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**WOMEN AHEAD OF THEIR TIME; “THE AWAKENING” BY KATE CHOPIN
AND “THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD” BY ZORA NEALE HURSTON**

Vehbi Onur DEMİRCİLER

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN AHEAD OF THEIR TIME; “THE AWAKENING” BY KATE CHOPIN AND “THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD” BY ZORA NEALE HURSTON

Vehbi Onur DEMİRCİLER

Süleyman Demirel University Department of English Language and Literature

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The present thesis compares and analyzes two American female authors, Kate Chopin living and creating at the end of the 19th century, and Zora Neale Hurston living in the 20th century. Though the writers lived and wrote in different periods and societies, their novels *The Awakening* (1899), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), show more similarities than differences as regards the position and place of women. The thesis focuses on the lives of the authors and their reflection in both novels. The characters' lives show big similarities with those of the authors. In addition, the position of women in the societies they lived in is being critically evaluated. The protagonists of the two novels manage to cope with lots of conflicts and hardships in order to gain their female identity. As a result of their struggle, they are able to make independent and free choices in society rather than submitting to oppressive rules and structure of a male dominant society and accepting to be the inferior gender. Although they lead cultural and social lives different from each other, they manage to realize themselves in the course of time. The authors succeed in going beyond their own age through dealing with the issues in their novels that nobody could even dare to talk about during the periods they lived. This study reveals the unique development and enlightenment process of the characters that were created by authors employing a feminist approach as well as revealing the impact of society on them.

Keywords: Kate Chopin, Zora Neale Hurston, *The Awakening*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Feminism, Harlem Renaissance, Victorian Era, Patriarchy, Rebellion

ÖZET

ZAMANIN ÖTESİNDEKİ KADINLAR; KATE CHOPIN; UYANIŞ VE ZORA NEALE HURSTON; TANRIYA BAKIYORLARDI

Vehbi Onur DEMİRCİLER

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Bu tez iki Amerikalı yazarı, 19. yüzyılın sonlarında yaşayan ve o dönemde eser veren Kate Chopin ile 20. yüzyılda yaşayan Zora Neale Hurston'ı karşılaştırmakta ve analiz etmektedir. Yazarların farklı dönemlerde ve toplumlarda yaşamış ve yazmış olmalarına rağmen, romanları *Uyanış* (1899) ve *Tanrıya Bakıyorlardı* (1937) kadının konumu ve yeri bakımından farklılıklardan daha fazla benzerlikler göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, yazarların yaşamları ve yaşamlarının her iki roman üzerindeki yansımaları üzerinde durmaktadır. Karakterlerin yaşamları, yazarlarınkiler ile büyük benzerlikler göstermektedir. Bu konuların yanı sıra yaşadıkları toplumdaki kadının yeri de eleştirel bir yaklaşımla değerlendirilmektedir. İki romanın kahramanları, kadın kimliklerini kazanmak için pek çok çatışma ve zorlukla başa çıkmayı başarmışlardır. Mücadelerinin sonucu olarak da erkek egemen bir toplumun kurallarına ve yapısına boyun eğmek ve ikincil cinsiyet olmayı kabullenmek yerine, toplumda kendi özgür ve bağımsız kararlarını verebilmektedirler. Birbirlerinden farklı kültürel ve sosyal yaşamlar sürmelerine rağmen, zaman içinde kendilerini gerçekleştirmeyi başarırlar. Yazarlar, yaşadıkları dönemde kimsenin konuşmaya bile cesaret edemediği konuları romanlarında işleyerek kendi zamanlarının ötesine geçmeyi başarmışlardır. Bu çalışma, yazarlar tarafından feminist bir yaklaşım kullanılarak yaratılan karakterlerin benzersiz gelişim ve aydınlanma sürecinin yanı sıra toplumun kendileri üzerindeki etkisini de ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kate Chopin, Zora Neale Hurston, Uyanış, Tanrıya Bakıyorlardı, Feminizm, Harlem Rönesansı, Victoria Devri, Ataerki, Başkaldırı

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CHAPTER I

1.1. Introduction

During their life time both Kate Chopin and Zora Neale Hurston were not as famous as during the years after their death. Kate Chopin passed away in 1904 and for sixty years she was not mentioned, referred and remembered in literary world again. However, with the publication of *“The Complete Works of Kate Chopin”* by Per Seyersted, Chopin came into the circulation of literature once more in 1969. Similar to Chopin, Zora Neale Hurston and her novels became popular and achieved value and acceptance in literary world in 1970s long after her death.

In both novels, writers emphasize the gender ideology in their cultures and the differences between their past and present. Especially it is evident in the novels that writers reflect some sections from their lives and they question the place and level of woman in society in accordance with their own life experiences. Protagonists of the novels, Edna Pontellier and Janie Crawford, struggle against the traditional Southern myth society order which was dominant over female gender. This ideology was substantially shaped by the sexual differences and the sexual characteristics, imposed on male and female. Chopin and Hurston tried to struggle against this prevailing power via their characters in the novels.

Although gender differences are among the most accepted reasons giving rise to man’s dominance over woman, the famous French writer and feminist Simone de Beauvoir suggests that *“one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”*¹ in her book *“Second Sex”* and she asserts the feminine is not a characteristic which is shaped at the moment of birth, but it is shaped through social and cultural interactions between genders, and experiences of female individuals.

From time to time women in real life can have rebellious acts like the protagonists of the novels and an important reason for this is that they can have

¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Vintage Classics, New York, 1997, p. 295.

characteristics and identities different from the expectations of society with the effects of changing technology, society and essential needs. Therefore, women expected and demanded the society change the views on the historical and traditional sexual relations in which woman was held in strict borders determined by male power. This act of rebellion was both fictional in the novels and realistic in reality, because by doing so, a woman was supposed to be questioned with modern gender identities and this would mean a more independent female in society.

The process of changing the concept of woman in society and literature was not easy because the society was constructed by a male-centred world, according to which female and female's writing was inferior to the men's. All the norms were established in accordance with the needs and fulfilments of male and everything in society was observed, designed and maintained from the point of view of only males. But the social, technological, and industrial changes affected woman deeply and they were deeply in need of changing their lives according to these changes.

First of all, the women went through a shift from domestic life to public arena with their more powerful self-identities. They had to experience some difficulties during this process because of the public's ideas about traditional life and place of woman in the past and the woman of their time, on the base of patriarchal norms. Female writers make frequent use of this conflict in society which was stuck between past and present. In both of the novels, the writers reflect this sudden conflict and transition of woman in society, its effects and conclusions via their rebellious acts and struggles of female characters.

Both Kate Chopin and Zora Neale Hurston took part in the Southern Renaissance by discussing and criticizing gender relations and exposing the spiritual awakening of the women in their novels. In this sense, both *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Awakening* are among the finest examples of female bildungsroman² in terms of woman's creating a self-identity which possess a lot more different characteristics than the novels of their predecessors.

² This is a very popular form of storytelling whereby the author bases the plot on the overall growth of the central character throughout the timeline of the story. As the story progresses, the subject undergoes noticeable mental, physical, social, emotional, moral, and often spiritual advancement and strengthening before the readers' eyes. It has often been seen that the protagonist begins with views, aims and dreams that are in contrast to the other character's in the story and then fights his or her way through to achieve them. <http://literary-devices.com/content/bildungsroman> (05.04.2013)

Out of a sustained dialogue between the fictions of the past and the demands of the present, they eventually develop their own visions. The constructions of the self is presented as a dialogic process in which memory, recollection, reflection, and reconceptualization play crucial roles. In this context, as works dealing with self-construction, these texts are examined as fictions of female development.³

In the process of the development of women within the society, the period and the conditions and requirements of the period are important to understand the evolution of women related to the historical background. Particularly with the industrialization period, women gained much value and confidence as an individual and labour force.

The Southern Renaissance is an intellectual blossoming and awakening that emerged in the southern regions of America during the first half of 20th century. Until southern states' joining to the American Union, the region consisted of agrarian community which was fully isolated from the world. Following the civil war, this area was heavily affected by the industrial and technological revolution when compared to the other regions, because this was a sudden and unexpected impact of the urban society on this rural region. The war accelerated the process of this industrialization in that when a large number of white men left their homelands for war, both blacks and women were urgently demanded in order to respond to the need of labour force of the society.

In pre-industrial societies, the dominance of patriarchy was far more sensible when compared to the industrialized societies of post-war period. In the antebellum period, namely before industrialization, father or husband figures were the only bread-winners and representatives of economic power in the house and the patriarchal family lost its significance during industrialization and capitalism.

New sectors were founded with fresh economic and working opportunities and these sectors demanded more workers regardless of gender discrimination. And this demand, to a large extent, was satisfied by female power owing to their lower salaries when compared to those of men, and so, the female shared the economic power with men although they were not as powerful as they.

Of course all these incidents happened much more painfully than we can imagine today, because in Southern regions slavery was still a dominant factor which

³ Dilek Direnç, *Sheltered Eyes Awakened; Rereading Chopin, Glasgow, and Hurston Rewriting the Renaissance South*, Ege University Press, Bornova- İzmir, 2006, p. 8.

prevented the liberation of both male and female slaves and did not allow any progress in women's lives, and racism was still in progress:

Within the system of patriarchal values, man was the all-powerful source of authority in the family; then the family was the source of social order and stability; and the planter class consisted of white slaveholding men was the source of authority for the whole Southern society. If any member within this strictly hierarchical structure went against the authority of the master, the threat was directed against the entire social order.⁴

Accordingly, it can be argued that the struggle of women for having equal rights in the society with men was not only for equal gender relations but also for racial issues.

Developments in fields of communication and transportation gave opportunity to Southern Society to reach the new world out of their isolated area and create their own world of ideas. With the Southern Society's penetration to the middle working class during industrialization process, the construction of society and gender roles as well as the economic life of society changed by means of the new opportunities given to them.

Southern women were conditioned to be dependant on traditional roles given to them and the image of woman was identified with the characteristics of piety, purity, prayers, domestic chores and submissiveness. For antebellum Southern women, white woman was a special breed which was situated beyond her appointed border. All of these concepts changed after the war with the new ideas and concepts of the urban society, and as the characteristics of modern women penetrated into Southern Society, woman's traditional roles of being mother, wife and devoted servant to domesticity changed into a career demanding a woman with education.

Women became more aware of the new world concepts through the educational opportunities provided and they campaigned for new equal laws and for better and more respectful working conditions than before. Hence it would not be wrong to name this period as the awakening of women and their transition from traditional and domestic life to public arena just as Edna Pontellier and Janie Crawford experienced through their individual struggles.

Both of the novels, *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, focus on the gradual awakening and the development of characters from their adolescence to

⁴ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 40.

maturity, providing fine depictions both physically and mentally; therefore both of these novels can be examined as bildungsroman.

Chopin's and Hurston's bildungsromans are different from the classical genre on account of protagonists' realizing themselves; while in classical bildungsroman the male protagonist realizes himself through self discovery, development and enlightenment in his inner world and then in society, the protagonists of both novels - Edna Pontellier and Janie Mae Crawford- realize themselves firstly in their inner essence and then try to adapt their new enlightened individual into the society and traditions:

In this approach, self is not a fixed essence to be discovered, but a product of constant interaction between the individual mind and its social, cultural, and historical setting.

Female bildungsroman of the modern period usually portrays an inward journey, which often culminates in a tragic awakening to the unresolvable conflict between women's needs and aspirations and the societal limitations imposed upon them.⁵

Edna Pontellier and Janie Crawford struggle hard mentally and physically to reflect their enlightened inner worlds to their public and social lives. In these struggles they come across many limitations of patriarchal society. As a consequence of their endeavour and striving, they take their place in the society with their explored new selves and they feel alienation and loneliness. At the end of these struggles Edna chooses death and Janie shoots her beloved husband. Although these endings may seem as dramatic actions, they are actually their victories of their suppressed identities over the society thanks to their making decision without anyone's consent.

In this thesis, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Awakening* are examined in a comparative way according to the period they were written, the experience of their authors and its reflection on the novels, the place of women in their societies and their rebellious acts in fulfilling themselves and the protagonists' interactions with society during their process of awakening. All these will be given in a feminist background and by taking Edna's and Janie's social and individual endeavours into consideration and by setting up an analogy between women's gradual evolution in historical background and protagonists' awakening process.

⁵ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 34.

In chapter two, feminism as an approach and the condition of women will be presented and discussed in detail. In addition to these, the evolution of feminism throughout centuries, its effects on different societies and Harlem Renaissance will be analyzed.

Chapter three will focus on the autobiographical features of the authors in order to understand the novels better and to make some fruitful connections between the author and her protagonist. Women's place in society during the Victorian Age and Harlem Renaissance are particularly given to emphasize the social background and its realization in the novels. Edna Pontellier and Janie Crawford's places and roles in their society are also handled as a source of fictional background and for analyzing the deeds of characters better.

The process of Edna Pontellier and Janie Crawford's rebelling and finding their own independent voice in society are accounted separately in Chapter Four. In this chapter, their interactions with society and their husbands are especially scrutinized to indicate the qualifications of bildungsroman.

In general, both of the authors were overlooked during their life time especially after publishing their masterpieces since their ideas and thoughts were ahead of their time. Their societies were not used to a woman's independence whether it was fictional or not, so both of the women writers and their works of art were excluded from society of the period. But nevertheless, their gift of prescience is reinforced by its constituting the base of feminism even today.

1.2. The Subject of the Study

The novels "*The Awakening*" written by Kate Chopin in 19th century and "*Their Eyes were Watching God*" written by Zora Neale Hurston in 20th Century tell us about the clashes of female protagonists with the society and the era they belong to. The main reason for the conflict is the gradual exposure of the suppressed female liberties and a never-ending search for a female identity. In terms of these clashes and spiritual awakenings, the bonds between the authors and their characters are explored and emphasized; and most of all, how they obtained their independence as a result of this

clash and what the result was; Edna's (*The Awakening*) facing a tragic suicide after this process and Janie's (*Their Eyes were Watching God*) becoming free and happy but alone constitute a general framework as well. Besides, a racial approach towards the white and black societies to which characters belong and their reaction to women's struggle in terms of gender and race are also dwelt on.

1.3. The Purpose and the Significance of The Study

The main purpose of the study was to observe the social change and spiritual development of the female characters and their predicaments during their self-realization process. How traces from the authors' own lives are reflected onto the characters within this process and lives of the women of the period are revealed and discussed. To what extent and how the woman is valued or oppressed in the societies they lived in; settling the woman's place in social pyramid of black and white societies, and comparison of these female characters with other women that possess the standard of judgement of the very same society are among the issues dealt with in this paper.

1.4. The Method of the Study

Impact of the societies of the periods during which these works were written on female characters, and their social lives are studied and handled in detail. What kind of a life the women lead in patriarchal societies and how they are influenced by the responsibilities, duties and roles that they are loaded are looked into in a social framework. The issues addressed in the two books were viewed using a feminist approach. Besides, Harlem Renaissance is emphasized through its impact on the society. Text-based approach was also employed.

1.5. The Limitations

Although much effort was made to cover the critical articles on the books in question, and to see the differences and similarities in the lives of different women in different periods, our paper is not without limitations and shortcomings. The limitation of this thesis can be the fact that the psychoanalytic approach, naturalism, and humanist

analysis are not used enough to explore the psychology of the characters and authors substantially.

CHAPTER II

2.1. Feminism in General

It is difficult to define feminism in terms of definite core concepts because feminism consists of a group of ideas and actions. The women's inferior position in society and discrimination against women due to their sex only constitutes the base of feminism. Feminists' main aim is to change and reduce this discrimination between genders in the social, economic, political and cultural order.

The term *feminist* was used for the first time in 1871 in France in field of medicine to show feminization of male sexual organs. In the political and social field, this term was used by a French writer and anti-feminist, Alexandre Dumas, in *I'homme-femme*, which is about adultery. When the theme of adultery is taken into consideration with feminism, it is not surprising that the term feminism is seen as a challenging force against men by some even in 21st century.

Although feminism as a term has many meanings in accordance with the conditions and needs of women in different societies and ages, it is based on the doctrine of equality of genders which came forward as a reaction against the women's secondary place when compared to men. It was used as a term for the first time by Alexander Dumas in order to indicate a movement of women's rights that emerged in 1872. This ideology, which is also called as a politic movement, is an act of retrieving women from their secondary position. The question of Mary Astel; "*If all Men are born Free, why are all Women born Slaves?*"⁶ lies behind the notion of feminist movement. Similarly, according to Andree Michel, this movement is a kind of teaching which foresees the enlargement of rights and roles of women within the society.

At the point of origin of this teaching, we see the abolishment of secondary position of woman, sex discrimination and social oppression in patriarchal societies. Although this teaching became a political movement in the midst of 19th century, its roots go far back to the creation of humankind and formation of social order, and it aims to remove the problematique of discrimination. Among the most obvious examples of

⁶ Patricia Springborg, *Astell: Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Freie Universität Bozen, Bolzano, 1996, p. 18.

the discrimination are the inferior place of women, their being considered equal to slaves and their not being considered as a legal entity during their life times in ancient Greek societies. Man is superior to woman in terms of creation and according to Greek poet Hesiod, each man has legislative power on his children and wife. In compliance with this view, Plato states that both man and woman who have a golden heart should be trained on the point of being philosopher- king, but he sticks to the age's ideology of patriarchal dominance by adding that women have a natural weakness because of their creation. But nevertheless, Plato is accepted as one of the first feminists since he foresees the recognition of woman in social life. It can be understood that a similar situation exists in Rome too and women can not own and enjoy their independence as a man does, and what is more, according to Marcus Cato women are not equal to men, but when women have got the chance to be equal, they will be superior to men. In Rome during the reign of 1st Justinianos (482-565), women commence several rebellious acts to have better rights and social status, and a reform is made in social order and they obtain new rights by means of this feminist based movement.

Although the mid of 19th century seems to be the starting point of women's rights movements, in fact it had started long before these dates. In these periods feminism emerged as a political and social movement which was conceptualized and the idea of feminism came into being long before its terminalisation. In 1848, the women's rights movement started to emerge with the Seneca Falls Convention. Following this convention, National Woman Suffrage Association was founded in New York, in 1869. Several types of associations similar to these were founded in Britain in the following years to reduce the inequalities and injustices in women's social and economic life. Besides these organisations, some French writers such as Olympe de Gauges and Theroigne de Mericourt fought individually in order to gain the rights which were promised to women by French Revolution.

