Janie as a little child: “Tea Cake went to the piano without so much as asking and began playing blues and singing, and throwing grins over his shoulder. The sounds lulled Janie to soft slumber and she woke up with Tea Cake combing her hair and scratching the dandruff from her scalp. It made her more

⁴²⁵ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), pp. 200,191

⁴²⁶ C. G. Jung. *Aspects of the Feminine*. (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1986.), pp. 41,43

⁴²⁷ Marianne Hirsch. *The Mother/ Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. (Bloomington: Indiana U.P.,1989.), pp. 57-58

⁴²⁸ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 257

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 264

comfortable and drowsy.”⁴³⁰ On the other hand, there are also times when Janie and Tea Cake destroy this idyllic scene. Upon his jealousy of Mrs. Turner’s brother, Tea Cake whips Janie to show who the boss is.⁴³¹ Therefore, Tea Cake creates an atmosphere of a family for Janie by acting both as a nurturing mother and an authoritative father figure.

His tragic death after the hurricane also stands for Janie’s disidentification and self-reliance. Bitten by a rabid dog, Tea Cake attacks Janie, which, in turn, forces Janie to shoot him to death. Echoing Lucy Pearson’s sermon to her daughter Isie, Janie, out of her self-love, shows that she does not love anybody better than herself even at the cost of her husband’s death. In doing so, she avoids Lucy’s fatal mistake. As John Lowe states, “Janie’s story resurrects Lucy, now free, to go forward and preach the great sermon that her social role in the earlier novel denies her.”⁴³² Therefore, Janie, by telling her story to Pheoby, repeats Hurston’s recurrent use of female transmission. Although this time the sermon is not between a mother and a daughter, Janie, acting as a community mother to her friend, wants Pheoby to understand the value of self-love, self-empowerment and autonomy.

In her analysis of black motherhood and black feminist thought, Patricia Hill Collins states that black feminist thought originates in Black women’s communities. Through serious and intimate conversations, they affirm one another; thus the issue of Black women’s listening to one another is vital for consciousness-raising process according to Collins. She writes that

[t]he specific contributions Black women make in nurturing Black community development from the basis of community-based power. Community othermothers work on behalf of the Black community by trying, in the words of late nineteenth century Black feminists, to “uplift the race,” so that vulnerable members of community would be able to attain the self-reliance and independence so desperately needed for Black community development under oppressive conditions.⁴³³

⁴³⁰ Ibid, p. 258

⁴³¹ Ibid, p. 294

⁴³² John Lowe. *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*. (Urbana: Illinois U. P., 1994.), p. 156

⁴³³ Patricia Hill Collins. “The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships.” In *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. Edited By Patricia Bell Scott. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.), p. 51

Hence, Janie, deliberately telling her story to Pheoby, attempts to “uplift” her sisters by encouraging them not to cancel their passions and desires. Her voice and story have to be heard by a “hungry listener” so as to enrich her women folks. Janie’s personal growth is, thus, extended for communal growth. Pheoby, after listening Janie’s story, also wants to utilize herself: “Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus’ listenin’ tuh you, Janie. Ah ain’t satisfied wid mahself no mo’. Ah means tuh make Sam take me fishin’ wid him after this. Nobody better not criticize yuh in mah hearing’.”⁴³⁴ Thus, the seeds Janie brings with her after Tea Cake’s death are figuratively planted to enrich her community. As Lucy Potts constitutes a source for voice and liberation for Hurston, Janie becomes a model of liberation and autonomy within the community of women. Nellie Mc Kay also writes “[e]xchanging outsidersness for individuality within the community, Janie becomes a feminist heroine with an assured place within that community, and her life becomes an influential source through which other women will find a model for their own self-empowerment.”⁴³⁵ Similarly, Susan Willis argues that “Janie has learned that although women must be with men and for men, they must also be with women and for men.”⁴³⁶ Stating that Janie and Pheoby’s back porch conversation is an affirmation of Janie’s voice, Willis also says that “Pheoby captures the spirit and hope for some new community based on sisterhood.”⁴³⁷