With feminism becoming a popular movement around the world, the opposing forces which deny this movement are crucial. Even after feminism became a literary term, many feminists still denied themselves as feminists in 1960s and 1970s, because there were still many questions and debates over the aims and objects of feminism. Among these debates, the definition and essentials of feminism are stated by Delmar (1986:13). According to him:

There are those who claim that feminism does have a complex of ideas about women, specific to or emanating from feminists. This means that it should be possible to separate out feminism and feminists from the multiplicity of those who concerned with women's issues. It is by no means absurd to suggest that you don't have to be a feminist to support women's rights to equal treatment, and that not all those supportive of women's demands are feminists. In this light feminism can claim its own history, its own practises, its own ideas, but feminists can make no claim to an exclusive interest in or copyright over problems affecting women. Feminism can thus be established as a field (and this even if scepticism is still needed in the face of claims or demands for a unified feminism), but cannot claim women as its domain.⁷

In the historical classification of feminism, it is seen that the terms of feminism were shaped according to a series of waves. The first wave of feminism took place in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and aimed to obtain equal rights for women and rights of suffrage. Second feminism wave is the revival of the first wave which went on between 1960s and 1970s. Second Wave feminism focused mostly on sexuality, economic freedom, family matters and unequal political rights. Although feminism is seen to have been shaped by two waves, second wave is a continuum of the first wave's thoughts and actions.

Increasing quality of education in Europe and America and the effects of the Second World War on societies made the second flow more effective than expected. As men left their homes to fight at the war, women took charge of the social duties of men and they could have a chance to take part in several positions in society life. Men managed to recapture their former power in social life during post war period and patriarchal life started again, but this time the rights demanded by women were more than the former flow and they tried hard to realize their own ideals because they were more educated and they had become aware of their power and essence during the war period without man dominance over them.

In pre-industrial societies, the dominance of patriarchy was far more sensible when compared to industrialized societies after war. In the antebellum period, namely before industrialization, father or husband figures were the only bread-winners and representatives of economic power in the house. The patriarchal family lost its significance during industrialization and capitalism. New sectors were founded with fresh economic and working opportunities and these sectors demanded more workers

⁷ Jane Freedman, *Feminism*, Open University Press, Buckingham/Philadelphia, 2001, p.3.

regardless of gender discrimination. And this demand was satisfied largely by female power because of their lower salaries when compared to those of men, and so the female were able to share the economic power with men although they were not as powerful as men.

Of course this was more difficult than expected, because in Southern regions slavery was still a dominant factor which prevented the liberation and encouragement of both male and female slaves and racism was still on progress:

Within the system of patriarchal values, man was the all-powerful source of authority in the family; then the family was the source of social order and stability; and the planter class consisted of white slaveholding men was the source of authority for the whole Southern society. If any member within this strictly hierarchical structure went against the authority of the master, the threat was directed against the entire social order.⁸

Accordingly, it can be argued that the struggle of women for having equal rights in the society with men was not only for equal gender relations but also for racial issues.

Although the concept of equality existed between genders in society, women did not have any solid equality in political and economic fields, and in addition to house holding, they had to work for half-fare in occupational life too. What is more, traditional mentality which defended that woman should play second fiddle to men in social life was still effective in the society. In reaction to all these facts, socialist feminism turned up and aimed to pull down the male dominance and to change the mentality of society and this socialist feminism underlies the second flow. This second flow of feminism claims that:

feminism symbolizes a unique policy revealing the relationship between capitalism and the concept of patriarchy, and it aims to handle with sexuality, class conflicts and racial issues.⁹

In theoretical classification of feminism, there are three different approaches; Liberal Feminism, Marxist or Socialist Feminism and Radical Feminism. Liberal Feminism includes all the campaigns and rebellious acts which defend the equal rights for women on grounds of liberal state, in that a liberal state is totally founded on the equality of individuals regardless of gender differences on social level. Marxist and Social feminists defend the rights of women on economic level and they try to do away

⁸ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 40.

⁹ Necla Arat, *Feminizmin ABC'si*, Say Yayınları, İstanbul, 2010, p. 71.

with the inequality between economic income and labour force of women, on the basis of capitalist order of production. The last group, Radical feminism, tries to change the patriarchal system because, according to the defenders of this group, men's domination over women is solely due to the requirement of patriarchal system. Although all these kinds of feminism are labelled separately, their common goal is to provide the equality of genders in every field and to redefine women's place in society.

Although feminism seems to be a concrete movement, there are some debates even among the feminists themselves. The main reason of these debates is whether women should be treated in the same way with men or they should be taken into as women in gender categorization. The reason of this assumption and perception is due to some factors such as class, race, ethnic and sexual orientations which are applied to women on different levels as a requirement of their gender and nature. And it is important for humanity to overcome these inequalities and differences as Lynne Segal responses to the question "*why feminism?*" as "*because its most radical goal, both personal and collective, has yet to be realized: a world which is a better place not just for some women, but for all women*"¹⁰. Segal's this answer also lays emphasis on importance of feminism in reaching its goal. Debates on equality and differences of women in society, whether it is because of women's biological nature or the historical background, could be dangerous as Segal adds:

there has always been a danger that in re-valuing our notions of the female and appealing to the experiences of women, we are reinforcing the ideas of sexual polarity which feminism originally aimed to challenge.¹¹

Women have always been given inferior or secondary status because of their natural sexual difference. Another reason of debates on feminism is women's being viewed close to nature as it resembles to a woman, and so women always take the inferior positions in society as if they were doomed to this. At this point both society and feminists fall into a debate on this matter. According to some, women should claim equal rights without taking into consideration the natural sexual differences and to some, women should claim the equal rights but they also should preserve their feminine qualities which can be the only power against masculine power. Although most of the feminists have tried to impose the equality of woman and man, they have not been able

¹⁰ *Feminism...* p.7.

¹¹ *Ibid.* , p.9.

to ignore and escape from the social hierarchy as Hester Eisentein and Alice Jardine states in *The Future of Difference*:

Western culture has proven to be incapable of thinking not the same without assigning one of the terms a positive value and the other, a negative. The response to difference on the part of women varies: there are those who exalt it by embracing a certain biology- and a certain eroticism. There are also those who deny it, or, rather, who seek to defuse the power of difference by minimising biology and emphasising cultural coding: on some level, these responses are saying, 'woman would be the same as ... if only.' A third strand states, like the first group, that women are indeed different from men, but for feminist reasons they add: women are better than men. This group's reasons would not be biological but sociocultural: as outsiders and nurturers, women do things differently from, and better than, men.¹²

Although there have been many debates on this matter, this has not had an ending and moreover, there have come into being more kind of feminisms that are related to women; cultural, radical and post structural feminism. Debates on woman have always continued throughout ages since the creation of human being because of the sexual roles given to each gender differently. Not only this sexual difference but also the social norms created by society differentiated women, and these traditional norms assigned the social duties to women; occupying with house, bringing up children, giving birth and making their husbands happy.

Women are also judged as if they were dependent on their emotions rather than their logic and incapable of making right decisions, so they were not given any social role on political and philosophical world. But this view changed significantly in the late nineteenth century and masculinity and femininity were categorized only in biological explanations. Naturally process of imposing this view was not easy, because women and even feminists were looking for some ways to overcome this social and cultural press and duty given to them. This struggle led to a distinction between sex and gender and

this distinction can also be expressed by the terms 'female' and 'feminine', 'female' being the biological category to which women belong and 'feminine' behaviour and roles being the social constructions based on this biological category.¹³

¹² *Feminism...* p.11.

¹³ *Feminism...* p.13.

This distinction is supported by Simone de Beauvoir in her book *Le Deuxieme Sexe (The Second Sex)* with the assertion that “one is not born a woman: one becomes one”¹⁴ which argues that the position of women in society is determined not naturally but socially. This social construction keeps woman in an inferior position when compared to man, which is a product of patriarchal cultures making a categorization of psychological and behavioural aspects of sex. At this point, the act of feminism struggles to free woman from her inferior position to eternal woman who is not categorized biologically, as De Beauvoir argues:

To refuse the notions of the eternal feminine, the Black soul, the Jewish character, is not to deny that there are today Jews, Blacks, women: such a denial does not represent for the interested parties a liberation, but rather an inauthentic flight. It is clear that no woman can claim, without bad faith, to be above her sex.¹⁵

This relation of difference between gender and sex has always been a common theme for feminists and in most of the feminist based organizations, as Oakley argues in her book *Sex, Gender and Society*:

‘Sex’ is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. ‘Gender’, however, is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’.¹⁶

With this awareness of distinction between biological and social essence, feminists have been enabled to behave and move just in accordance with social awareness since the late 20th century, which is crucial for the comparison between man and woman in social levels. But doing so may also be dangerous for women, because without the fact of difference of sexes between man and woman, masculinity can overcome femininity in social constructs without any privilege towards women. Moreover this theme of gender has concreted with women since women’s and feminists’ main desire has always been to reach the same level with men, but this desire of equality may make women less respectable in terms of the theme of gender, on which they have always studied. Such a condition makes women inferior and less respectable as Oakley argues; ‘such a strategy only works because gender was invented to help

¹⁴ *The Second Sex*... p. 295.

¹⁵ *Feminism*... p. 14.

¹⁶ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, Maurice Temple Smith, Np, 1972, p. 16.

*explain women's position: men neither wonder about theirs nor need to explain it.*¹⁷ In this respect, making a distinction between sex and gender sometimes could turn out to be a failure because, to some feminists, sex and gender are two concepts which are integrated with each other, as Monique Wittig asserts:

There is no sex. There is but a sex that is oppressed and sex that oppresses. It is oppression that creates sex and not the contrary. The contrary would be to say that sex creates oppression, or to say that the cause(origin) of oppression is to be found in sex itself, in a natural division of the sexes pre-existing (or outside of) society.¹⁸

Therefore, feminism should be studied as a whole from all aspects; gender, sex, power, and woman should be examined and criticized taking these qualities into account, too.

Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud claims that women's biological and sexual difference creates another difference on basis of morality when compared to men. According to him, women have weaker moral development as a consequence of their gender and sexuality. Freud's this claim pushes feminists and feminist psychologists to study on this matter and undermine this idea. One of these psychologists is Carol Gilligan who implies this in her study. In this study Gilligan (1982; in Freedman, 2001) discovered that:

Women who were deciding whether to have an abortion had a conception of the self that was different from that of most men. Women saw themselves as connected to others and dependent on others for their identity rather than autonomous, as men tend to see themselves.¹⁹

However, women have always been considered as less moral because of the moral judgement of society, when compared to the men whose morality is taken as "norm". Gilligan also names this difference as a "product" not a biological or social essence of creation, but she faces criticism because of this comment by the ones who are fearful of a social equality between men and women. For her, this criticism is nothing more than a strategy to sustain the dominance of male-dominant society. Gilligan is supported by some feminists with the idea that through the equality between men and women, feminine values and characteristics will obtain the true place in society. Woman

¹⁷ *Feminism...* p. 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* , p. 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* , p. 19.

is also important in society for her role of motherhood. Feminists and psychologists who defend the equality of men and women argue that women should be placed in a more central place in social life because of their physical ability and capacity to give birth and reproduce.

Mothering is the leading important difference between men and women and is a result of both free choice and natural instinct. Motherhood should not be undervalued in social sphere. If the quality of motherhood were given to both genders, as Nancy Chodrow claims, *girls and boys would not grow up with these different qualities; men would be more loving and connected to others, and women would be more autonomous and competitive.*²⁰

Even though the number of women who were both married with children and had career increased in the post-war period, social oppression on women was still going on. A great majority of women were still carrying out the social requests given them even without questioning. This deficiency in consciousness of women stemmed the realization of feminism ideals within the society unavoidably. Betty Friedan, one of the founders of the American National Organization for Women, summarizes this situation in the preface which was prepared for the 10th year press of her book *The Feminine Mystique*:

This book reveals that all women I know, including me, live in an illusion and that the doctors treating us and the experts examining us maintain this illusion, and our homes, schools, churches, policies, professions are constructed on this illusion... If women are human-beings indeed, all the things that prevent them from living in the society as individuals with complete personalities (neither more nor less) should be altered. And women, once they are freed from the mystery of womanhood and begin to take themselves seriously as a human, are going to realize that their places stand on a false basis.²¹

When all the matters related to difference and equality are taken into consideration, some binary oppositions should be accepted as they are, and feminists should deconstruct these as a whole since the ideas belonging to feminism can change in borders of this circle. In this respect, the issue of equality and difference of women in society and in their own genders should not be called and perceived as a debate but an

²⁰ *Feminism...* p. 22.

²¹ *Feminizmin ABC'si...* p. 72.

approach to talk issues that are related to woman. And issues which are about difference and equality raise positive discussions among feminists as Anne Snitow states:

By writing of the varied vocabularies and constructions feminists have used to describe the divide, I do not mean to intimate that they are all one, but to emphasize their difference... The electricity of its internal disagreements is part of feminism's continuing power to shock and involve large numbers of people in a public conversation far beyond the movement itself. The dynamic feminist divide is about difference; it dramatizes women's differences from each other – and the necessity of our sometimes making common cause.²²

The cultural and social identity given to woman naturally made her compete fiercely against man and woman was not regarded suitable for any other mission or duty other than given to her by society. Especially the governing politics and the rights which were given or would be given to women in public sphere were contrary to the traditional ideology. According to Adam Smith, since they do not have the courage and ability to govern themselves, women do not possess the virtues which are required for public life.

Similarly, according to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, women were not capable of anything other than giving birth, looking after her children and managing the house. Women were not offered any choice and so they could not decide on anything because, decision making authority of women, according to Hegel, were shaped by arbitrary requirements rather than universal requirements:

Hegel, it is argued, understands woman as by nature destined to fulfill the role of passive embodiment and nurturer of family values, while her male counterpart assumes the challenge of progressively transcending natural immediacy, creating a cultural sphere of free moral action, of politics, art, science, religion and philosophy.²³

In spite of all these antifeminist ideas, John Stuart Mill defends the opinion that in addition to women's demand for freedom, they should also have civil and legal rights which can not be special to men, in his book *The Subjection of Women*. This defence has set up a substructure to realization process of feminism since the beginning of mankind; even if it could not do away with the ideology which accepts the notion that woman is inferior to man, at once.

²² *Feminism...* p. 24.

²³ Antoinette M. Stafford, *The Feminist Critique of Hegel on Women and The Family*, Animus Vol: 2, 1997, p. 69.

A range of demands and ideas of 17th century feminists lie behind this cultural movement:

Feminists of this period (1) disclaimed the view that women are naturally different from men and described them as a social group possessing certain characteristics specified socially. (2) They regarded men as another social group suppressing women who are also a social group and they came up against not the men but their social power. (3) They both wanted to enter the privileged world of men and wanted men to learn something from women.²⁴

Consequently feminism as a movement became one of the most effective politic ideologies in 20th century which tries to save women from secondary position, defends the gender equality and sets against gender segregation. Feminism is also called as the woman problem and:

feminism has become a worldwide cultural trend allowing women to enjoy all moral, religious, social, political, legal and educational human rights as equally as men, that is a movement to secure one-to-one equality.²⁵

2.2. Feminism in 19th and 20th Centuries

In 18th century, women in USA and France struggled for their rights in social and international areas with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was mentioned as a legal proclamation for the first time. Thinking that this could be a salvation for them, women produced several works of art in the field of literature with the aim of manifesting themselves better. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written by Mary Wollstonecraft, is one of the most important of these and it defends the idea that woman should have their economical independence and equal education rights proudly. Although this book could not manage to be successful in social application areas, gender conflict of woman was taken into consideration by public opinion with the help of this book and women were made conscious about these matters.

In 19th century, individual rights and liberties, especially women's concretization, came into being with liberalisation which is based on interpersonal equality and protection of individuals' independence. With this emancipator understanding, new implementations for each gender came into force both in Europe and America. Following the rise of liberalism, a reaction was born against traditional

²⁴ *Feminizmin ABC'si...* p. 38.

²⁵ *Ibid.* , p. 36.

politic ideology, for which women are inferior, submissive, irrational and noncitizen. Many suffrage associations defending women's right to vote were founded in Europe and America by means of this reaction and especially in England, this reaction turned into a resistance. Quite naturally subversion of traditional ideology was not easy and a massive reaction emerged against this. Even if the right to vote for women was defended by John Stuart Mill and many other lawyers, this right could be only achieved in 1920 at the end of First World War. Traditional ideology was too strong to be demolished easily and this situation is stated by Necla Arat as:

Without any doubt, what is underlying all these is the distinction between public realm and private realm; cultural realm and natural realm as mentioned earlier. Sexually discriminating traditional political ideology maintains to view the woman as a being belonging to private realm and natural realm. By this way, the distinction of public-private turns out to be another form of the distinction of female-male. While *virtue* matters to private realm, public realm is defined as a realm in which *rights* reign. Distinction between *beautiful, elegant, nice* and *strong, ostentatious, esteemed* is interpreted as the one between female and male.²⁶

During the 19th century and following the capitalism's shaking the whole world, the world became a place of fierce competition meaning that man and children in a family which is the core unit of society had to sell their labor to the market and turn it into money. Woman, in return, was supposed to meet basic needs of the house except for the needs related to money. However, this situation began to slowly turn into something that had no solid reward for their labor. As a revolt against this unfair condition, women started to take on a working individual role in social life no matter how little wages they were given. Besides these working class women, there were also other women who worked without any wage at local trades or small hand craft shops to help their husbands to survive in a competitive materialistic environment. These women were at a family supporter position, who worked for their bosses or husbands without a wage. Indeed, whether working (at a factory or with their husbands for family business) or not working, women experienced great difficulties due to this economic and social order.

As the women took part in business world, though with small budgets, this led to strikes of factory workers lest they would be made redundant. Therefore, women's

²⁶ *Feminizmin ABC's...* p. 34.

playing an active role in business world was met by protests, objections and reactions from various walks of life. Because of these reactions, women was named as supporting work force for household expenses rather than a real work force, and the reactions were silenced to some extent. Not surprisingly, women were ascribed, once more, a lower character role in society instead of a real individual role. Working class women were absolutely dissatisfied with the low wages given for such heavy workload and with unemployment whereas bourgeoisie women revolted for the economic and political rights that they did not have yet.

Nevertheless, this revolt could not come to fruition since it was multi-directional and was handled by two distinctive groups of women. To working class and middle class, what mattered was that women should earn money, and the issue of women rights was not a priority. As for upper classes, quest of political rights for women was the very priority, particularly in societies where the average education level of women was the same as or higher than that of their male counterparts. These two different groups did not agree to collaborate with each other, thus lowering the speed of feminist movement. Just as the property owners hampered the salvation of laborers, men prevented the salvation of women.

In 19th century, women began to appear in public arena with rising numbers of organizations and higher level of education, intellectuality and their essence in field of literature. Feminism began to develop perceptibly for the first time after February Revolution that took place in 1848. Suffrage and representation rights to women were supported in 1849 in the *Opinion des Femmes* magazine edited by Jeanne Deroin. In addition to political rights, economic mishaps of women were being questioned; laundrywomen demanded that the fourteen-hour working day be reduced by two hours and they be given the same wage as the men who did the same job, and they could make these happen. Under the leadership of Jeanne Deroin, a hundred and two associations merged and formed the Federation of Workers' Associations to protect and defend the rights of workers and laborers. Naturally there were women haters in the federation as well who wanted to take possession of administration by exploiting women. Moreover, among the workers were there anti-feminists who defended withdrawal of women labour from the markets and whenever a woman was employed, these workers would go on strike.

Nevertheless, these reactions of anti-feminist men and groups could not drive women out of social life; on the contrary, Female Labor Association was established in USA to encourage women to actively take part in work life. Through the diligence of this association, women settled their position firmly in a masculine business world and many women such as Ella Wiggins, Mother Jones and Ella Wheeler came into prominence in this field and became legendary names of this movement.

Feminist movements in the world were not confined to economic struggles only. For instance, the first feminist manifest was signed by William Thompson in England in 1825, which was followed by John Stuart Mill's being elected to parliament in 1851 and 1867 with the help of many women associations to defend political rights of women in England. Women delegates from the USA were not accepted to an assembly held in London in 1840 and this situation gave rise to Seneca Falls Convention held by Elisabeth Cady Stanton and Lucrecia Mott in 1848. This convention sparked off the political rights campaign of women in America.

In the year 1836, the newspaper "*la Gazette des Femmes*" began to be published in the belief that a newspaper addressing women rather than men might be useful to make public more aware of women's problems, and this newspaper always defended that women should be able to work in public sector and be assigned to civil services. A similar magazine, "*Le Droit des Femmes*", was brought out by Leon Richer in 1869 to defend women rights and it promoted equality of men and women in many realms including marriage and labour laws. One of the most significant achievements of feminists in 19th century was equal educational opportunities given to women. For example, towards to end of the century female students began to be accepted first to the secondary education and then to Edinburg University, Faculty of Medicine. Similarly, women in the USA struggled for their right to study medicine and a faculty of medicine for women was opened for the first time in New York in 1865.

Following the gradual and local achievements of women movements and due in part to feminist interaction between countries during 19th century, the idea that all women in the world should gather under a single roof with a common conception emerged. And finally The International Council of Women (ICW) was founded in

Washington DC in 1888.²⁷ Besides these, various organizations, associations and women rights defenders combined together within an action plan to stop oppression of women.

The second council assembled in London in 1899, 11 years after the first one, and 5000 women and 11 organizations representing 600.000 feminists participated. General themes of the meetings were peace, collaboration, political and economic relations, a reform in social and religious life and how to increase education level of women. Removing women from the lower class and placing them to the same social class as men and achieving equality through this replacement were other priorities of the council. The ideas put forward during the second council made feminism even more acceptable. For example, according to French feminist MmeAvril de Sainte-Croix, salvation of women would enable the salvation of men as well, meaning that problems of women were not just gender related problems at all and it was a movement that could make lives of both men and women more beautiful and independent. Thinking that, she participated in some organisations and *chaired the 1904 ICW committee on White Slave Traffic and Equal Moral Standard*.²⁸

The International Council of Women (ICW) maintained its struggle to protect women rights in all fields during the 20th century. Branches of ICW were established in more countries. In France, French Women National Council was founded in 1906. This French council began to deal with children's social problems as well as those of women and it was thanks to the efforts of this council that women began to be assigned to high level civil services in public administration. Similar to the council in France, The International Woman Suffrage Alliance was founded in 1904 to campaign for political rights of women in America and England and to fight against the groups that were opposed to women movement. Women's Social and Political Union was another association founded in England with the same purposes. However, what distinguished

²⁷ (ICW was the first women's organization to work across national boundaries for the common cause of advocating human rights for women. In March and April 1888, women leaders came together in Washington DC with 80 speakers and 49 delegates representing 53 women's organizations from 9 countries: Canada, the United States, Ireland, India, England, Finland, Denmark, France and Norway. Women from professional organizations, trade unions, arts groups and benevolent societies participated. National Councils were affiliated to the ICW and thus made themselves heard at international level. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Council_of_Women (03.02.2012)

²⁸ Bonnie G. Smith, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, Oxford University Press, USA, 2008, p. 179.

this association from the others was that it employed acts of violence such as bombing, arson and suicide to claim rights. All these organizations agreed to collaborate to stand up to prostitution.

Labour force, provided by men who went to fight during the 2nd World War, was replaced by female labour. This condition led to a gradual change of traditional roles of men and women. Nurseries were opened at workplaces to facilitate working conditions of women with children while many women helped men fighting at the front. Even though war was something international, women were against wars. The Peace and International Relations Committee, founded in 1899, demanded that an organization should be founded during the war and women from each country should censure the war. After all, women regarded other women as their sisters during a war no matter what nationality they were and they always defended concepts of mutual love and peace.

During the post-war period, women suffrage was recognized in 21 countries thanks to studies and support of suffrage organizations. In addition to this achievement, leading organizations and women's rights advocates carried out significant studies on protection of rights of women and labourers, creation of equal working conditions, prevention of prostitution, establishment of peace and giving women the right to speak in a civilised world. Firstly, women were given the right to hold offices in public administration; then they managed to take the same wage as a man who did the same job. But despite all these achievements, recognition of the nationality of a married woman did not happen immediately. Right to issue identity documents by consent of her husband was given only in 1938, nearly in the middle of the century.

The approach that ICW employed while defending the rights of women was personalism. The core element forming the basis of this approach was viewing the woman as an individual or a person regardless of any economic, domestic, social or any functional role attributed to her. In this sense, it was aimed that woman must be equal to man in view of political and economic rights while disregarding her procreative identity in the social framework:

Personalism in the broader sense does not consider the person as the object of an original intuition, nor does it conceive of philosophical research as beginning with an analysis of immediate personal experience and its context. Rather, in

the scope of a general metaphysics the person manifests his singular value and essential role. Thus the person occupies the central place in philosophical discourse, but this discourse is not reduced to an explicitation or development of an original intuition of the person.²⁹

In this century, in addition to various opinions such as personalism which defended individualism of woman, the opinion that woman is a means of breeding and should only serve her husband were systematized and indoctrinated in fascist societies. Especially Germany stood out with its fascist approach towards the women among these societies. The notion of woman in Germany was associated with three concepts; child, kitchen and church. Germany assumed the title of being the first country to legalize dismissal of married women. When it comes to education, women were prohibited to attend high schools and coeducation in order to keep them out of culture and they were directed to finishing schools to make better housewives instead. To Nazi Germany, woman was not something more than an ordinary animal:

Woman was a kind of animal. Family was the only natural environment in which she could live and a woman who claimed her own sexual independence was a degenerated creature just like a Jewish, Negro and homophile. Feminism was a bourgeois perversion; it would run over the natural order of the world. Nazis was a homophile brother's society which externalized woman and at the same time sublimated the mother-woman. Also, in Spain, the women lost their all rights (such as right to vote in 1931, abortion right in Catalonia), in the period of Franco, which were granted them under the system of republic.³⁰

Women's combat against fascism, the biggest enemy of their own independence, came along with mass and individual struggles in the 20th century. Their fighting like a guerrilla during the 2nd World War or their taking place of the men, who went to the front, for submunition production earned them a more respectable position:

Even an example is enough to explain the role of women in this struggle: their contributions during Leningrad Blockade which lasted for 900 days from September, 1941 to January, 1944. During this blockade, women joined to the works which town dwellers and women had never been accustomed with: they dug a 600 km long antitank ditch, strengthened the surroundings of the town with barbed tapes and walls, made barricades in the suburbs, joined in anti-aircraft weapon and guerrilla wars, put out the fire arising from the dense bombardment, made production in ammunition factories and they grew vegetables in the middle of the city in order to nurture the 2.500.000 population

²⁹ <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/personalism> (09.02.2012)

³⁰ Andree Michel, *Feminizm Cep Üniversitesi*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1993, p. 96.

of city who were doomed to starvation by the Nazis' bombardment and blockade.³¹

The Soviet Women Anti-Fascist Committee, founded in USSR shortly after the 2nd World War began, demanded all the women in the world to combat against fascists at its first gathering on 7th September 1941 and in response to this call, many women whose countries were already at war both saved the honour of their countries and proved themselves by going to the front with men to fight. Countries such as USA and England were able to fight overseas only through the help of these women working at armoury factories. As a result of this struggle and effort of women, a mobilization including women themselves was launched in England. Women were asked to work at armory factories and they, especially those aged between 20 and 30, were prohibited from working for private sector. On the other hand, they were provided various incentives during this period such as half-day working, working at home and nursery schools for their children. A similar situation emerged in the USA in 1942 when there needed a 4-million work force but not enough men. Just as in England, women in USA were given many facilities and incentives to join the urgently needed workforce, and thus in 1944 the number of women employed rose to 18 million from 10 million.

During the post-war period, women were graced with gratitude and appreciation by the society and men for their support during the war, and they were requested to stay in civil society. However, when men returned home after the war and demanded their previous jobs back, this situation posed a serious threat for women; in order not to lose their jobs, they had to accept to work for lower wages and moreover, some regulations prohibiting married women to work were added to the agenda of the society. Much as enlightened women opposed to these regulations, governments of USA and England deprived women again of the nursery schools by closing them and oppressions towards the women, unfortunately, began once more, though not as strong as before.

“*The Second Sex*”, written by Simone de Beauvoir in 1947, helped women not to lose their hope in this struggle. Beauvoir defended that women should acquire a profession to obtain their economic independence:

In this book, Simone de Beauvoir, demonstratively, defended the belief that the roles of women were restricted not by the nature, but by a range of old

³¹ *Feminizm Cep Üniversitesi...* p. 96.

prejudice, custom and law for which women were also responsible for allowing this to go on. He suggested women to protect their self esteem of womanhood by getting rid of their dependence on the institution of marriage which condemned women derivativeness, but at the same time marriage was thought to relieve them and integrate them with society.³²

Many countries in the world such as America, England and France were deeply affected by this book, and women in these countries managed to have a say in several professions, previously dominated by men only. Still, no matter how active a role they played during the war and post-war period, women's place in the eyes of society did not change as much as had been desired:

The reason of society's existence was not to improve the hidden abilities of women on the contrary; the reason of women's existence was to satisfy the society's production and reproduction needs. The society which used women during the war in production and army, did not hesitate to send back them to their homes when they did not need them anymore.³³

Through the emergence of birth control methods in 1960's, women began to possess a significant distinction between their fertility and sexuality. This was, in a sense, a way of seeking justice and a revolt against the world that regarded woman only as a means of birth. First steps of this case and revolt took place in North Europe and America and Neuwirth Law that legalized birth control was adopted in 1967 with the support of women from all walks of life. Same year in England, in 1973 in USA, in 1975 in France and in 1978 in Italy abortion law was put into effect, but over the last years abolition has been legally prohibited in many European countries. Women's struggle for abolition right has not ended yet and besides, this fight will go on as long as they are regarded as not an individual, but a tool.

As the number of literate women increased in the society during the periods following 60's, their struggle against fascism and anti-feminists remarkably consolidated. Because they were instilled with what the previous generation went through and were asked not to accept themselves as the second sex. In 1966 National Organisation of Women was established by Betty Friedan especially to bring married women with children together, since the group that suffered most from anti-feminism was composed of the women who were married and had children and they needed to raise their voice and participate in social life by being educated. Philosophy of this

³² *Feminizm Cep Üniversitesi...* p. 102.

³³ *Ibid.* , p. 103.

organisation was individualism, and it aimed to impose the idea that first of all they are human and then comes the roles of being a mother, wife or housewife. By this way they were able to discover their suppressed talents. Again in the same period, small groups of Women's Liberation Movement were founded in 1967 by young and single women and they tried to unite women who suffered from various injustices and discrimination. Both organizations aimed to claim women's rights in any case and they often managed to do so:

As a pressure group, women's liberation movement protested many times in order to change the sexist imageries related to women, annihilate the work and charge discriminations, enfranchise of abortion and so on, by getting into act at a level of federal and local governments, mass communication, newspapers, television networks and universities. One of the most glamorous success of NOW and women's liberal movement was to provide with payment of millions of dollars which was not paid to women workers because of payment discriminations in the past, as a result of the trials they commenced against conglomerates like ITT.³⁴

In cultural domain, journals, newspapers and most of all literature were of enormous importance in emergence and then expanding and consolidation of feminist movement. *Sexual Politics*, published in 1969 by Kate Millet, was the most significant work of feminist literature, which was viewed as a means of striving by women. Through pervasion of this literature to larger masses, Women's Studies gained importance. Ideas and notions were instilled into women of different countries and spread of feminism in an educative way was made possible. As feminism reinforced its place in literature, many publishing houses were established in many countries for the purpose of expansion of feminist thinking. Similarly, for the reconstruction of sexual identity in schools in America, images and pictures in school books were revised and edited. Self-education of women and rise in attainability level of feminism through literature influenced not only economic life but also private life as well:

According to compiled statistics in all of the Western societies, the tendency to motherhood and childbirth is in decrease, divorcement; especially demanded by women is in increase. This means that women do not want to imprison themselves to the marriage as it was during their mother's time. Again the same statistics proves that as the education level among women increases, the tendency to marriage declines, and tendency of divorcement increases. Independent unity and single parent family, being discontent with the limitation of love life only with people from different genders (heterosexual) are some of the solutions which are offered by feminists, both in their writings and their

³⁴ *Feminizm Cep Üniversitesi...* p. 108.

daily life, as an alternative to traditional marriage. In addition to the revolution in the field of thought, feminists come up with a revolution in customs too; but the proposals of feminists and the “sexual revolution” which is featured by men (ascribed to feminists) are different things³⁵

Women’s being regarded as the second sex in patriarchal order has been a global problem nearly since the beginning of human history. In general, feminism is a movement which came into being with individualistic liberation movement of Renaissance period and is experiencing its heyday today. What makes feminism such a strong movement today is that oppression towards women is at an unbearable level and that feminism offers solutions to stop it. Another reason for its being a lasting movement is that instead of viewing women superior to men, it adopts the principle of equality between genders.

2.3. African Feminism

After the World War I, afterwards the significant change of economic principles and situations, women’s role and activism also changed in the world globally. The dependence on money which was resulted with the rise of capitalism, the activism of women in economic fields reached to larger extents. With economic and educational enlightenment, women started to search for not only economic rights, but also equal rights in the field of democracy towards their own gender, and struggled against class and gender distinctions. All over the world the themes for which women gave great struggles have always been same:

these are, roughly speaking: women’s legal and political rights: violence, reproductive rights and abortion, sexual liberty, employment and discrimination, political participation and representation.³⁶

But the mode of implementation has always shown great differences among woman in relation to regions, nations and cultures and the main reason of this was the economic differences between nations. For example, while the women in Europe and North America improved their economic situations and harvested the fruits of

³⁵ *Feminizm Cep Üniversitesi...* p. 113.

³⁶ <http://www.rosadoc.be/site/rosa/english/pdf/factsheetsenglish/34.pdf> p. 1. (16.06.2012)

capitalism, the women of South regions were doomed to poverty and terrible living conditions. These feminist advancements realized in a more different way in Africa because Afro-American women implemented the requirements of feminism into their cultures without adopting the norms and values of Western feminism.

Among the main differences between Western and African Feminism, the race, colour, and ethnicity factors are the most prominent ones. In Africa, the unfortunate condition of women was the consequence of change in the world globally and the African women had to pay the price of this with some kind of troubles peculiar to themselves. Women were more active in rural life and agriculture, rather than jobs which were related with education. Besides this, the mortality rate of infants and children was very high because of malnutrition.

While the women in Europe and North America struggle for better education and equal economic rights with men, the women in Africa and South America have to solve the inequalities and disorders in black society, racism and inferiority of themselves in order to deal with the matters of white women. So it can be argued that the movement of African Feminism is mainly based on racist ideologies, colonialism and social and humanitarian conditions:

African women have a different starting point. African women's roles grew from a long tradition of female integration in collective structures. This is completely different from the West, where feminism grew from middle class individualism and the patriarchal structure in a (post) industrial society.³⁷

One of the great factors which delayed the evolution of the process of Feminism in Africa, was the decision of applying this whether voluntarily or compulsorily:

The effect is two-faced. On the one hand, it creates an opportunity for women to be on the decision making side when new states and institutions are being organised and structured. On the other hand, this western pressure is greatly resisted by those in power. The participation of women is experienced as being 'imposed by the West' and not stemming from own culture or experience.³⁸

The most featured difference between Western women and African women was that the latter did not only struggle against sexual oppression but also racial and class oppression, too. Afro-American women have always been the protagonist character in

³⁷ <http://www.rosadoc.be/site/rosa/english/pdf/factsheetsenglish/34.pdf> p. 3. (16.06.2012)

³⁸ Ibid. , p. 2. (16.06.2012)

the struggle of liberation and survival because of the adversities which were derived from the combination of their sexual and racial identity:

It was our experience and disillusionment within these liberation movements as well as experience on the periphery of white male left that led to the need to develop a politics that was antiracist, unlike those of white women, and antisexist, unlike those of Black and white men.³⁹

There is also a great difference in the scope of thought between African and Western culture. For example, mutilation, especially genital mutilation was a rather behaviour towards women which were thought to be for favour of them. But this situation drew the reaction of Western society and however recently African women agreed with Western thought, at first they rejected this idea which was perceived as an attack to African culture. Similar to this debate, in 20th century, in Western culture, the woman took her place as a starting point of everything, in African culture, woman was nothing more than an ordinary cultural part of society. This is so basically because of the different perspectives about the relationship between private and public debates. In spite of all these deprecating approaches towards women, they also had important roles in the borders of Africa, having some kind of important roles in administration.

Both in the history of Africa and in African myths, there have been many female leaders in the head. But on the contrary to the assumed thought, women leaders could never bring egalitarian democracy or the equality of genders, because, the women who achieved the leadership were the representatives of particular dynasties which were formed of mostly by male power and population. And, women who could overcome serious crises in their nations, were overshadowed by the physical and patriarchal power of their husbands and sons when they wanted to get on well with them as mothers and wives.

Similar to Western culture, in Africa, gender roles were applied in accordance to the traditional regulations and gender biased social ideas. While women's roles were accepted to be private in the borders of house; wifhood, motherhood, cleaning home, cooking, and other house works and assuring to the happiness of their husbands, men's main roles were required more connection to public environment in order to fulfil duties of social roles by society traditionally. With the enlightenment of feminism on African

³⁹ Barbara Smith, *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, Rutgers University Press, USA, 1983, p. 265.

feminists and women, women started to reject this harsh distinction of roles of genders and believed that although these private and public roles are different from each other, there is no biological dependence on roles in accordance with gender and both men and women should share domestic and public roles.

Colonisation is one of the most important effects on the lives of women which rose with the capitalism and traditional resistance against Western culture in 19th century. This was a disruptive effect which defended the ideas of suppression and segregation of women in the field of education and ownership of their by men. This circumstance gave birth to the idea that women always need the guidance of men in society. Although it seems that there happened many economic opportunities for women with the rise of patriarchy and individualism in the borders of colonisation, this caused a great discrimination between genders in labour force against women within community. So it can be argued that with the colonisation in several fields like education, economy, religion and legal life, the process of women's having a more equal level with men, realised drastically.

With the rise of colonisation, men were granted to be the owners of farms, lands and women who were working for them. Women did not have any validate role in this economic field because colonial rulers were only interested with the males as their addressee and they were only interested in the export of commodities. But African men used to give all the labour force to the women with all the required labour force and so they could go to mine fields and cities to earn more money and this situation created a pressure on women and compelled them to sustain a rural life.