In addition to her role as a bridge and a mediator between Janie and “Mouth-Almighty,” Pheoby has another important mission. She recreates the dyadic mother-daughter symbiosis for Janie. Chodorow explains that due to their high sense of relational capacities, women try to reexperience and recreate the sense of dual unity they had with their mothers. Although they become heterosexual, they look for emotional gratification and love. Referring to women’s tendency to have closer personal ties, she writes: “One way that women fulfill these needs is through

⁴³⁴ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 332

⁴³⁵ Nellie Mc Kay. “Crayon Enlargements of Life: Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as Autobiography.” In *New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Edited. by Michael Awkward. (Cambridge:Cambridge U. P., 1990.), p.68

⁴³⁶ Susan Willis. “Wandering: Hurston’s Search For Self and Method.” In *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates and K. A. Appiah. (New York: Amistad Press, 1993.) p.127

⁴³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 127

the creation and maintenance of important personal relations with other women. . . . These relationships are one way of resolving and recreating the mother-daughter bond and are expression of women's general relational capacities and definition of self in relationship."⁴³⁸ In this sense, Janie, who suffers maternal betrayal, gratifies her latent wish for reunion with her mother through Pheoby. Not only does Pheoby feel satisfied at the end of their conversation, but also Janie feels gratified. After Pheoby leaves, she goes to her bedroom, and combs her hair thinking: "Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much at life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see."⁴³⁹

To put it briefly, Janie, an emblem of powerful self-affirmation, self-love and self-assertion, frees herself from the constraints of past sexual, and psychological oppression and becomes a role model for her women folks. Rejecting her vulnerability, she succeeds in turning her motherlessness into advantage and enjoys being at peace within herself. Knowing that her story gains voice only through telling it to Pheoby, she speaks for the horizon, voice and self-fulfillment. In so doing, not only does she activate female bonding within her community but also presents a "blossoming" existence from which her mother and grandmother have restrained themselves.

⁴³⁸ Nancy Chodorw. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. (Berkeley: California U.P. 1978.), p. 200

⁴³⁹ Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In *Zora Neale Hurston: Novels and Stories*. (New York: The Library of America, 1995.), p. 333

CONCLUSION

Zora Neale Hurston, an emblem of self-actualization and self-reliance, by deliberately focusing on interpersonal issues rather than racial ones, has left an imprint on the black literary and feminist tradition. In her literary career, she explored her characters' quest for self, voice and personal fulfillment instead of focusing on their conflicts, oppression and segregation in a dominant racist society. While doing so, whether consciously or not she used autobiographical accounts and revealed her innermost feelings and desires via her characters. In this sense, underscoring the most important events in her life and their effects on her oeuvre is essential. What has been tried to do in this thesis is therefore to analyze Hurston's some selected works in the light of psychoanalytic and feminist criticism by referring to Hurston's childhood experiences and her unresolved relationship with her mother Lucy Ann Hurston.

That her mother's death left a stamp of misery on Hurston which was never lost and overcome is a naked fact. How she suffered from this irrefutable fact and how she became a "wanderer" after her mother's death are vividly expressed in her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*. To make things worse, the agony she felt because of her failure in keeping her promise affected her more than any other facts. As a result, psychoanalytic reading reveals much about Hurston's life and her selected novels so as not to miss her legacies and intentions. Her maternal loyalty which is the most determinant influence both on her life and her fiction requires critical assessment. In this sense, her novels *Seraph on the Suwanee*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and *Jonah's Gourd Vine* present us different variations of mother-daughter symbiosis. Thanks to these novels, which are chosen as case studies of this thesis, we can find out different types of mother-daughter dyad with different types of mothers and daughters and with different resolutions. Furthermore, that our adult and interpersonal relationships are all based on the primal attachment to our first love objects that is to our mothers is once more underlined via the heroines of these novels. In the light of her unresolved experience with her mother, Hurston, through her "motherless" heroines, restates the fact that if one cannot resolve the tie to her/his mother, s/he is bound to yearn for a reunion

with her/his mother in one way or another. Therefore, a psychoanalytic examination of these novels and Hurston's tie to her mother results in an undeniable fact that Hurston herself attempts to restore her bond with her mother and longs for a reunion with her.