In African culture, motherhood is an important aspect of being a woman. According to African cultural beliefs, woman is a reproductive presence and so she can not be inferior to man. Even in 1970s the average number of children per an African woman was six, and this situation is rather adverse to the situation in Europe and North America where there was a belief that there is an inverse ratio between number of children and development in education.

African women believed that, they could sustain both productivity and economic duties without any conflict between them. In Africa, the emphasis was given to society in general more than individual, so this situation made women's duties more

complicated than other women in other societies in which women were charged with only care for their children and their husbands. Since community is formed by two genders, women have also some privileges and responsibilities however not so much as men do. And so, women also have important roles indirectly in the development of their society and relations with other nations.

Black feminists' experiences have great effects in the process of their political realization. Almost all of black women had experienced sexual oppression, and this situation was compelled to women as a requirement of being a ladylike woman, but this would bring them an awareness of threat to their genders:

We were told in the same breath to be quiet both for the sake of being “ladylike” and to make us less objectionable in the eyes of white people. As we grew older we became aware of the threat of physical and sexual abuse by men.⁴⁰

With black feminist approach, women had chance to build a politics to change their oppressed fate and end up this oppression. Although, education and economical level was at the bottom when compared to American capitalism, they were able to gain some characteristics through which they could fight against this oppression.

For ages, a little value was given to Black women in society and they were aware of the fact that only people who gave value them is again themselves, so they tried hard to have a healthy politics in order to evolve and improve the conditions of themselves, their mothers, sisters, and daughters. They were determined to reach equal humanistic qualities with white women and wanted to be treated like a human being instead of walking and following behind the males in black society and white community. So it is impossible to have a look at African feminism from only one perspective; the themes of sex oppression, race and class distinctions can not be separated from each other.

In this respect African women struggle against not only racism but also sexism too, and this situation made the political work of African feminism more difficult than white women's feminism in application methods and process of availability. Michele Wallace explains this situation in her book *A Black Feminist Search for Sisterhood* as:

⁴⁰ *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology...* p. 266.

We exist as women who are black who are feminists, each stranded for the moment, working independently because there is not yet an environment in this society remotely congenial to our struggle-because, being on the bottom, we would have to do what no one else has done: we would have to fight the world.⁴¹

The idea of feminism in Africa was empowerment and rebellion of women of the age but also it was a threatening to women, themselves. Because, feminism would consider the equality between genders regardless of different gender roles and distinctions and unfortunately women were aware of their minor physical and biological power against men's. And, knowing that African women tried to search and gain their personality believing that women and men are two components which complete each other, and even if they are not equal, they make each other valuable and essential to life. African feminism was also perceived as a threat to the life of black men with the thought that the ideas of feminism were going to suppress their male power and above all with economical awakening, men would lose their most valuable and most hardworking free working allies.

Black feminism is also a rebellion and reaction against the insusceptible attitude and selfishness of white women's feminism which gives little effort and attention to the lives of black females. Even if racism is seen to be reduced in the eyes of white women for themselves, it still continued among black females and so black feminists continued to struggle against this:

Eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue.⁴²

In the scope of African Feminist Theory, the woman's dependence on man arose mainly because of consumerist society around the world. With the rise of consumerism in the global world, the powerful ones empowered themselves and this weakened the ones who took place in the bottom of social pyramid. And unfortunately, Afro-American women constitute this part of pyramid in the world.

As the man had the economic power, women became more dependent on their husbands. Latterly, African women started to be affected by the feminist movements in other nations, but although they had this powerful determination, they could not transfer

⁴¹ *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology...* p. 270.

⁴² *Ibid.* , p. 273.

this to their life and cultures at once because they could not estimate the reactions of their own society to this movement as it is stated:

the term 'feminism' is English, as the language itself but its realization is inextricably bound to the culture and peculiar backgrounds and experiences of the women.⁴³

So woman had to search strategies to change the views and ideas of traditional woman, mother, daughter and sister figures in their own culture.

Although women were accepted as weaker than the men in the African society, in essence, they were the ruler of core part of society; family. Ibekwe Chinweizu claims this in his book *Anatomy of Female Power* as:

because every man has as boss his wife or his mother, or some other woman in his life, men may rule the world, but women rule the men who rule the world. Thus contrary to appearances, woman is boss, the overall boss, of the world.⁴⁴

In wide aspect, superficially, man had always wanted to be seen as the only ruler in society even if they were ruled by their wives in the border of house. But in social respect especially in patriarchal societies, the man does not accept this idea, because man sees this as a power given to woman which can be taken back whenever wanted, under the control of man. In other means, this is a social satisfier of man by means of power and control which belongs to himself similar to an Ogbaru Igbo proverb; "Onwunwe nwata na enwe ewu bu na aji", which means "*a child's ownership of a goat is only skin-deep*":

In other words, it is no ownership at all. This is informed by an anecdote which tells of how a father bought a kid and gave it to his son to keep and tend. Everybody called it the son's goat. The son took great care of his goat, feeding it with choice verdure and spring water and the goat fattened accordingly. One day the boy came back home from collecting grass for the goat to find that "his goat" has been slaughtered for meal for some august visitors without his consent or even information. He realized to his chagrin that, that goat was never his, the real owner had demonstrated his ownership. This is analogue to female power. The woman is mother but the child belongs to his father whose name and lineage he bears and belongs to.⁴⁵

⁴³ Helen Chukwuma, *Women's Quest For Rights: African Feminist Theory In Fiction*, Forum on Public Policy, np, 2006, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Ibekwe Chinweizu, *Anatomy of Female Power, A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy*, Sundoor, Nigeria, 1990, p.12.

⁴⁵ *Women's Quest For Rights: African Feminist Theory In Fiction*... p. 3.

In terms of power, there is a great distinction between African man and woman, and this distinction reflects on the roles of genders in social aspects. While Man tries to get the edge over woman by being crude and direct, woman tries to show her power in a more subtle and direct way. Man demonstrates his power in aggressive and physical ways, and woman resists this by being maneuver against aggressiveness and behaves in psychological ways in order to manipulate her own rights, so it can be said that man seems to be more powerful than woman because of the visible form of power of man but woman whose power is seen as inferior to man is more effective in long term. But still man is more esteemed than woman because of the harshness and aggressiveness of him which is visible to society as a concrete manner and a victory.

Some kind of concepts changed as the educational life of women improved, because women's main dependence on their husbands were because of their economic attachment to them and this situation changed only with advanced educations of women. The marriage life of African society in 19th century also reflects some crucial changes of women in accordance to their sophistication.

Previously women would marry just because of the irrefutable fate of a woman which is turned out with marriage. But, the meaning of marriage changed substantially and women of latter generation started to get marry as a means of love so they had more option other than marriage in their social life; they would also divorce if they were not happy. They became aware of the fact that marriage is a sacred institution and they did not have to sustain a bad marriage believing that marriage is not the only way of life.

Similar to the case of marriage, the concepts about mother-hood changed and African feminism showed that they were not against the motherhood or anti- male but they were against the concrete roles given to them. Women were determined to end their marriage even if they had children and they were receptive about new relationships other than their husbands, and their children were important for women to be their protector instead of their husbands:

Marriage or no marriage, have children. Your children will take care of you in old age. You will be very lonely if you do not have children. As a mother, you are fulfilled.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Flora Nwapa, *One is Enough*, Tana Press, Enugu, 1990, p. 9.

With the arrival of Western legal arrangements to African society, women experienced both disadvantages and advantages in civil laws. At first, Western legal institutions clashed with traditional norms. Women were not fond of these regulations because, there was a great inequality between genders and men were accepted as the proprietors of most of the properties in the community including women.

This new regulations in civil life, gave women chance to reject the inequalities between genders and defend their own rights. While formerly, women were just called as “the wives of” their husbands, the new civil laws gave women privileges in marriage. For example, women could obtain rights to claim property in case of death of their husbands or divorce and because of some similar advantages to this, regulations about civil rights of Western were applied to African society more easily.

2.4. Harlem Renaissance

Technically, having taken the name of the New York City neighbourhood of Harlem, Harlem Renaissance was a period of great cultural production and innovative activities among African American artists, writers, poets and novelists in the field of literature, art, dance and music. It was a source of escaping from the complex and hard life conditions including very small economical budgets and a chance to realize their American Dream (transition).

It is an intellectual blossoming and awakening that took place in the South of America, in the first half of 20th century. Until South region’s joining to the American Union, here was consisted of agrarian community which was isolated to the world. After the civil war, this area was heavily affected by the industrial and technological revolution when compared to the other regions, because this was a sudden and unexpected impact of urban society to this rural region. The war accelerated the process of this industrialization, because when a large amount of white men left their homelands for war, both blacks and women were demanded in order to answer to the need of labour force of the society. Developments in the fields of communication and transportation gave opportunity to Southern Society of reaching the new world out of their isolated area and having their own world of ideas. So with the Southern Society’s penetration to the middle working class in the process of industrialization, in addition to

economical life of society, the constructions of society and gender roles also changed with new opportunities given to them.

During the First World War, Americans were lack of qualified soldiers and they felt the need for the power of African Americans. In return for that, African American soldiers demanded their existence as full American citizens, not as slaves. Thus, the nationalism of black society raised and this gave birth to Harlem Renaissance. This process, however, was not so accessible because of the race conflicts between the white and black as it was stated in the poem *If We Must Die* by Claude McKay. Following the war, the more black people demanded their rights and respect in return for their military service, the more whites responded with harsh race riots, racism, murderous anger and oppression for their demands.

Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Duke Ellington are among the pioneers of Harlem Renaissance though some of them deny being a part of that movement. Although the heyday of this movement was between 1920s and 1930s, the foundation of Harlem Renaissance, also called as New Negro Movement, was laid in earlier generations by intellectual individuals. As Houston asserts:

The New Negro is a kind of manual of maroonage, a voice of a northern, urban black population that has radically absented itself from the erstwhile plantations and devastated country districts of the South. Combining a panoply of folk sounds with traditional artistic forms and entrepreneurial and practical concerns of black liberation, The New Negro projects an articulate, nationalistic, and independent black voice. That voice – if at times too sanguine, overly self-conscious and self-confident – constitutes a high point for energies set in motion at the turn of the century.⁴⁷

The main reason of this movement was The Civil War and its impacts over African Americans. They wanted to do away with racial barriers in order to have better educational opportunities and to abolish the system of slavery which had always been identified with African American people, particularly with Negro women. With the hope of survival, most of African American people left south and immigrated north regions where they could behave, to some extent, free from their socially given “slave” identity. This migration was also prompted by some social factors:

a labour surplus in the South, prompted both by poor crops and the forcing of sharecroppers off plantations: a combination of natural catastrophes, including

⁴⁷ A. Baker Houston Jr. *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 94.

floods, droughts and a boll weevil infestation that disrupted cotton production; and southern anti black violence.⁴⁸

Upon this immigration, a great number of African- American colleges and universities and cultural places like theatres were founded, and so an opportunity to gain public roles in the society arose for black community. Some important ones of these were William Edward Burghardt and James Weldon Johnson. The intellectuals, innovative writers and artists began gathering in Harlem Manhattan and Greenwich Village in order to create new ideas, work together and catch the national attention. Some of the black people migrated in Detroit and Chicago to take advantage of economic and social opportunities and some black people settled down in New York City for its cultural life and facilities, which means that the reason of the immigration was not only economic but also cultural. Still, this community definitely managed this transition through conveying their thoughts by means of literature and art. In this respect, Harlem Renaissance is also regarded as the first major cultural and social awakening of the African Americans and the most active of artistic, educational and intellectual movement by Negroes. Along with the cultural and economic developments in Harlem, the wealth of society increased when compared to times of slavery. After the national depression caused by tragic fall of American markets in 1929 which is also known as “*Black Tuesday*”⁴⁹, the ascent of African-American citizens among the Americans became easier and this was an opportunity for them to show their existence which was not managed by their ancestors:

It is a good thing that (the editor) Dorothy West is doing in instituting a magazine (*Challenge*) through which the voices of younger Negro writers can be heard. The term “younger Negro writers” connotes a degree of disillusionment and disappointment for those who a decade ago hailed with loud huzzas the dawn of the Negro literary millennium. We expected much; perhaps, too much. I now judge that we ought to be thankful for the half-dozen younger writers who did emerge and make a place for themselves.⁵⁰

Although African American society had their own culture and literature in times of slavery, not until the new revolutionary Negro movement could they find any

⁴⁸ <http://www.docdatabase.net/more-060404-the-women-of-the-harlem-renaissance-799652.html> (17.12.2012)

⁴⁹ The most catastrophic stock market crash in the history of the United States, Black Tuesday took place on October 29, 1929 and was when the price of stocks completely collapsed. It was because of this day that the Roaring Twenties came to a stumbling halt and, in its place, was the Great Depression. It all started a half a week earlier on Black Thursday or, due to Europe’s time difference, Black Friday. This was a time of incredible instability. <http://www.blacktuesday.org/> (24.02.2012)

⁵⁰ Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, Oxford University Press, np. , 1976, p. 390.

opportunity to expose these characteristics because of the social pressure over them. The revolutionary features of Harlem made this movement a renaissance act. Whereas some critics claim that the works of literature, art and music were born with Harlem Renaissance, this historic moment was the rebirth of cultural, economic and ethnical life of African American society. The main idea of the New Negro movement was to carry out nationwide protests in order to raise new awareness of becoming a nation and to protect the African history. Protests were important and essential because of the issue of racism. Although there was a slave free region and there was considerable decrease in the slavery at least in urban life, the black society was still considered to be the slaves of white community. At this point the importance of literature appeared as a means of chain between cultures and races in order to demolish and decrease the pressure of whites on blacks. By doing so, the effect of Renaissance was going to be nationwide instead of local.

Through the Harlem Renaissance, the middle class white people showed interest in this black community in order to experience the odd black life, and the effects of discrimination disappeared in time. Perhaps the best example of this is the change of a night club named “Cotton Club” in the region of Harlem:

... nightclubs like the Cotton Club, a whites-only club where blacks were the staff and the entertainment. The Cotton Club, where the floorshows often portrayed blacks as primitives, expanded opportunities for individual artists who performed there. In some senses, it also limited the black community through its emphasis on blacks’ exoticism and otherness⁵¹.

The change of this night club also indicates the intricate relationship between the aesthetics and racial politics of African American society by the rise of renaissance. The nationwide intention of the renaissance was *to move Afro-American from subservience, low esteem, and dependency to the status of respected and boldly outspoken nation.*⁵²

Inevitably, some conflicts occurred among the blacks. While some believed in the power of renaissance, the rest considered this movement as a redundant act. George Schuyler, one of the authors of the era, defended the redundancy of the renaissance asking that “*Why should Negro artists of America vary from the national artistic norm*

⁵¹ http://www.oup.com/us/pdf/americanlit/h_renaissance.pdf, p. 153. (12.09.2012)

⁵² *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance...* p. 94.

when Negro artists in other countries have not done so?”⁵³, in his article Negro-Art Hokum which was published in *The Nation* in 1926. On the other hand, Langston Hughes, a poet of the time, defended the power of renaissance and the power of black soul and described the proud of being a black man; the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro-art in America- this urge within the race towards whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible”, in his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” which was published in “*The Nation*” in 1926. Owing to these opinions, Harlem Renaissance is also a movement of the arising opposite ideas of not only white-black relationships but also black-black relationships.

The acceptance of Harlem Renaissance was not so difficult in terms of its main ideal, because during this period, also named as “Jazz Age”, the white popular American writers and intellectuals like Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, T.S. Eliot, and Eugene O’Neill were in a struggle to get rid of the European effect on their literature and culture and to “*separate contemporary American literature from the stultifying influence of late-nineteenth-century American literature*”⁵⁴. Similar to the Jazz Age, African Americans’ main ideal was to declare their independence from the dominant ruling white society; therefore, the transition period was easier than it was expected. In the book *The New Negro* (1920) by Alain Locke, there was a huge conflict between two cultures, and so the blacks’ writing style was not so alienated as to have a permanent own style. In order to make the renaissance lasting, black artists had to form their own form and style which was related to both American and African artistry.

In literature world of the age, women writers created their own protagonists according to their personal desires and experiences, and showed their struggles against Southern traditional Southern ideal of woman. In this process of women writers’ indicating their literal struggle, woman was dealt as a gender regardless of her race; *while working at it, she attempts to create a more inclusive canon by incorporating women writers, black and white, into the existing one instead of developing a separate female canon.*⁵⁵

⁵³ George S. Schuyler, *The Negro-Art Hokum*, *Nation* 122 (June 16, 1926): 662-3.

⁵⁴ http://www.oup.com/us/pdf/americanlit/h_renaissance.pdf , p. 154. (12.09.2012)

⁵⁵ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened*... p. 16

Their main aim was to focus more on the problems of their own black society and the gender problems than racial conflicts. Their primary aim was to expose the place of black woman in the male dominated society and to equalize the rights and social roles of male and female. Although their subject matter only seemed as gender problems and the women, they were also interested in cultural class interactions. In this respect, they were different from the other contemporary male writers most of whom used racial themes in their work of arts:

For women writers of the Harlem Renaissance like Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen, and Zora Neale Hurston, the effort to articulate effectively a sense of self included an exploration of female sexuality and of romantic relationships. Significantly, although all three of these authors focused on a similar problem for black women, they presented a broad range of answers, a spectrum that paralleled and reflected the class and cultural tension facing their male counterparts.⁵⁶

In common, the novels of female writers in the Harlem Renaissance and the female protagonists are in search of their freedom socially. And novels are generally based on the tragic or troublesome consequences of heroines. These female heroines face many dangers both racial and sexual in search of gender identity, freedom and respect in the community. Zora Neale Hurston's most famous novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is one of the most featured low-down folk's examples of "bildungsroman" of this age. It is the story of "one young black woman's quest for self-determination and her salvation through immersion in the black folk culture of central Florida"⁵⁷. In the novel, Hurston tells the story of a black female's hardships with a folk culture based background. Although Zora Neale Hurston's success is also derived from these styles, some critics and writers like Richard Wright criticize her for using the black folk culture in her novel. In his essay "*Blueprint for Negro Writing*", Richard Wright rejects Hurston for her inaccurate criticism using the social, economic and cultural disorder of the nation and especially Southern region.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ http://www.oup.com/us/pdf/americanlit/h_renaissance.pdf, p. 158. (12.09.2012)

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 159.

⁵⁸ <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/grand-jean/hurston/chapters/time.html> (01.03.2012)

CHAPTER III

3.1. Autobiographical Features of Kate Chopin

Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* was not popular at the time it was written because the ideas and beliefs of Kate Chopin about women and their roles in both domestic and public life were so different from the commonly accepted norms that her novel could not find the well deserved place among the society of the era. She was one of the pioneers of the feminist movement in the 19th century. Her expressions and use of languages as a courageous woman writer made her ahead of time. Many writers like Bernard Koloski, Per Seyersted, Thomas Bonner and Emily Toth wrote biographies of Kate Chopin and they made countless researches to understand her world of thought better and above all they tried to understand why Chopin could not be understood by the people of her age and why her novel could not gain its deserved fame and importance.

The biography of Kate Chopin, written by Emily Toth in 1990, concentrates on the idea that reading *The Awakening* is the only way to give a better understanding of both Chopin's ideas and her life. *The Awakening* is a fictitious work but when it is examined by Toth, it is a fictitious autobiography which reflects Kate Chopin's life partially; Chopin's childhood and family, her friends, relationships, love affairs, the places she lived in, the structure of the society and how Chopin came to write.

Catherine (Kate) O'Flaherty was the second child of Thomas O'Flaherty and Eliza Faris. Her mother was of French extraction. She was bilingual and could speak both French and English. Above all she was affected mostly by French Literature and feminism; she could use it as witty as she did in *The Awakening*. In the novel, most of the characters talk in French including the parrot with whose voice the novel begins; "*Allez vous-en! Allez vous-en! Sapristi!*"⁵⁹ For Bernard Koloski, in Louisiana where Chopin lived there were many bilingual people speaking French, Spanish and English and by blending these languages, Chopin tries to make a more accurate character representation of the place she grew up. In the novel Edna gets married to a Creole man, Leonce Pontellier who is different from her own society and through the use of French

⁵⁹ Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Other Stories*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, p. 3. (All further references from the book will be made to this edition of the book with the author's surname and page number)

she uses wit as a means of clash which symbolizes the disparateness between two different societies; American and Creole society. Although Edna knows French well, this does not mean that she belongs to Creole society; *“She was an American woman, with a small infusion of French which seemed to have been lost in dilution”*(Chopin, 6).

At the age of five, Kate Chopin was left an orphan when her father was killed in a railway accident. She attended St. Louis Academy of the Sacred Heart for ten years and during this period she was away from her family. Till her marriage, she did not experience a male role model in her life whose decisions are affective and precise on females. The characters and people in her life were all women; her mother, grandmother, great grandmother and Sacred Heart nun. She was raised in matriarchy where women made their own decisions. And Edna shows great similarity to Chopin in this way. At a very early age, Edna lost her mother traumatically and was left an orphan and she grew up under the care of her father and elder sister:

The action was at first a little confusing to Edna, but she soon lent herself readily to the Creole's gentle caress. She was not accustomed to an outward and spoken expression of affection, either in herself or in others. She and her younger sister, Janet, had quarreled a good deal through force of unfortunate habit. Her older sister, Margaret, was matronly and dignified, probably from having assumed matronly and housewifely responsibilities too early in life, their mother having died when they were quite young, Margaret was not effusive; she was practical. Edna had had an occasional girl friend, but whether accidentally or not, they seemed to have been all of one type—the self-contained. She never realized that the reserve of her own character had much, perhaps everything, to do with this.(Chopin, 20)

Edna is not satisfied with her childhood, because upon her mother's death, her father tries to bring up her in patriarchal ideas. Being lack of a mother in her life, Edna feels herself fully suppressed and handicapped by patriarchy and so she can not balance between the decisions of male and female. With this dissatisfaction, Chopin reflects her own choice of feminist order over patriarchy. And Chopin's father's death is symbolized through Edna's spiritual isolation from her father.

In Kate Chopin's marriage to Oscar Chopin, it is obvious that Oscar did not want to subordinate over Kate. She confides in her commonplace book that:

I am going to be married to the right man. It does not seem strange as I had thought it would--I feel perfectly calm, perfectly collected. And how surprised everyone was, for I had kept it so secret!⁶⁰

This was the kind of marriage which Edna had always desired. Edna's husband Leonce treats her like a property that belongs to him:

You are burnt beyond recognition," he added, looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage. (Chopin, 4)

Upon death of Oscar Chopin, Kate Chopin was left without social protection in the society, but nevertheless she was strong enough to earn a living again. Kate Chopin reflects the deficiency and death of Oscar Chopin in the novel via physical distancing and moving away from her husband, Leonce Pontellier and his house. Kate Chopin's compulsory separation from her husband Oscar Chopin because of his death results in Edna's choice of living alone and her rejection of her husband's wealth and struggle for her own livelihood by moving into a smaller house to live alone:

...I have a little money of my own from my mother's estate, which my father sends me by driblets. I won a large sum this winter on the races, and I am beginning to sell my sketches. Laidpore is more and more pleased with my work; he says it grows in force and individuality. I cannot judge of that myself, but I feel that I have gained in ease and confidence. However, as I said, I have sold a good many through Laidpore. I can live in the tiny house for little or nothing, with one servant. Old Celestine, who works occasionally for me, says she will come stay with me and do my work. I know I shall like it, like the feeling of freedom and independence.(Chopin, 88)

Similar to Edna's romantic relationship with Robert Lebrun, Kate Chopin also had a relationship with a local married painter, Albert Sampite. But this relationship did not last more than two years. She moved to St. Louis back to her mother's home. Both Edna's and Kate Chopin's relationships are non-conformist because these are relationships in which there are married figures; like Edna, Albert Sampite is also a married man. And neither of these relationships end up with marriage.

According to Kate Chopin's daughter, her mother (Kate Chopin) had an idea that everything in life has beauty and brutality, good and evil, easy sides and hard sides. If someone wants to achieve something beautiful, he/she may have to face with some difficulties in this process. But the important thing is to be aware of both sides of life:

⁶⁰ <http://www.katechopin.org/biography.shtml> (11.01.2012)

According to her daughter, Chopin had a ‘habit of looking on the amusing side of everything’, but also ‘rather a sad nature’. She knew that life has both beauty and brutality – and she also knew how to keep secrets.⁶¹

Kate Chopin reflects these ideas in her novel *The Awakening* through Edna’s relationship with Robert. Although Edna’s relationship with Robert seems innocent and full of romance, it becomes brutal as their relationship proceeds, because Edna is stuck between the good side of Robert and the evil side of her own marriage. They walk around, have a talk, and they are in a process of friendship that turns into love. Edna feels so relaxed when she is with Robert whereas she feels bad and anxious when she comes back to her husband Leonce. Edna even learns swimming which is an important way of her self-awakening with Robert. But when compared to Edna, Robert is more coward because he always thinks about the norms of society and behaves in accordance with them. In brief, Robert is a conformist particularly when their love increasingly grows serious and so Robert leaves Edna thinking that she is a married woman and they can not be together.

After Kate Chopin’s mother dies of cancer in 1885, she falls into a deep grief. Seeing Chopin’s distress, her doctor, Dr. Frederick Kolbenheyer, recommends Chopin to try writing in order to get rid of her grief and recover again, and he wants to encourage her to do that.⁶²

Kolbenheyer is probably the one who introduced Kate Chopin to Pulitzer and to his partner John Dillon, and theirs was the first daily newspaper to publish a Chopin story. But his most important contribution was to repeat to Kate Chopin what Madam O’Meara, her beloved Sacred Heart teacher, had told her more than twenty years earlier: you have a talent, and you must write.⁶³

And in 1890, Kate Chopin becomes the first professional woman writer in St. Louis and writes her two masterpiece novels (*At Fault* and *The Awakening*). By the advice of her doctor, Kate Chopin turns back to her former life and she awakens her soul and discovers the writer woman inside her. In *The Awakening* Edna is similarly prompted by Mademoiselle Reisz, the artist woman of the society. When Edna listens to

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<http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/companions/chapter.jsf?bid=CBO9781139001984&cid=CBO9781139001984A005> (10.01.2012)

⁶² It is interesting to note that in the 19th century and even the first half of the 20th centuries, in case of depression the major therapy was a rest. The doctors forbade any activity including writing. However, as we see from the example, there were good exceptions in America.

⁶³ Emily Toth, *Unveiling Kate Chopin*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS, 1999, , p. 106.

Reisz playing the piano for the first time, she is affected by her art and courageous soul that challenges her emotionally and triggers the first step towards her awakening.

She waited for the material pictures which she thought would gather and blaze before her imagination. She waited in vain. She saw no pictures of solitude, of hope, of longing, or of despair. But the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body. She trembled, she was choking, and the tears blinded her (Chopin, 29).

Kate Chopin was a woman who lived in accordance with both society's needs and her individual world. It is probable that she had struggle between her inner world and external world. When Chopin's novel *The Storm* was discovered by Seyersted in a diary dated 1894, it could not have any chance to be published because it was too erotic and explicit for society. Moreover, while some of her autobiographies were concentrated on the men in her life, she was mainly connected with the women in her life, and contrary to the belief that she was content with her life, she questioned the rights and wrongs in the life she had experienced. And Chopin reflects this with a quotation that identifies both Edna and herself:

Even as a child she had lived her own small life all within herself. At a very early period she had apprehended instinctively the dual life—that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions.(Chopin, 16).

The father figure in the novel also represents Oscar Chopin's father in real life. Oscar's father was a grouchy father who treated his wife and children badly. Although Oscar helped his battered mother escape, she turned back again and died largely because of her husband's behavior. In the novel, Edna's father is also a grouchy father who leads to his wife's death implicitly; "*The Colonel was perhaps unaware that he had coerced his own wife into her grave*"(Chopin, 79).

Kate Chopin was so accustomed to the life in Creole society that in South Louisiana, where she was born, she was something of a foreigner. Although Chopin felt herself as a woman among Creoles, she was unfamiliar with their open and affectionate ways of communication. Like Kate Chopin, Edna was also unfamiliar with the behaviors of Creole women:

Mrs. Pontellier, though she had married a Creole, was not thoroughly at home in the society of Creoles; never before had she been thrown so intimately among them. There were only Creoles that summer at Lebrun's. They all knew each other, and felt like one large family, among whom existed the most amicable relations. A characteristic which distinguished them and which impressed Mrs.

Pontellier most forcibly was their entire absence of prudery. Their freedom of expression was at first incomprehensible to her, though she had no difficulty in reconciling it with a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn and unmistakable.(Chopin, 12)

Kate Chopin had a solitary soul and she was different from her society. She used to promenade on horseback in the afternoons, go for walks on her own and smoke cigarettes regardless of the people around her. Local people stopped and gawked at her because no women used to do such things. One of her neighbors liked to tell everyone about her like a dirty lady. With such insults, society is trying to heal Kate Chopin to become aware of her duties. Like Chopin, Edna is also tried to be healed through warnings and some kind of commands from her husband and the people around her. She is “*reminded of her rings which she had given to her husband before leaving for the beach*”(Chopin, 4) by her husband to make her remember her marriage. While Adele is giving birth, she says to Edna “*think of children Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them*” (Chopin, 122) to remind her mother-woman role in the society and maternal side which is disregarded according to Adele.

In general, looking through the novel *The Awakening*, it is possible to learn about the life styles of the people and the conflicts of the society in which Kate Chopin lived. The names and the characters in the novel, though their names are partially changed, reflect the real people and settings.

During her married life, however, she managed to make notes of the stories she picked up in the salons or the gossip of the street. Those she often used later in her short stories and in *The Awakening*. Most characters encountered in the novel are indeed true-life people who shared many characteristics or similar stories with the protagonists. Edna Pontellier, for instance is probably inspired by Edna Pontillon, a woman who gave up her art, to become one of her husband's possessions

Similar is the case of Leonce Olivier whose wife left him for another man. It is therefore important to keep the link to reality in mind during the discussion of the novel and why a biographical approach to the novel is both necessary and justified. Not only do many protagonists reflect real people, but the overall society of Kate Chopin's time is also mirrored.⁶⁴

⁶⁴Claudia Dewitz, “*The Awakening*” by Kate Chopin - Edna Pontellier, a Woman Fated to Die, Seminar paper, Grin Publishing, 2010, p. 4.

3.2. Autobiographical Features of Zora Neale Hurston

In her literary career, Zora Neale Hurston had always been criticized for not using the themes of racism and for not defending the rights of her own black community against white community. Hurston did not mean to do that, because in her novels she made use of the perspective of her own life. She did not want to depict the blacks as a defeated, humiliated, degraded and victimized society. This is because she did not observe and experience such racial harshness during her lifetime and she wrote as if she were unaware of the problems of black life.

Eatonville, Florida where Zora Neale Hurston was born and grew up seems to be the unique place for her, since it was the place where her personality was shaped. For this reason she used Eatonville as the setting of her some novels, particularly in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. She lived in Eatonville and the themes she used in her novels were nothing more than her observations. She had hardly any experience with racism because her hometown consisted of black society. Only lack of racist experiences made her write on other themes such as love, sexuality and gender relationships as is the case in "*Their Eyes Were Watching God*".

Eatonville is one of the most important places for black society, because it was the first place of incorporation of Negro Community. And it is obvious that Zora Neale Hurston is very important for the people of Eatonville. Today, some festivals such as *Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities* are held to honour the writer and "to make Eatonville an internationally-recognized tourism destination of the arts and culture from throughout the African Diaspora, with special emphasis on the multidiscipline as represented in the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston."⁶⁵ Zora's father, John Hurston was once elected as the mayor of the town. The place, even today, is still governed by some rules which were written by him. For both of the women, Hurston and her protagonist Janie Crawford, Eatonville was the best place to live in.

Since Hurston's father was the mayor of Eatonville, Hurston was also respected as the daughter of John Hurston. As stated before, Eatonville was a place which was consisted of black race and no case of racism happened there. Similar to the position of Hurston's father as a mayor, in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie is also

⁶⁵ <http://zorafestival.org/about-the-organization-who-we-are/> (04.06.2012)

the wife of the mayor and founder of the town, and so is respected and honoured at the same level with her husband, Joe Starks and she lives there for a long time during her marriage to Starks. Joe Starks, the husband of Janie, is an imitation of Zora's father in real life in that both men moved to Eatonville to start a new life, gained success as the mayor and businessmen of Eatonville, in other words both of them gained their esteemed careers in Eatonville. And both of the women's formative years passed here and thus Eatonville was an effective and persistent place for them.

Zora Neale Hurston was the fifth of eight children. She was always supported and encouraged to be independent, courageous and creative by her mother. She always wanted her children to be the best saying “*jump at de sun*” as she states in her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Her mother had always been a source of happiness and strength until she died when Zora was only nine years old. After her death, Zora's father John Hurston re-married and started to treat Zora like an object and rejected her. This case shows great similarity to Janie's being behaved like a mule by her husband. To Joe Starks, his wife is lack of the characteristics of a human being and she can not even have the ability to make a speech:

Thank yuh fuh yo' compliments, but nah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home.⁶⁶

Hurston was among the first black scholars to research folklore of black society deeply. She was different from the society because while many scholars were trying to reject and deny their own black identity and black rural culture, Hurston celebrated it with pride, both in her life and in her novels. Similar to Hurston, Janie was also different from the society in terms of her physical appearance and her thoughts and ideas. The symbol of hair that Hurston employed in the novel is one of the best examples of it. In the novel, Janie's hair and wearing style make her stand out as independent, courageous and powerful especially when she returned back to Eatonville:

The men noticed her firm buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume; then her pugnacious breasts trying to bore holes in her shirt. They, the men, were saving with the mind what they lost with the eye. The women took the faded shirt and muddy overalls and laid them away for remembrance. It

⁶⁶ Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2006 p. 43. (All further references from the book will be made to this edition of the book with the author's surname and page number)

was a weapon against her strength and if it turned out of no significance, still it was a hope that she might fall to their level some day.(Hurston 2)

Her hair is far more luxurious than that of the other people in her society. She is made to bind up her hair up by her husband Joe. But soon after the death of her husband, “*she tore of the kerchief from her head and let down her plentiful hair*”(Hurston 87). Janie’s hair is vital to her self-esteem when compared to other women in the society who are not aware of their beauty. While most of the black women of that age have straight ragged hair, Janie has curly well kept hair she takes a pride in. In the novel, her ethnic identity is also different because she is not a full black citizen but a crossbreed of three-quarters Caucasian and one-quarter African American. Perhaps, all these characteristics account for her being different from society and her desire to create an unusual protagonist.

Their Eyes Were Watching God can be studied as a kind of autobiographical novel of Zora Neale Hurston, similar to her main autobiography “*Dust Tracks on Road*”. Hurston wrote her novel in Caribbean in 1937 following the end of a love affair of hers. She finished writing the novel in seven weeks and she narrated a woman’s quest for self-realization and love affairs in her novel similar to those in her own life and experiences. She loaded her own characteristics onto Janie; she is controversial, independent, eccentric, rebellious, arrogant and highly outspoken.

Especially, the first five chapters of the novel hold a mirror to the early life of Zora Neale Hurston. Since Hurston lost her mother at a very early age and because of the insusceptible behaviours of her father, she was greatly influenced by her grandmother’s love and interest toward her. Similarly in the novel, Janie’s grandmother is the only support and source of love among the people around her. Grandmother of Janie, who is also called Nanny, works as a child minder with a white family. But Janie did not experience any racial segregation during her childhood from this white family or any other person. Moreover, Janie and her grandmother were always supported by this family; she, therefore, does not become aware of her African- American identity in frame of racism. Even when she becomes aware of her race looking at a photo of herself, she does not pay any attention to this:

‘So when we looked at depicture and everybody got pointed out there wasn’t nobody left except a real dark little girl with long hair standing by Eleanor.

Dat's where Ah wuz s'posed to be, but Ah couldn't recognize dat dark child as me. So Ah ast, 'where is me? Ah don't see me.'

'Everybody laughed, even Mr. Washburn. Miss Nellie, de Mama of de chillun who come back home after her husband dead, she pointed to de dark one and said, 'Dat's you, Alphabet, don't you know yo' ownself?'

'Dey all useter call me Alphabet 'cause so many people had done named me different names. Ah looked at de picture a long time and seen it was mah dress and mah hair so Ah said:

'Aw, aw! Ah'm colored!'(Hurston 9)

This is probably because of Hurston's anti-racial environment in her puppyhood times. Hurston had social interactions with white people, got on the carriages of white riders without any thought of a racial threat.

The real age of Janie is debated by the people in her town in the very beginning of the novel. This case also shows great similarity to Hurston. There is not clear knowledge about when she was born; in 1891 or in 1901, because Hurston was dishonest about her age. She was even enrolled in Morgan State University in 1917, signing her age as sixteen although she was older.

In addition to these similarities, love and marriage life of Janie also have many common grounds with Hurston. Both of them had several marriages in search of self-realization through love and both of them had courageous and rebellious soul in their quests for happiness. Although Janie does not have any emotion of love, she marries Logan Killicks with the enforcement of her grandmother who wants Janie to be secure and have a good life. During her marriage with Logan, Janie hopes that her feelings can change and she can love Logan in time. But this does not happen and Janie leaves Logan, running off with Joe Starks, her second husband, and then finally with Tea Cake with a hope of love. Her divorce from her first husband Logan is just one of the steps in her quest which would help her reach true love and self-realization. There is hope on the horizon with Joe Starks:

Janie pulled back a long time because he [Joe] did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon. He spoke for change and chance. (Hurston 29)

Thereupon Janie gains the courage to elope with Joe. This rebellious act of Janie reflects the thoughts and experiences of Zora Neale Hurston. In Zora's search of real

love, she meets a man called Herbert Sheen in the college and marries him in a very short time. She divorces him four years later in 1931 and was not surprised at this divorce because just like Janie, Hurston also had some hopes to root feelings of love, but this did not happen. The only difference between two marriages is that Hurston married voluntarily and Janie married through the compulsion of her grandmother. Similar to Janie, Hurston also divorced her husband because of some insults and enforcement of her husband.