Always having her mother in mind and internalizing her encouragements as basic tenets of her life, Hurston puts up a struggle of survival and resistance. By associating herself with the horizon and the sun, and trying to what her mother has expected from her to do, she epitomizes the unique bond between a mother and a daughter. Having lost her mother at a crucial point of her development when she was nine years old, Hurston is driven by the symbiotic yearning for her mother. Her sense of guilt for her failure in fulfilling her mother's deathbed wishes gives her a lifetime agony. Believing that her mother depended on her for voice, Hurston, so as not to fail her mother again, deals with all the difficulties and never gives up following her own dreams. Her tragic separation from her mother and her longing for a union therefore pervade her work. Even though she does not explicitly write about mothers and daughters, the theme of unique bonding between them with all vicissitudes and variations dominate the undertow of her major works. The works chosen as case studies of this dissertation are thus the ones in which we can see Hurston's internalization of her mother's voice and her innermost feelings, conflicts, yearnings and critical junctures in her life in relation to the loss of her mother.

Jonah's Gourd Vine is one of these novels in which we can find some essential characteristics of mother daughter symbiosis. Internalizing her own parents as models and using autobiographical account, she wrote *Jonah*, in which she made a critique of false models of black masculinity deriving from the imitation of white values. John's irresponsible, devastating, and infantile sexuality causes not only his wife's but also his death. Actually, what Hurston criticizes in this novel is women's self-cancellation and self-sacrificing. Emotionally and physically devastated due to her overabundant love and excessive devotion to John, Lucy eventually realizes her selflessness and mistake and preaches a sermon to her daughter Isie at deathbed so that she will not suffer victimization and oppression when she grows up. Echoing Hurston's own experience with her mother, Lucy Pearson encourages and inspires her daughter for self-love and self-reliance. As many critics have noted, it is in fact

Lucy rather than John who is Hurston's real focus in this novel. By giving voice to Lucy and her sermon to Isie, Hurston addresses to a broader audience. As her own mother exhorted her when she was a child, Hurston via Lucy speaks to her women folks and tells the priceless value of self-love and self-fulfillment. She wants them to "jump at de sun" and not to love anybody better than themselves.

By portraying clashing types of mother daughter relationship in *Jonah*, Hurston also points to the variations and ambivalences of this unique bond. On one hand, she presents Emmeline Potts, Lucy's mother and their hostile relationship as an epitome of Oedipal struggle; on the other hand, she illustrates Lucy as a mother and her bond with her daughter Isie. Echoing Nanny in *Their Eyes*, Emmeline Potts stands for the mothers who lack mutual understanding and who fail to meet their daughters' changing needs. Lucy, as an adolescent daughter, resists her mother's wishes and wants to choose her own way. She claims her autonomy and achieves her separation from her mother, thus becomes an individuated woman. When she becomes a mother, she does not repeat her mother's mistake and helps her daughter in her development by giving her a salutary lesson. Through her sermon, we can see that how a mother plays a crucial role in her daughter's core identity and personality development.

The irreplaceable role of a mother in the psychological and physical development and survival of the infant is an undeniable fact. Despite numerous definitions, from mythology to psychoanalytic and feminist discourses mothers play a leading role. In Jungian terms, mother is [t]he bearer of the soul image."⁴⁴⁰ Jung, by saying "mother is the first world of the child and the last of the world of the adult. We are all wrapped as her children," underscores how the mother archetype determines and affects our lives. On the other hand, mother in Freudian account is a love object from which the infant has to have a hostile break to gain heterosexual identity and maturity. Although Freud acknowledges the importance of pre-oedipal mother, he places the father as a source of strong ego and superego development. Mother, for Freud – as she lacks penis – creates in boys and girls a sense of

⁴⁴⁰ C. G. Jung. *Aspects of the Feminine*. (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1986.), p. 86.

compassion for women's inferior status compared to men. A boy because of "castration" fear turns to father and represses his incestuous wishes for his first love object. Already "castrated" girl blames her mother for her lack and wants to have a penis. Out of her "penis envy" she wants to have a child, preferably a boy to compensate the absence of a penis. That's why, according to Freud women are more masochistic, jealous, and narcissistically wounded than men.