Zora Neale Hurston's second marriage is similar to the affair of Janie and Tea Cake. Both women remarried in order to find the real love and respect which they could not find in their former marriages. Janie starts a relationship with Tea Cake in the hope of real love after her husband Joe Starks dies. Tea Cake is younger than Janie who is in her forties. Like Janie, Hurston's second affair happened with a man who was younger than her. In both of the relationships, women are more passionate and more mature and hardworking when compared to their husbands. Hurston's final marriage with Albert Price III resembles Janie's relationship with Tea Cake in respect to the deepness of long-wanted and searched love. But both of these relationships did not last very long; Tea Cake is killed by Janie at a moment of madness for the purpose of self defence while Hurston and Albert Price III breaks up because of some different goals which were prevented by each other.

Both of Janie's and Hurston's grandmothers are scared of racism and its threats, so they try to protect them against the white people and men. Being fearful of white dominance, Nanny says:

So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule ud de world so fur as Ah can see. (Hurston 14)

Hurston's grandmother gets worried for fear of being lynched when she gets in contact with the white, and similarly Janie's grandmother gets anxious for fear of sexual abuse and rape when she sees Janie kissing a man. Opposed to the ideas of grandmothers, Janie and Hurston never perceived the white race as a threat because they were accepted by the white and they were the company of white race.

Janie and her grandmother moved to their own house with a small garden. Here in this garden, Janie establishes some kind of relationships with trees and plants. Similar

to Janie, Hurston was always interested in trees and plants which could treat her mental disorders and whenever she had any problem, she would communicate with trees and tell her problems to the nature.

Zora Neale Hurston used to have fun during her childhood while she was listening to the gossips of women in the town on the front porch of Joe Clark's store whenever she was sent out. Similarly enough, in the novel there is a gathering point for men in the town. Zora did not have any chance to participate in these conversations because she was too young to join. This place is also imitated and used in the novel as an effective place from Zora's childhood. In the novel, the owner of this shop turns out to be Joe Starks, the second husband of Janie. Here is also a meeting point for the inhabitants of the town and a centre of gossip. Janie is also interested in these gossips, but she is prohibited to do so by her husband, just like Hurston. Although Janie is old enough to participate in these conversations, her husband Joe Starks does not want her to do so, because she has to behave like a noble and a wife of a noble and an esteemed founder.

Hurston used to wander a lot and she liked visiting and living in different places in her life time. She lived in various places such as Eatonville, New York and Baltimore. It is obvious that for her, the people around her are more important than the place she lives in. She searched for security, familiarity and safety rather than the beauty of the place. Perhaps this wandering and quest happened for the sake of some tasks or missions and Hurston reflected this feature on her character Janie. Janie is also wandering for the sake of love and self-realization. Both of the women change their environments in accordance with the places of her husbands and conditions. If we have a glance at the life of Hurston, it is possible to observe that she had many friends around her and she was raised and supported by her mother until her death. She had many intellectual friends like authors, artists during the period of Harlem Renaissance. According to Hurston, the names of her friends were not so important as long as they were by her side with their support and encouragement:

It might be asked in how far it is necessary to give names of Zora's friends and tell under what circumstances they learned to know each other. What is more important is the attitude Zora had towards friendship in general, which is the following:

I am grateful for the friendship of Fanny Hurst and Ethel Waters. But how does one speak of honest gratitude? Who can know the outer ranges of friendship? I am tempted to say that no one can live without it. It seems to me that trying to live without friends, it is like milking a bear to get cream for your morning coffee.⁶⁷

For Janie, her concept of family is rather different from that of Hurston. She is raised under the protection of her grandmother. As a consequence of this manner, Janie is made to marry to Logan by her grandmother for fear that Janie should share the same fate with her mother. Her mother Leafy was raped by her teacher and she became pregnant and gave birth to Janie. In other words, Janie is not the daughter of a standard family. In her opinion friendships and relationships are also important but in order to possess these, she has to have a quest of her self-realization. The environment that Hurston had in the process of Harlem Renaissance was similar to the friends and environment of Janie in the farm during her affair with Tea Cake.

As a writer, Zora Neale Hurston chooses her themes, characters and places in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* from her own experiences and life. Although she was criticized and ignored for not writing within the borders of black rebellion literature, she managed to reflect her own experiences to the novel in general without being prejudiced by black racist tradition.

3.3. The Place of Woman in the Victorian Age

Although the life conditions in Victorian Era shows great similarity to the daily life of 21st century, the condition and place of woman show several differences in terms of social life. Women were always under the control and direction of males and they were substantially restricted. The only salvation for the women was to accept the general belief of society that woman was inferior to man and she was doomed to lead a domestic life in the borders of house. In Victorian society, marriage was the only career for a woman; a woman could be a successful and self-realized woman only if she could fulfil the requirements of a marriage and satisfy her husband and children. A Victorian woman had to be innocent, biddable and submissive. In addition to these, she had to be

⁶⁷Sandra Schemel, *Zora and Janie - A Comparison about the life of Zora Neale Hurston and the fictional character Janie in her novel "Their Eyes were watching God"*, Seminar Paper, Grin Publishing, 2001

lack of intelligence as much as to have intellectual ideas. That is, she had to be under the control of her husband both physically and intellectually.

There is a great difference between the real condition of Victorian woman and her reflected image to the world. In general, Victorian woman is shaped as a home loving and a devoted woman always wearing a tight corset like a housewife who is always satisfied with the marriage life. She does not care for her own needs and ideas, she sacrifices herself for the sake of her marriage, her husband and her motherhood duties, she tries to be the best wife, friend and companion for her husband. She lives in clover and her main duty is to take care of housework while her husband makes her more virtuous. The only necessary thing to achieve these, is having the virtues of innocence, loyalty and purity. But this is just the seen portrait of Victorian woman; next to virtuous and wealthy women, there were women who had to sustain their lives in poverty. These were the working class and generally they were ignored in the portrait of Victorian age.

In the Victorian age, the roles of genders, especially women's, were determined in accordance with church teachings and biological differences. While women were taught to be the most virtuous and moral individuals in the society, they were also restricted with these proposals indirectly. The role of women in this age showed difference with the economic situations and changes in the society. Previously, women were expected to be the owner of domestic household duties, but later with the industrialization, women started to be the economic companion of their husbands in order to contribute to the house budget. With the acceptance of women's power in public in labour force, women demanded more rights than former. The demand of women for having a better and esteemed place in public constitutes a significant place in the rise of Victorian feminism.

For the Victorian society, a woman should not be powerful and prominent character; she had to be weak and inferior character whether she is single or married. She was deprived of power of decision making, and the only thing she could decide on was the menu of the dinner and how to educate her children as their moral teachers. Her main duty was to provide a comfortable place for her husband who got tired of the complex industrial working conditions of the 19th century. So, a man could not be

expected to be engaged with domestic life and while he was making money and providing the economic needs of family, his wife was assumed to fulfil the household management. The main dominating power of Victorian woman was the family life and its responsibilities given to her. According to Victorian beliefs and traditions, woman, whether married or single, was a possession of the house who served for the continuity of family structure. So many women would consume her physical and spiritual youth energy by managing the house.

Education was important in the lives of Victorian women because, with the rise of women education, they would go beyond the borders of living a boredom housewife life and they could struggle for their individual rights. After women's acceptance to schools, many frictions happened between males and females with the idea that women would neglect the house work and this situation could damage the structure of the Victorian family. So the education life of women was restricted to family issues, house economy and all the things related to family and domestic life. For example, Annie Rogers(1856- 1937) who was one of the founding fellows of St. Anne's College, was offered an opportunity to have education in Worcester College for further academic education, but when her sex was turned up, she was rejected and a far less successful male was accepted instead of her. Even if girls were accepted to schools, they were educated in the fields of domestic life and home management just in order to protect the women's inferior place in the society as a Victorian middle class wife and mother. Even those who supported women's education did it in their own interests. But the aim was not a humanistic behaviour towards women because this section used to believe that a woman could only communicate with her husband in an intelligent way through this education.

The desire of education was intense in women's lives, because through education they not only ended their boredom but also they had an opportunity to escape dependence on males. With the acceptance of women in the field of education, some colleges like Queen's College and Bedford College were founded and at these colleges non-conformists girls and the ones who were against the Anglican schools and churches, were given opportunity to have education. In the process of education of women, it was seen that their studies and school lives did not prevent their femininity and their duties as women, and in 1871 Women's Education Union was founded by

Maria Georgina Grey and Emily Sherriff for the improvement of education conditions of women and the suffrage movement.

With the help of unions which defended women's rights, the schools accepted female students for moderate fees and offered them an equal education level with males. Previously, the education given to women was determined according to the class labels of their family. For example, the girls of middle class families were educated to have domestic roles. But later, this situation changed and women had the opportunity for further education and they even took part in social and political positions too. One of the obstacles in women's education was the traditional work roles given to genders. Although women had chance to work in high positions, their salaries were lower and they were discouraged by their male peers.

In the field of politics, women were inferior to men; they had no chance to own any property, and economically they were dependent on their families or husbands to survive. This situation went on like that until 1860s with the emergence of feminism on fighting for the rights of women in working conditions and suffrage. In 1867, National Society for Women's Suffrage was founded by feminist women and radical men, in London, Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, and in some other places, to gain women's identity in parliamentary and the right to vote throughout the country. This community also published "The Women's Suffrage Journal" in order to spread this struggle.

In the case of love affairs, men were allowed to do everything even keeping a mistress with his wife in the same house and both females had to be faithful in any situation. But, similar to this, if a woman had a lover, this would not be welcomed as a normal situation as it was in male's occasion, and this woman was doomed to be externalized out of society.

In Victorian era, a woman whether married or single did not have any right to demand any property because, in the eye of this society, their fathers and husbands were even the owners and masters of women and, women were not real individuals and they were lack of power and intelligence in controlling this property. Even the properties that descended from woman's family used to belong her husband when she got married. This situation changed in 1887 with the Married Woman's Property Act, and the right to have property was given to woman. In the case of a divorce, woman did not have any

right to demand any property and moreover if the divorced couple has children, their authority was given to father and, mother was not allowed to see them again. In addition to these a divorced woman did not have any acceptance in the society with the thought that she would be a threat to the moral values of the structure of family in the society.

As it is in most of the societies, there were also differences between women according to the social classes they belong to. A wealthy woman was supposed to improve her marriage career on the basement of good economic situation. Her main duties were sewing, cooking, fulfilling, being a perfect mother, and representing her husband in domestic life within public sphere. But this situation was quite different for the women of poor families; they could only survive with the pickings that were left from the wealthy families, and they had to work in socially accepted jobs for their earnings.

In early Victorian period, women were able to work in the family or help their husbands. With the rise of industrialisation and migration from rural to urban life, women had chance to work in factories. Although this situation is seen as a good opportunity for women, they were dissuaded from these jobs by compelling them to work for long hours in return for lower salaries than men. Because as women took place in labour force, they became the breadwinners by being more preferable when compared to men. In working class, even if it seems that there is no distinction according to marital status, if a woman was married, this job would affect her marriage negatively and cause divorcing. In traditional social aspect, the salary of woman in a job was not as important as a man's salary:

Wages for men, also called the family wage was that a man's salary permitted him to support his family, while for the working class woman, it was however, it was believed to be far less important and constituted a lower wage.⁶⁸

The biological features of women were also another group of obstacles in their working conditions. In the case of pregnancy and household duties, their wages were lowered and suppressed by their principals and peers. Once a woman takes place in working positions in Victorian era, she has to prove her worth in order to main her subsistence in this job, while a man does not have to prove this, because even if the male is a good or bad worker, he always finds his place without questioning. In 1874,

⁶⁸ http://logicmgt.com/1876/overview/victorian_woman/victorian_working_woman.htm (19.06.2012)

Women's Protective and Provident League, and Women's Industrial Council were established in order to defend the women's rights and balance the conditions between male and female in the field of career.

In Victorian era, the place of woman was restricted to the borders of her family's or husband's house. The only expectation of society from women was to carry on domestic duties as women's capacity were admitted to be adequate for only these, and this kind of a view removed women from the public sphere and Victorian feminism emerged in order to balance the public and domestic roles among the genders and ensure the rights of women. In addition to this, the effects of industrialization can not be disregarded too, because with the rise of economic opportunities, women gained some new roles, and in the process of being adapted to these roles, feminism took place, actively.

In this age, as man started to be interested in workplace and public sphere, woman was neglected and she was accepted as if she were only interested in and busy with domestic life, family, children and especially with her husband and as a result of this, women lost their roles in production and economic independence. Upon this situation, the only choice for women to gain their power which they lost in public sphere and workplace, was to be virtuous and respectful through fulfilling their moral duties and the expectations of society. But against the general thought, this polarization was not an indicator of women's weakness; the woman of the age was not weak and passive; she became more powerful and virtuous, by obeying some traditional norms and servicing for domesticity and became the moral teachers of society.

Being the moral teachers of society in the constitution of family, women were more active in moral socialization. They were volunteer transporters of moral ideals from their homes to poor families. So it can be said that women were the bridges between classes and the provider of unity.

For Victorian woman, domestic life was a way of living through which they created their own borders of independence in patriarchal society, and for them being more comfortable in the society was only possible through fulfilling the requirements of domesticity. In order to teach women how to become a more powerful individual within society and home, some written and oral instructions were made. Among these Book of

Household Management, written by Isabella Beeton, became the most popular teaching book for women for fifty years after its publication in 1861. In this book, a Victorian woman was enlightened how to achieve the household management and how to be a perfect wife and mother.

Manner and style of dressing was also another indicator of the woman's economic situation. By looking at a woman's physical appearance, her wealth could be understood clearly, because a woman could only show her husband's wealth condition by her clothes. So it can be said that the more clothes a woman had, the richer her family was:

A wealthy woman's day was governed by etiquette rules that encumbered her with up to six wardrobe changes a day and the needs varied over three seasons a year. A lady changed through a wide range of clothing as occasion dictated.

Fashion, history and photographic records clearly illustrate there was morning and mourning dress, walking dress, town dress, visiting dress, receiving visitors dress, travelling dress, shooting dress, golf dress, seaside dress, golf dress, races dress, concert dress, opera dress, dinner and ball dress.⁶⁹

The idea of home for Victorian woman, was just like a world of female in which she was far away from the complexity of public and world of work. Even the bunchy dresses of women empathize that a Victorian woman who belonged to middle class was delimited to the house in which the male was the only breadwinner and economic power. But in time, the clothes of women started to hold a mirror to their sexuality instead of implying on their characteristics of being housewives:

Women's clothes began to mirror women's function. In the 19th century women's fashions became more sexual- the hips, buttocks and breasts were exaggerated with crinolines, hoopskirts and corsets which nipped in the waist and thrust out the breasts. The female body was dressed to emphasise a woman's separation from the world of work. By wearing dresses that resembled their inferior furnishings, women became walking symbols of their social function- wife, mother, domestic manager.⁷⁰

Through the end of Victorian age, woman's style of wearing changed and they started to wear tailor made clothes which represented differences among the women in a society and the power and capability of being a thinking individual.

⁶⁹ http://www.fashion-era.com/a_womans_place.htm (19.06.2012)

⁷⁰ http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/academicstaff/jonesc/jonesc_index/teaching/birth/wk11_victorian_britain_handout.pdf p. 3. (19.06.2012)

In the process of women's gaining power in domestic life, they came across many difficulties of house work, because women were not only busy with cooking and baby sitting, but also they had to sustain the hard physical work of house like washing, ironing, fetching, sewing, dusting and sweeping.

In the Victorian Era, motherhood was a virtue which turned a woman into a real woman, so giving birth was not a reproductive function but it was a symbolic duty on the way of individualization:

Domesticity and motherhood were portrayed as sufficient emotional fulfilment for women and many middle-class women regarded motherhood and domestic life as a 'sweet vocation', a substitute for women's productive role.⁷¹

Motherhood was a great expectation of society in a marriage and a childless woman was doomed to be pitied in the society and moreover childless single women oriented to work in child caring or nursery in order to encourage them to motherhood, indirectly. Because a woman who did not have a child was accepted to be a woman who was lack of virtue and could not realize herself and female fulfilment.

Women of middle class in Victorian Era, were more addicted to their children than their mothers and former generations. Victorian women taught and educated their children morally at home and incorporated with them. Especially with breast feeding, a more emotional tie between mother and child occurred and so a mother woman could affirmed her own identity and took the pleasure of acceptance in the society. so it can be said that the idea of motherhood became more respectful in Victorian era and gained importance with the help of society and its pressures.

One of the reasons for women's removal from the world of work and public sphere was that in the eyes of society, motherhood was a duty to the state which had to be performed responsibly. So, in terms of society's value judgement, motherhood should not be compared or incorporated with a paid public job and because of all these important characteristics given to motherhood, how to be a perfect mother and wife was taught to women rather than waiting for them to behave in a natural instinctive way. In society, working mothers were more neglectful and irresponsible in satisfying the needs

⁷¹http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/academicstaff/jonesc/jonesc_index/teaching/birth/wk11_victorian_britain_handout.pdf p. 4. (19.06.2012)

and caring of their children, and the consisted idea of a real mother suggests that a mother should be always there for their children.

While women were the passive characters in each part of society until the very beginning of 19th century, they took place actively in corporations, missionary activities and Sunday schools which were established to teach people about Christianity, inspiring by evangelicalism. This was a great opportunity for women to show their power in public sphere, even if all of them were volunteer workers in these charities. This was a kind of relationship and communication between women from each class, and doing so they would help other women about how to be a real individual in the society by teaching them the roles of a female who achieved happiness and more facilities by fulfilling the expectations of society. Another reason that lies beneath this moral mission was to gain political rights through unifying all the women they could reach. With this political mission, they would have right to decide, vote and have influence on their fate.

Although the Victorian woman managed to get rid of many restrictions imposed on her such as deciding on fertility and her roles in the family around the middle of the age, she could not manage the same success in alleviating the economic restrictions on her. Because, for the patriarchal authority, if a woman gains her economic independence, she will no longer be obedient to her husband. Women were not allowed to work outside without the permission of her husband or the salary she took would belong to her husband and some more similar implementations were carried out in order to maintain the male power on female identity, indirectly. But this situation changed with the rise of industrialisation in 19th century. With the rise of technology and developed transportation, families immigrated from rural to urban life, and this pushed women to work in a public sphere, because industrialization required high level of work power including women. With economic opportunities, women felt themselves independent though it was limited.