Freud's insistence on the presence and absence of the phallus and instinctual drives rather than environment in the development of personality caused his successors to develop new theories. Object-relations theorists, who give priority to interpersonal relations and parents' role in the development of personality, by expanding Freud's theories and models, have started a new stream within psychoanalytic tradition. Melanie Klein, W.R.D. Fairbairn, D.W. Winnicott, pivotal object relations theorists, focused on the mother's role and the importance of early relationship with mother. Klein, by postulating the terms "good breast," and "bad breast," pointed to the infant's aggression, anxieties and frustrations with regards to the infants' fantasies of the mother's inside. In so doing, she underlined how the bond between mother and infant includes the dual feelings of love and hate, frustration and gratification, dependence and independence.

The ambivalent feelings of the infant towards the mother are also explained by Fairbairn and Winnicott. For Fairbairn, the basic need of the child is relations with the (m)other. He says that when there are some disturbances and failures in this relationship, after splitting the mother into "good" and "bad" aspects and internalizing the "bad" mother, the child her/himself becomes bad. Thinking that it is not the mother but s/he is bad, s/he develops bad feelings about the self because of inner, repressed bad objects. Therefore, according to Fairbairn, the more the gratifying and responsive the mother is, the less impaired and damaged the child.

Similar to Fairbairn, Winnicott, by proposing "holding environment" and "good enough mother," suggests that when the mother is good enough and able to answer the child's needs, this helps and improves the child developing a true sense of self. However, he says when there are deficiencies in the child's environment owing to the failure of the mother, the child suffers from sense of fragmentation and cannot feel genuine in her/his relationships. Therefore, in the light of these

assumptions, the quality of the relationship between mother and child becomes vitally important, for maternal deprivation, impotence, and inadequacy cause destructive consequences on the child's psyche.

In this respect, by applying basic tenets of Freudian and object-relations theories with regards to mother-infant bonding, I have tried to analyze Hurston's two heroines' psychological and spiritual journeys in this thesis. Arvay in *Seraph on the Suwanee* and Janie in *Their Eyes* like their creator Hurston, have ups and downs because of their relation to their mothers. The unique experience of mother-daughter relationship, a mother's effects on the daughter's psychological and emotional development, different vicissitudes of this unique experience have been scrutinized via Arvay and Janie. How the inadequacy, emotional and physical absence of the mother have affected these "emotional orphans" preoccupied the main argument of this work. Although the experiences and pitfalls they have gone through are different from each other, they share a common fact: both are driven by the loss of a relationship and both seek to recreate the union with their mothers in one way or another. Their unconscious yearnings for their "absent" mothers result in their developing "substitutive satisfactions" and mechanism of defenses. What makes them the focus of this work is also due to the fact that they present us different types of daughterhood with different defense mechanisms and resolutions.

Arvay is a kind of daughter who suffers from maternal deprivation, insufficiency and emotional abandonment; therefore, she cannot develop a true sense of self and goes through series of failed relationships. She always thinks that she is worthless, inferior, and does not deserve to be loved. Her sense of inferiority derives from sibling rivalry because of her parents' general preference for her sister, Lorraine. Nevertheless, the main reason for her failed self is that her mother fails to provide a "holding environment" for Arvay to develop a unified sense of self. Because of her mother's impotence to nourish and adapt to Arvay's need for acceptance, love and acknowledgment, Arvay thinks that she is useless and inferior. Narcissistically wounded, Arvay tries to compensate her sense of belonging and worth by retreating to religion and becoming a missionary. Therefore, religion as a kind of "substitutive satisfaction" stands for a mother substitute with whom she can (re)create wholeness and reunion. In addition to religion, she seeks a "holding