3.4. The Place of Woman in Harlem Renaissance

Throughout the history of mankind, the Negro woman has always been the symbol of resilience, rebellion, resistance and power because of the hardships and

suppression they encountered against the patriarchy and racism. They worked in the farms as workers, served as perfect wives at home, served for other women at their homes and while doing so they never neglected their motherhood duties. The most painful thing for them is not being a woman but being a black woman. They were exposed not only to the violence and pressure of their husbands but also the white society which had always been an upper class of black society. But despite all the hardships they experienced, they managed to survive as the women of Harlem Renaissance. Although the women of Harem Renaissance had active roles in daily life and jobs whether as workers or wives, they also took place in literature and so they could create another point of view to the phenomenon of renaissance. Their ideas, emotions and thoughts were important for literature world; however, sometimes they were ignored by some section in the society.

During the Renaissance, the black community who achieved their dreams was small in number and they were the wealthy class of society. The middle class was consisted of doctors, lawyers, barbers and teachers etc. This middle class was the group who raised their social and economic level with the help of New Negro Movement. And, finally the lower class was consisted of workers and domestics. There was a great conflict and segregation among the black even without the effects and suppressions of white society. The main factors that caused segregation were not colour, class and profession; but the gender was also another fact which was extremely as important as the former factors.

In the process of Harlem Renaissance, the name of the Negro woman changed into "*The New Woman*" in feminist approach like the white woman of 19th century. During this period, a great transition came into being; the women of the south, left slavery situations and they raised so higher levels that they started to reside in the region called Harlem. In this progression, the woman objected not only the system of slavery but also the male-dominated society:

The finest achievement of the new woman has been personal liberty. This is the foundation of civilization; and as long as any one class is watched suspiciously, even fondly guarded, and protected, so long will that class not only be weak, and treacherous, individually, but parasitic, and a collective danger to the community. Who has not heard wives commended for wheedling their husbands out of money, or joked because they are hopelessly extravagant? As long as caprice and scheming are considered feminine virtues, as long as man is the

only wage-earner, doling out sums of money, or scattering lavishly, so long will women be degraded, even if they are perfectly contented, and men are willing to labour to keep them in idleness!

The new woman, in the sense of the best woman, the flower of all the womanhood of past ages, has come to stay — if civilization is to endure. The sufferings of the past have but strengthened her, maternity has deepened her, education is broadening her — and she now knows that she must perfect herself if she would perfect the race, and leave her imprint upon immortality, through her offspring or her works.⁷²

The place and importance of woman in realizing the Harlem Renaissance is emphasized by two questions;

“Why did the Harlem Renaissance fail?” is the question, and the query is tantamount to the unexpected question sprung by a stranger as one walks a crowded street: “When, sir, did you stop beating your wife?” Both questions are, of course, conditioned by presuppositions that restrict the field of possible responses.⁷³

With these questions the failure of the Civil Rights Movement is emphasized because of the inequality between genders and it would not be possible to realize a renaissance without the equal rights given to both genders.

The role of Negro Woman was more difficult than the white woman, in that age. When the intellectuals, writers and musicians gathered in the region of Harlem, there was not even a female participant. But later under the leadership of W.E. Du Bois and Alain Locke, some female figures were included into this group. These archetype females were small in number and they were leaders and they were talented enough to search for their rights. The black females out of this group were quite different from their male counterparts, because women including the sophisticated women writers and non-hostesses who do not have any assets were not regarded as the contributors and participant of this movement. Even in that a time black women were under the shadow of black males rather than white society. Concisely, in national awakening of Afro Americans, black women were condemned to be behind males.

The Negro woman was associated with the “Mammy” figure, a slave or a prostitute, no matter how much talented, educated and beautiful was she. Until 1925, the Negro woman was not aware of some individual rights of her own and the ideals of beauty. In 1925, in Elsie Johnson McDougald’s essay “*The Double Task: The Struggle*

⁷² Winnifred Harper Cooley, *The New Womanhood*, Broadway Publishing Company, New York, 1904, p. 3.

⁷³ *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance...* p. 12.

of *Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation*”, women were awakened about their being an individual with humanistic emotions and inner world rather than an image of server. Black women were always associated with “*Aunt Jemima*”⁷⁴ whose most important ability was to serve regardless of her individual characteristics.

According to one of women pioneers of the Harlem Renaissance, Ruth Whitehead there was a harsh discrimination, segregation and victimization of woman just because of their being woman. They were generally abused sexually, they were raped and, moreover the rapes were sanctioned. When compared to White women who were named as virtuous, pure and object of chivalry, black women were always out of these boundaries. They had to confront sexual assault and psychological destruction in daily life. Society always denied their integration and destroyed their sense of humanity and self-worth. In the order of society, black men were not allowed to save their families from the slave owners, and slave marriages were prohibited, too. Some slave mothers (Negro mothers) unfortunately killed their children in order not to see their selling as slaves.

The black women were treated like inferior creatures when compared to males, just because of their lack of education. They were the ornaments of home, mothers of their children, and playmates of their husbands and sometimes the wives of their husbands as a necessity of respect in the society. And generally, a Negro woman was treated like a property of her husband; father or her master just like Janie is treated like a mule in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. But against all these, the black women were encouraged to take place in education, politics, industry and almost every field men can earn living. And doing that, they were warned to *remember that the door they kick in will be doubly thick because they are a women and a Negro.*⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Aunt Jemima, trademark, stereotype, cultural icon to many whites, and racist caricature to many African Americans. For Chris Rutt and Charles Underwood, Aunt Jemima was the perfect symbol for their experiment with the first packaged pancake mix. These white entrepreneurs attended a vaudeville show in 1889, featuring black-faced comedians in a New Orleans-style cakewalk tune entitled “Aunt Jemima.” Barbara Christian's *Black Women Novelists* (1980) analyzes how Jemima kept particular images about white women intact. African American resentment regarding Aunt Jemima stemmed not from a rejection of the maternal or domestic image she presented, but from unabashed attempts to create, with this single image, a monolithic African American woman and market her to the world. <http://www.answers.com/topic/aunt-jemima> (21.08.2012)

⁷⁵ <http://www.docdatabase.net/more-060404-the-women-of-the-harlem-renaissance-799652.html> (17.12.2012)

With the rise of cultural awareness through literature, music and other cultural activities, many things that evolving woman changed extraordinarily. Especially, Josephine Baker, Katherine Dunham, Ma Rainey, Zora Neale Hurston and Bessie Smith are the most important women writers who used their talents in contributing to the development of Negro literature. Although the number of women in literature and arts was phenomenal, their number could never reach the number of their male counterparts. Among the women writers, Zora Neale Hurston was the most important and the most criticized writer. Because her novels would always reflect the crudeness and bawdiness of the society and this annoyed some sections of the society thinking that she would retard the process of Renaissance. So she was under restraint during her life time, and her novels gained popularity years later her death. Although her masterpiece "*Their Eyes Were Watching God*" became popular during the heyday of feminism in the second half of the 18th century, her novel should be a feminist novel long before the notion of feminism came into being.

The case of black women became crucial years later Harlem Renaissance, just as Zora Neale Hurston's becoming popular years later her death. Effective therapy and giving value to human being regardless of his/her gender, is very effective in order to develop, utilize and value the inner strengths of individuals. This ignorance of black women caused the deceleration in the realization of Renaissance completely:

Black women, the most disadvantaged group in the United States, as evidence by their unenviable occupational, educational, employment, income, and male-availability levels, have been "messed-over" by distorters of reality... This distortion successfully continues the oppression of Black women and indirectly Black men, thereby masking the real racist and sexist culprits. (Jackson, 1973, p.254)⁷⁶

Living in a racist and sexist society has been a difficult place to live for a woman especially for a black woman, because of her social place and identity. Black women have always had to work in hard conditions in order to support themselves and their families. The characteristic of black woman to adapt varied roles in the process of transcending social barriers is due to the oppression and force of the society. Her identity and femininity were ignored, and her name was just a slave woman. Even if she

⁷⁶Joan Hamerman Robbins, Rachel Josefowitz Siegel, *Women Changing Therapy: New Assessments, Values, and Strategies in Feminist Therapy*, Haworth Press, Philadelphia, 1983, p. 135.

were pregnant or old, she was made to work as the other slave men did. Black woman, who searched for equality between male and female more than white and black, is considered as the original feminist by some sections. Since they gained their womanhood rights in hard conditions, they had always tried to preserve and protect their awareness and rights. This challenging search of an identity in the society allowed them to create their own original personalities and this made them real feminists:

Black women in the society are the only ethnic or radical group which has had the opportunity to be women. By this I simply mean that much of the current focus on being liberated from the constraints and protectiveness of the society which is proposed by women's liberation groups has never applied to Black women and in that sense, we have always been "free," and able to develop as individuals even under the most harsh circumstances. This freedom, as well as the tremendous hardships from which Black women suffered, allowed for the development of a personality that is rarely described in the scholarly journals for its obstinate strength and ability to survive. Neither is its peculiar humanistic character and quite courage viewed as the epitome of what the American model of Femininity should be. (Joyce Ladner, 1972, p. 280).⁷⁷

Since the black woman was treated as if she were on the sub base of social pyramid and the black woman was persuaded to this idea, a system of defence was formed automatically in order to resist against the social pressure over her. In this process, the black woman acquired some features of being masculine-based, self-reliance, independence, assertiveness, strength, rebel and innovative. And from that time of emancipation, each black woman charged herself to transfer these characteristics to the next generations for better life conditions.

After, the revival, African American women were generally respected as the backbone of traditional societies and economic responsibilities because they were farmers, workers, traders and on the other hand they were the homemakers, child educators and providers. They also started to take place in politics and affairs with the help of their sophisticated and developed personalities.

Before the awakening of black women in the 19th century, they used to see that their lives were defined and shaped by white society or males. Unfortunately, they were right in their thoughts because they were behaved and named as pathological creatures. In social services, such as health services, they were generally denied to have equal access to treatment. In black neighbourhood, there would not be any mental health

⁷⁷ *Women Changing Threaphy: New Assessments, Values, and Strategies in Feminist Therapy...* p. 136.

services, because they were not seen as good candidates of treatment. But in respect to psychology, black women's literary works, and their artistic expressions are essential as a mirror of reality to reflect their essence of soul and their inner worlds. Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou and Alice Walker are among the black female writers who instruct about the psychology and analysis of black woman. Since the black woman is a product of environment, history and pressure of society, their life experiences are great treasures for literature, sociology and psychology.

3.5. Edna Pontellier's Place in the Society

In Victorian Era, there were many strict rules that were controlled mainly by men. Individuals, especially women were just allowed to behave in accordance with the roles given them by society. These roles were the expected behaviors that were used for the maintenance of the social pyramid. An individual could only be happy and accepted by society, if he/she behaved and acted according to these assignments. The effect of the so called "fixed roles" on individuals, women in particular, might be disastrous. Those not conforming with them are likely to find themselves ostracized by the community. Although there could be some contradictions between the free will of the individual and the role that is given to him/her, sometimes in order to have a place in this order, the individual would have to give up his free will:

The horror of social ostracism was paramount. To be caught in the wrong fashion at the wrong time of day was as greatly to be feared as addressing a member of society by the wrong title.⁷⁸

In the nineteenth century, the roles were classified according to the gender and social classes. According to American sociologist Talcott Parsons, women were not allowed access to many things and had no ownership in the society; they did not have any rights for anything when compared to men. As it is seen in Parsons' model, Model A represents an extreme separation between man and woman which symbolizes Victorian society, while Model B represents a full dissolution between gender roles as it should be normally within the borders of equality between genders with no superiority of patriarchal rules and governance in the society;

⁷⁸ <http://www.aboutbritain.com/articles/victorian-society.asp> (20.07.2012)

Table 1: Parsons Model⁷⁹

	Model A – Total role segregation	Model B – Total integration of roles
Education	Gender-specific education; high professional qualification is important only for the man	Co-educative schools, same content of classes for girls and boys, same qualification for men and women.
Profession	The workplace is not the primary area of women; career and professional advancement is deemed unimportant for women	For women, career is just as important as for men; equal professional opportunities for men and women are necessary.
Housework	Housekeeping and child care are the primary functions of the woman; participation of the man in these functions is only partially wanted.	All housework is done by both parties to the marriage in equal shares.
Decision making	In case of conflict, man has the last say, for example in choosing the place to live, choice of school for children, buying decisions	Neither partner dominates; solutions do not always follow the principle of finding a concerted decision; status quo is maintained if disagreement occurs.
Child care and education	Woman takes care of the largest part of these functions; she educates children and cares for them in every way	Man and woman share these functions equally.

The main role of Victorian women was to run errands at home, to be a housewife and, most importantly, to carry out and put into practice her maternity. Maternity was the most prosperous thing for women because this was the main responsibility of theirs to their husbands as Lydia Maria Child states in her *Mother*

⁷⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_role (15.04.2012)

*Book; “the woman who is not willing to sacrifice a good deal in such a cause does not deserve to be a mother”.*⁸⁰

In general scope of Victorian life, woman is the handicapped and weak character in public sphere. Woman had the chance to be powerful only in motherhood and domesticity. They were associated with domestic activities which gave them the right to act in society as a domestic wife. Women could only participate in outside activities in the name of her husband. Woman’s business was to give birth to children, take care of them and control the inner part of the home while man’s main business was to earn money, and to be the breadwinner who had to support his family financially:

When husbands went off to work, they helped create the view that men alone should support the family. This belief held that the world of work, the public sphere, was a rough world, where a man did what he had to in order to succeed, that it was full of temptations, violence, and trouble. A woman who ventured out into such a world could easily fall prey to it, for women were weak and delicate creatures. A woman's place was therefore in the private sphere, in the home, where she took charge of all that went on.⁸¹

In the separation of the roles between male and female, their natural characteristics were taken into consideration. Men were expected to be independent, reasonable, self-confident and materialistic while women were expected to be dependent, loving, virtuous and sacrificing. Since women were controlled by their emotions and instincts, they were accepted as irrational, passive and compassionate and since men were controlled mostly by their intellect they were the rational, genius and powerful creatures. In spite of the roles given to the genders, there were many contradictions in applying these roles:

Men were supposed to be religious, although not generally. Men were supposed to be pure, although one could really not expect it. But men never supposed to be submissive. Men were to be movers, and doers--the actors in life. Women were to be passive bystanders, submitting to fate, to duty, to God, and to men.⁸²

The same idea is present in George Burnap’s book *The Sphere and Duties of Woman*:

She feels herself weak and timid. She needs a protector. She is in a measure dependent. She asks for wisdom, constancy, firmness, perseveredness, and she is willing to repay it all by the surrender of the full treasure of her affection.

⁸⁰ Lydia Maria Child, *The Mother’s Book*, Carter Hendee and Babcock, Michigan, 1831, p. 16.

⁸¹ <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/386/truewoman.html> (18.04.2012)

⁸² *Ibid.*

Women despise in men everything like themselves except a tender heart. It is enough that she is effeminate and weak; she does not want another like herself.⁸³

In the order of Victorian society, women were considered to be the property of their husbands. Until the age of adolescence, they were under the control of their father or brother who symbolizes the patriarchal power in the house and when they got married they were treated just like an owned property from her family. In society woman was considered to be a social and legal person, but she did not have the right to use this without the name and approval of her husband, moreover, all the personal property of woman were taken from her and managed by her husband. In return for this, husband was obligated to support the members of family financially. But, as time went by, the idea of marriage in the society changed considerably, marriage was not seen as a necessary thing for social insurance. Sarah Grand explains this situation with these words: *“Thinking... for herself, the modern girl... knows that a woman’s life is not longer considered a failure simply because she does not marry.”*⁸⁴

In Victorian era, there was also a great discrimination between man and woman in the field of education. Girls never had the chance to be a student in high schools, academies, colleges and universities like boys who had the opportunity to enjoy advanced education in each level and field of life. Female education was restricted only to languages, music, sewing, drawing, embroidery, accounts and other works concerning errands at home. Women were allowed to attend only dame schools in which education ended at the age of twelve. But in the eighteenth century, this situation started to change dramatically:

The development of private secondary schools for young women, so called seminaries, during the early 1800's was the beginning of the interest in furthering educational opportunities for women. Women’s colleges were founded during the mid and late nineteenth century in response to a need for advanced education for women at a time when they were not admitted to most institutions of higher education. Societal trends such as an increase in labour saving devices in the home, a shortage of teachers due to the growth of common schools, a proliferation of reading materials for women, and more philanthropic

⁸³ George Washington Burnap, *Lectures on The Sphere and Duties of Woman: and Other Subjects*, Nabu Press, Charleston, 2010, p. 48.

⁸⁴ Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Feminism, Sex and Morality*, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, United Kingdom, 2001, p. 163.

and some limited employment opportunities for women due to the Civil War led to an increased demand for higher education for women.⁸⁵

Although women had more opportunities to have education on the level of men by the end of nineteenth century, there were still many obstacles that prevented them from doing many other jobs. Because of their sex, they always had to remain in the background when compared to males:

The Supreme Court used assumptions about gender roles, women's supposed weakness, and the vested interest of the state in preserving the vigour and strength of the race to differentiate between the sexes. It sought to protect (potential) motherhood at the expense of individual interest, needs, or capabilities. By viewing women primarily as mothers, the Supreme Court foreclosed job opportunities and limited women's citizenship rights.⁸⁶

With time, society believed that if a woman is educated, she can be a better mother and she can raise her children in better conditions. With this thought, women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge became available around 1870s, so education level of middle class women got closer to the education level of Aristocratic class.

In Victorian Era, woman was totally dependent on her husband's or her father's economic positions, therefore the family was the corner-stone of Victorian. Young ladies were trained to be modest individuals having no opinions other than her family's. As the popular writer of the time, Mrs. Ellis implied "*women's highest duty is so often to suffer and be still*"⁸⁷:

Throughout the Victorian period the perfect lady as an ideal of femininity was tenacious and all pervasive in spite of its distance from the objective situations of countless women. The main difficulty with the perfect lady is a model of behavior even in the middle class and it came to be accepted in an altered form in the working class was the narrowness of the definition. Few women could afford to pursue the course laid out for them either economically, socially or psychologically.⁸⁸

In terms of sexuality, society preferred to avoid talking about sexual matters. The matters about sexuality were believed to be taboos, and, moreover, these were regulated and restricted with law and moral rules were applied by the church in Europe.