environment” for herself through someone to “take refuge” in. Disappointed and devastated by Carl Middleton’s marriage to her sister, she turns inward and leads a life inside her. Always outsider-within position in her family and white Cracker community, she desperately needs someone to help her resolve her conflicts. Her husband, Jim Meserve seems to provide a holding environment for her in the beginning since he says that he is there to protect her, but we see later that he himself needs protection and hovering as he is also driven by unconscious yearning for a mother. He is attracted and bound to Arvay because she reminds him of his mother; thus, he puts Arvay in place of his mother. Therefore, Jim and Arvay confirm the fact that when a child cannot resolve the loss of a relationship with her/his mother, s/he tries to recreate the symbiosis with her through a lover, husband, and wife when s/he grows up. To put it differently, mother becomes mixed with lover and couples represent a missing self object for each other. In this sense, Jim satisfies the need for his mother by reversing his role as a husband to a child and regarding Arvay as his mother rather than a wife. Similarly, Arvay satisfies her need to be accepted, acknowledged and loved by “serving” and “hovering” Jim and her children. In so doing, not only does she create a holding environment for them but also for herself. Her mothering and nurturing capacities are a means to heal the wound caused by her mother. Her hands are meant to serve because only then can she feel useful and needed and create a “good enough” environment for her.

However, for her to develop a true sense of self and to create a real “holding environment” she has to go back to her mother. The cyclical characteristic of a mother-daughter relationship is thus revealed when Arvay returns back to Sawley to her mother. Healing and resolution come when she finally hears what she needs: Her mother tells her how good daughter and mother she is. Thus Maria Henson, satisfies Arvay’s need of affirmation and love albeit late. Moreover, Arvay fulfills her mother’s death wish and understands that the ones who caused her sufferings all depended on her one way or another. Realizing her capacities and power, she turns back to Jim changed inside. She gives up her old, impaired self and meets her husband reformed and transformed. Their reunion at sea stands for their yearning for restoring the primal oneness with their mothers. Jim by taking the role of a child, Arvay by hovering Jim satisfy their latent need and form “holding environment” for

themselves in the end. Therefore, through Arvey we can see that when the mother provided necessary and essential environment which is vital to the development of the child, the child grows and functions freely. However, when these relations are missing, inadequate or inconsistent, “the incipient self is ensnared and imprisoned, wrapped in its protective cocoon, hidden from the world of others experienced as unsafe for authentic and spontaneous living. Only if the appropriate facilitating environment is provided can the true self be reached and allowed to continue its growth.”⁴⁴¹

On the other hand, Janie, the self-assured and self-reliant heroine of *Their Eyes*, presents us a different portrait of mother-daughter relationship and different type of daughterhood. Abandoned by her mother, she experiences both physical and emotional absence of the mother. However, she is not burdened by this fact. Rather, her orphan status provides her a sense of freedom and safe-guarding. It is true that she is brought up by her grandmother, Nanny, but Nanny and Janie’s conflicting visions and expectations result in Janie’s hatred for her grandmother and rejection of her as a mother substitute. Having no role models to identify with, Janie has nobody but herself to deal with emotional and physical oppressions. Thus, her motherlessness, quite contrary to typical and expected results, does not make her vulnerable or victimized. She emerges as a woman who is self-aware, vigorous, and self-empowered. Out of her self-love and her insistence on her own dreams and wishes, she resists the conventional norms of community and constructions of femininity. She wants to avoid living the similar fate of her mother, grandmother and other oppressed women. She breaks away her ties with the past and looks for the horizon.

However, although she does not have any interest in searching for her wandering mother, she unconsciously longs for restoring a symbiotic relationship with her through a lover with whom she can experience the harmony between the pear tree and the bee. Her marriage to Tea Cake, through which she creates a “holding environment” for herself, satisfies her need for mutual bonding. Echoing

⁴⁴¹ Jay R. Greenberg, and Stephan A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983,).p. 201

Jim and Arvay, Janie and Tea Cake become “self-objects” for each other. The symbiotic longing for the lost mother leads Arvay, Jim and Janie to a lifelong search to find her through a lover, husband, and a wife. Jim and Arvay create such a symbiosis with each other; Janie also creates a similar harmony through Tea Cake. She cannot be happy with her two former husbands because they fail, as Nanny does, to establish such a mutual holding environment for her. Thanks to Tea Cake, her latent desire is gratified.

In addition to Tea Cake, Pheoby also creates such an environment of symbiosis and bonding for Janie. The final stage of Janie’s resolution after finding a mother mixed lover comes when she creates a different kind of female bonding with Pheoby. By telling her life story to “hungry listening” Pheoby, Janie acts as a mother by encouraging and inspiring her. Taking the role of “community mother” which is essential to black women’s social activism, she wants her sisters (or daughters) to “jump at de sun.” By having an intimate conversation with Pheoby, she not only “uplifts” her women folk but also creates a different kind of female bonding though it is not between a mother and a daughter. She restores her bond with her mother by creating an atmosphere of friendship and sisterhood with Pheoby and other women in general. To conclude Janie’s story, we can refer to Adrienne Rich, who clearly explains Janie’s maternal deprivation and repression. Rich writes “[p]erhaps all sexual or intimate physical contact bring us back to the first body. But the ‘motherless’ woman may also reach by denying her own vulnerability, denying she has felt any loss or absence of mothering. She may spend her life proving her strength in the ‘mothering’ of others.”⁴⁴² This is what Janie does to compensate her loss of a relation to a first love object.

To conclude, this thesis has explored mother-daughter symbiosis and its importance for the development of daughter’s personality, sense of self and feminine sexuality. As the experience of motherhood is problematic since it involves joy, love, devotion, uniqueness on one hand and pain, struggle, sacrifice, selflessness on the other, the experience of daughterhood has similar ambivalent and

⁴⁴² Adrienne Rich. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995.), p. 243.

contradictory feelings. Daughters, oscillating between love and hate, symbiosis and rivalry, identification and individuation, dependence and autonomy can neither be with nor without their mothers. On one hand, they need their mothers' love and nurturance in order to develop a unified self; on the other hand, they also need to claim their autonomy and differentiation by separating from them. Thus, via Hurston, Arvay, and Janie, the complexities and ambivalences of this unique bond are scrutinized in the light of Freudian account, object-relations theories, and feminist literary criticism. In so doing, I have had a look at mother daughter dyad from the perspectives of a daughter with her conflicts and dilemmas. Therefore, what is missing in this analysis is mother's voice. In further studies, Arvay's role as a mother and her relationship to her three children, her daughter in particular, can be examined. Moreover, Maria Henson's shadow existence and the role of patriarchy and mothering on her fading into background can be a case study for the examination of motherhood and mothers' experiences. What's more, the role of the father in the construction of femininity and what the absence and presence of the father mean to a daughter can also be analyzed through Hurston's own relation to her father. Further, Arvay's indifferent paternal figure, Janie's nameless father may also be analyzed by referring to the "symbolic order" or "the name-of-the-father" in Lacanian account. All in all, as an old saying says "[y]our son is your son till he gets him a wife, your daughter is your daughter for the rest of your life."⁴⁴³ Thus, Hurston, Arvay, Janie as "prisoners of childhood" reenact the vicissitudes of mother daughter symbiosis and continue to be daughters of their mothers.⁴⁴⁴ I hope, by reclaiming their voice, a new sense of insight into the meaning of motherhood and daughterhood has been commenced.

⁴⁴³ Elizabeth Fox-Geneovese. "Mothers and Daughters: The Tie That Binds" *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women's Writing*. Edited by Nagueyalti Warren and Sally Wolff. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999.), p. xv.

⁴⁴⁴ Maria V. Bergman. "The Effect of Role Reversal on Delayed Marriage and Maternity" in *The Mother-Daughter Relationship. Echoes Through Time*. Edited by Gerd H. Fenchel, (London: Jason Aronson, 1998.), p. 192.

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