⁸⁵ Irene Harwarth, Elizabeth DeBra, Mindi Maline, *Women's Colleges in the United States: History, Issues, and Challenges*, DIANE Publishing, Collingdale, 1997, Executive Summary VII

⁸⁶ Jay Kleinberg, *Women in American Society 1820-1920*, BAAS (British Association for American Studies) Pamphlet No. 20, 1990

⁸⁷ Martha Vicinus, *Suffer and Be Still, Women in the Victorian Age*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973, Introduction

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, introduction

Before marriage a young girl was supposed to be perfectly innocent and unaware of sexual matters, that is to say she had to be sexually ignorant. Sexual relations were solely on the front burner for the purpose of reproduction and maternity. Women had to be pure and protect their purity and they had no other option but to marry the man who was chosen by her family. In case of adultery, court treated man and woman differently considering the male and female characteristics:

Court typically granted more severe consequences to female adulterers than to males. Courts argued that it was not right that a woman's child from a father not her husband should inherit her husband's property. Women were thought to be emotional, not intelligent and in charge of the household.⁸⁹

In this century with the emphasis given on the importance of female individuals in the society, the place of women in the society was taken under debate especially by the pioneers of feminist movement. The new woman movement started especially when the plight of African American slaves showed great similarity to the women who had to meet the expectations of social values and overcome the hard conditions they encountered; because both were accepted as the passive, obedient and second inferior class in the society. On the top of the social pyramid there was white man and under it woman and African slaves, with no equality among them.

In 1848, Declaration of Sentiments was signed by a group of people in the leadership of *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, in order to secure women's rights and provide a more equal order between man and woman. With this agreement, the right of vote was granted to women and according to *North Star*, the document was “*grand basis for attaining the civil, social, political, and religious rights of women*”⁹⁰. According to historian Nancy Cott:

they spoke of the women movement , to denote the many ways women moved out of their homes to initiate measures of charitable benevolence, temperance, and social welfare and to instigate struggle for civic rights, social freedom, higher education, remunerative occupations, and the ballot.⁹¹

Although it was a courageous step for the women, it caused much controversy between the new ideal woman and traditional identity of woman:

89 <http://5b-english4us.blogspot.com/2009/01/role-of-women-in-victorian-age.html> (17.05.2012)

90 <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/abwm03dt.html> (17.05.2012)

91 Ross Evans Paulson, *Liberty, Equality, and Justice: Civil Rights, Women's Rights, and The Regulation of Business 1865-1932*, Duke University Press Books, Durham, 1997, p. 121.

Many people respected the courage and abilities behind the drafting of the document, but were unwilling to abandon conventional mindsets. An article in the Oneida Whig published soon after the convention described the document as "the most shocking and unnatural event ever recorded in the history of womanity." Many newspapers insisted that the Declaration was drafted at the expense of women's more appropriate duties. At a time when temperance and female property rights were major issues, even many supporters of women's rights believed the Declaration's endorsement of women's suffrage would hinder the nascent women's rights movement, causing it to lose much needed public support.⁹²

In *The Awakening*, Edna and her actions reflect the developing new ideal women of the nineteenth century who required personal independence and economic freedom and her emotions and conflicts in this process.

In the novel, there is a strict conflict between female and male and moreover, this conflict also happens between female and female. The protagonist of the novel; Edna Pontellier is fully stuck between society and her own desires. She is the figure of an awakening soul who struggles to transform her own essence into an independent woman from a dependent Victorian woman figure. She is trying to survive from the pressure of Southern, Creole society and its strict norms. In the Creole society, a woman is treated like another species whose only duty is to meet her husband and her children's needs.

Edna comes from a Presbyterian family from Kentucky, but she marries a Creole, Leonce Pontellier. Although many years pass after her marriage with Robert, she realizes that she is alone and alienated in her husband's society for the first time when she spends much time in an integrated way with Creole people especially with women:

Mrs. Pontellier, though she had married a Creole, was not thoroughly at home in the society of Creoles; never before had she been thrown so intimately among them.(Chopin, 12)

In the novel, three main women characters represent the woman's transition moods; Adele Ratignolle is the classic Victorian mother woman, Mademoiselle Reisz is an artist woman who rebels against the norms of Victorian minded society, and Edna is a woman who is stuck between these two women characters and two societies; Creole and American. Edna learns many things from Adele who represents the ideal mother

⁹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_Sentiments#cite_note-1 (21.05.2012)

woman in the novel. In her friendship with Adele, Edna is greatly shocked by her freedom of expression, her lack of embarrassment. When they come together, they gossip about their private lives. This is weird for Edna, because Edna grew up in Presbyterian background in which there are many social taboos:

Never would Edna Pontellier forget the shock with which she heard Madame Ratignolle relating to old Monsieur Farival the harrowing story of one of her accouchements, withholding no intimate detail. She was growing accustomed to like shocks, but she could not keep the mounting color back from her cheeks. (Chopin, 12)

On social level, Edna has an enviable place in Creole society, thanks to the business of her husband, but in order to have a place in the society, it is not enough to be wife of Leonce. Motherhood and domesticity are also required things that can make her a part of Creole society. In terms of the rules of society, piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity are the required elements in achieving this. In the very beginning of the novel, Edna seems to accept these norms of society until she has close relationship with Creole society. At the end of the novel as a means of rebellion against society and discovering her essence in the world and her place in the society, Edna rejects all these qualities.

For Victorian society, having piety and being religious are the duties which are enforced on individuals without questioning. She behaves as if she were still in her adulthood:

“I don't remember now. I was just walking diagonally across a big field. My sun-bonnet obstructed the view. I could see only the stretch of green before me, and I felt as if I must walk on forever, without coming to the end of it. I don't remember whether I was frightened or pleased. I must have been entertained.”

“Likely as not it was Sunday, she laughed; —and I was running away from prayers, from the Presbyterian service, read in a spirit of gloom by my father that chills me yet to think of.”

“And have you been running away from prayers ever since, ma chère?” asked Madame Ratignolle, amused.

“No! Oh, no! Edna hastened to say. —I was a little unthinking child in those days, just following a misleading impulse without question. On the contrary, during one period of my life religion took a firm hold upon me; after I was twelve and until - until - why, I suppose until now, though I never thought much about it - just driven along by habit” (Chopin, 19)

This behaviour of hers, can be interpreted as a rebellious act against her faithful father because Edna's father is a Presbyterian man, who believes in raising up his children in accordance to Presbyterian Church norms. Although he is against Edna's marriage to a man out of a Presbyterian family, Leonce Pontellier, Edna marries a Catholic man from another society, Creole society. And by time Edna admits that this marriage is not a right decision and this is entirely based on the rebellious act of Edna trying to escape her father:

Her marriage to Leonce Pontellier was purely an accident, in this respect resembling many other marriages which masquerade as the decrees of Fate. It was in the midst of her secret great passion that she met him. He fell in love, as men are in the habit of doing, and pressed his suit with an earnestness and an ardor which left nothing to be desired. He pleased her; his absolute devotion flattered her. She fancied there was a sympathy of thought and taste between them, in which fancy she was mistaken. Add to this the violent opposition of her father and her sister Margaret to her marriage with a Catholic, and we need seek no further for the motives which led her to accept Monsieur Pontellier for her husband. (Chopin, 21)

As regards Edna's role and behaviors at home and household chores, she is greatly indifferent to the expectations of her husband. For the Creole man, the most important thing for a woman is being devoted to her husband as a means of social obligations. Although Edna is keen on her children, different from other women in the society, she raises them in a more independent way. When they fall or hurt themselves, they do not cry and rush to their mother as other children do; instead, they go on playing. This situation and the duties of Edna in the house do not satisfy Robert who believes that a married woman has to behave in accordance with her husband's world of thought and traditions similar to the other wives in the society:

It would have been a difficult matter for Mr. Pontellier to define to his own satisfaction or any one else's wherein his wife failed in her duty toward their children. It was something which he felt rather than perceived, and he never voiced the feeling without subsequent regret and ample atonement.

If one of the little Pontellier boys took a tumble whilst at play, he was not apt to rush crying to his mother's arms for comfort; he would more likely pick himself up, wipe the water out of his eyes and the sand out of his mouth, and go on playing. Tots as they were, they pulled together and stood their ground in childish battles with doubled fists and uplifted voices, which usually prevailed against the other mother-tots.(Chopin, 10)

Elaine Showalter⁹³ implies the superiority of a mother-woman over other types of women in the novel as it is in the Victorian society and shows that women play their given roles perfectly even without the control of male dominance over them as long as they behave in accordance with the expectations of society:

Madame Lebrun's pension on Grand Isle is very much a woman's land not only because it is owned and run by a single woman and dominated by 'mother-women' but also because its principal inhabitants are actually women and children whose husbands and fathers visit only on weekends.⁹⁴

In the novel, since Adele acts voluntarily, she is not healed by society. So, Kathleen M. Streater considers Adele as the real feminist instead of Edna. Edna acts in a rebellious way so she is a radical character, more than a feminist:

Chopin, through Adele, offers her readers more than one definition of feminist expression. Adele's subtle rebellion to patriarchal ideology is easy to overlook as she forges her resistance from behind and within masculine parameters, manipulating the male-defined borders of her identity as wife and mother...⁹⁵

Edna loses her mother at a very early age. Although she has an elder sister, her sister does not treat her with compassion because her sister is under the influence of her father and she raises Edna under the patriarchal rules and norms like a masculine power. The first female model Edna comes across through the novel is Adele and she is attracted by Adele's sensual beauty and her companionship like a mother-daughter relation. Sometimes this close relationship is so intense that Edna calls her "*faultless Madonna*" (Chopin, 13).

Although Pontelliers are on holiday, Leonce goes on working as the breadwinner of the house. He leaves Grand Isle frequently and sends full packets of food and drink with candies for his wife and children. Also, Leonce reminds of Edna her domestic duties at home through some verbal orders and behaviours. But Edna is so bored with this situation that this becomes a very unbearable situation for Edna because she is

⁹³ Elaine Showalter (born January 21, 1941) is an American literary critic, feminist, and writer on cultural and social issues. She is one of the founders of feminist literary criticism in United States academia, developing the concept and practice of gynocritics. (Wikipedia), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Showalter, (29.05.2012)

⁹⁴ Elaine Showalter, *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing*, Clarendon Press, Gloucestershire, 1991, p. 73.

⁹⁵ Kathleen M. Streater, *Adele Ratignolle: Kate Chopin's Feminist at Home in The Awakening*, Midwest Quarterly Vol:48 No:3, 2007, p. 406.

really stuck between the business of her husband and the social duties given her indirectly. Also, she knows that through the commands of her husband, Leonce wants to remind his dominance over the house and his wife and doing so satisfies his personality:

It was eleven o'clock that night when Mr. Pontellier returned from Klein's hotel. He was in an excellent humor, in high spirits, and very talkative. His entrance awoke his wife, who was in bed and fast asleep when he came in. He talked to her while he undressed, telling her anecdotes and bits of news and gossip that he had gathered during the day. From his trousers pockets he took a fistful of crumpled bank notes and a good deal of silver coin, which he piled on the bureau indiscriminately with keys, knife, handkerchief, and whatever else happened to be in his pockets. She was overcome with sleep, and answered him with little half utterances.

He thought it very discouraging that his wife, who was the sole object of his existence, evinced so little interest in things which concerned him, and valued so little his conversation. (Chopin, 7)

Leonce, just like a typical Victorian man, thinks that the most important asset for a man is his wife and her deeds in the society. Having a prestigious place is the main indicator of the importance of society's thoughts and expectations for Leonce. Throughout the novel Edna does not take into consideration the order and the rules of the society while her husband Leonce as a conformist gives importance to the expectations of society and for him, public opinion is above everything and he constantly mentions this:

Why, my dear, I should think you'd understand by this time that people don't do such things; we've got to observe les convenances if we ever expect to get on and keep up with the procession. If you felt that you had to leave home this afternoon, you should have left some suitable explanation for your absence. (57)

He hoped she had not acted upon her rash impulse; and he begged her to consider first, foremost, and above all else, what people would say. He was not dreaming of scandal when he uttered this warning; that was a thing which would never have entered into his mind to consider in connection with his wife's name or his own. (Chopin, 193)

In the novel, art is one of the main factors that makes Edna different from other characters. In Victorian society art is an element that is performed by men or socially accepted rare women who are socially discarded and enormously talented individuals. Throughout the novel, Edna is deeply affected by the beauty of Adele and her freedom of speech. Edna's character is also shaped by the piano artist Mademoiselle Reisz deeply. In the society Reisz lives in, the talented personalities are not welcomed because

it gives them excessive self-confidence, which is unacceptable by Victorian society. With the effect of her powerful soul, she takes into consideration neither the thought of society nor her physical appearance:

She was a disagreeable little woman, no longer young, who had quarreled with almost every one, owing to a temper which was self-assertive and a disposition to trample upon the rights of others. Robert prevailed upon her without any too great difficulty.

She entered the hall with him during a lull in the dance. She made an awkward, imperious little bow as she went in. She was a homely woman, with a small weazened face and body and eyes that glowed. She had absolutely no taste in dress, and wore a batch of rusty black lace with a bunch of artificial violets pinned to the side of her hair. (Chopin, 28)

Edna is a transition character who transforms into Mademoiselle Reisz from Adele Ratignolle. Edna is greatly influenced by Reisz who symbolizes the voice of “new woman” and the solitary soul. But at the same time she does not reject the friendship of Adele Ratignolle because just like Adele, Edna is also a mother woman and though she wants to have an independent soul, she can not escape and find a place as an independent individual either as a mother woman or wife of Leonce Pontellier because of the presence of Adele in Edna’s soul who reminds her motherhood duties:

Whereas Adele is ‘a faultless Madonna’ who speaks for the values and laws of the Creole community, Mademoiselle Reisz is a renegade, self-assertive and outspoken. She has no patience with petty social rules and violates the most basic expectations of femininity.⁹⁶

Art is very important for Edna’s characterization because through art, Edna exposes her suppressed and hidden feelings and the inner soul step by step. Being an artist requires a courageous soul which is obtained by Edna gradually. For Kathleen Wheeler:

Art is the activity of giving shape and order to oceanic formlessness. Art is a creative process, pre-eminently of the creation (through great labour) of a self which is genuinely original and individual. Art is structured through intelligent work, organized and articulated as a result of powerful imaginative gestures working on initially unformed material.⁹⁷

Besides art, nature, sea is also another symbol of rebellion against the order and escape and freedom which makes Edna courageous and makes her a free individual in

⁹⁶ Wendy Martin, *The American Novel, New Essays on The Awakening*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 46.

⁹⁷ Harold Bloom, *Kate Chopin Bloom’s Modern Critical Views*, Bloom’s Literary Criticism, Pennsylvania, 2007, p. 133.

the society. It is just like a relieving and a hypnotizing drug which gives Edna total freedom away from the pressure over her:

She could have shouted for joy. She did shout for joy, as with a sweeping stroke or two she lifted her body to the surface of the water. A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul. (Chopin, 31)

Edna's success in swimming and art symbolizes the very gradual independence she gained slowly. When she sees that swimming is something like a kid's stuff, she regrets for not trying this and not achieving that kind of independence before; "*why did I not discover before that it was nothing. Think of the time I have lost splashing about like a baby*"(Chopin, 31). But her husband does not want her independence through art, thinking that she neglects her wifeness and maternity duties:

"It seems to me the utmost folly for a woman at the head of a household, and the mother of children, to spend in an atelier days which would be better employed contriving for the comfort of her family."

"I feel like painting," answered Edna. "Perhaps I shan't always feel like it."

"Then in God's name paint! but don't let the family go to the devil. There's Madame Ratignolle; because she keeps up her music, she doesn't let everything else go to chaos. And she's more of a musician than you are a painter."

"She isn't a musician, and I'm not a painter. It isn't on account of painting that I let things go."

"On account of what, then?"

"Oh! I don't know. Let me alone; you bother me." (Chopin, 63)

When Edna becomes economically independent with the help of art, she does not want to stay under the same roof under his economic strength anymore. She imitates Mdemoiselle Reisz who lives alone and does not have any responsibility anyone except herself. This is similar to the woman of day who lives alone independently away from a husband or someone who supports her economically:

Before the 20th century, few women were financially independent, and it was usually husbands who earned the greater part of the family income and would control resources. During the 1920s, legal reforms took place that gave a wife property and inheritance rights above any children. This ended the idea of marriage as a patriarchy.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server.php?show=conInformationRecord.141> (10.08.2012)

Edna also wants to get rid of her husband's control and move to a pigeon house that belongs to her:

I have a little money of my own from my mother's estate, which my father sends me by driblets. I won a large sum this winter on the races, and I am beginning to sell my sketches. Laidpore is more and more pleased with my work; he says it grows in force and individuality. I cannot judge of that myself, but I feel that I have gained in ease and confidence. However, as I said, I have good many through Laidpore. I can live in the tiny house for little or nothing, with one servant. Old Celestine, who works occasionally for me, says she will come stay with me and do my work. I know I shall like it, like the feeling of freedom and independence (Chopin, 88)

For Mademoiselle Reisz, in order to survive in society without the control of a male or a patriarchal power, one must be strong and determined. She encourages Edna to be strong in her relationship with Robert; *"The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings"* (Chopin, 92). In Victorian culture, marriage was the ultimate career of woman, which made the woman prestigious and respectful in society. For woman, after her marriage, she could sacrifice everything including her own self. A woman had to obey and satisfy her husband and perform her maternity duties. Edna rejects these duties and destined to loneliness. She accepts the consequences of being alone and having a solitary soul for the sake of her own identity, her own escape from the pressure and conventions of society.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was a precise prototype of woman; she had to be under the name of her husband and she could have no other options to be accepted in the society. But Edna never thinks of an acceptance in the society. She would never budge herself from anything even for her children. She is against the idea of marriage and she does not even attend her sister's wedding ceremony. However, she also gets married to Leonce as a rebellious act against her father and her sister's will:

..violent opposition of her father and her sister Margaret to her marriage with a Catholic, and we need seek no further for the motives which led her to accept Monsieur Pontellier for her husband.(Chopin, 21)

She is getting far away from the romantic expectations of marriage and this turns into an act of escaping from patriarchy.

In her marriage Edna is made to feel that her husband is the greatest husband she could have in the world. All the people around Edna adore Leonce Pontellier as a generous man when he sends some gifts for his family and people force her to call herself a lucky woman:

Mrs. Pontellier was always very generous with the contents of such a box; she was quite used to receiving them when away from home. The patés and fruit were brought to the dining-room; the bonbons were passed around. And the ladies, selecting with dainty and discriminating fingers and a little greedily, all declared that Mr. Pontellier was the best husband in the world. Mrs. Pontellier was forced to admit that she knew of none better. (Chopin, 9)

Leonce Pontellier implies that Edna is his property on every occasion. Leonce is so obsessed with his wealth that he can never think of Edna's right on this wealth and property. The more Leonce boasts about their family house and other possessions, the more Edna feels far away from her husband. For Leonce, Edna is also a part of the house, just like a valuable piece of house. Even in the very beginning of the novel, when Edna returns back home sun-burnt, Leonce treats her like a belonging; *"You are burnt beyond recognition, he added, looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage."* (Chopin, 4)

The family life of Pontelliers is not active as Ratignolles is. For Leonce there is nothing more important than working hard and his social prestige in the society. Adele becomes aware of Leonce's absence at home and warns Edna to do something and rescue their marriage. Upon this, Edna gives the signal of the bad course in their marriage:

"It's a pity Mr. Pontellier doesn't stay home more in the evenings. I think you would be more—well, if you don't mind my saying it—more united, if he did."

"Oh! dear no!" said Edna, with a blank look in her eyes. "What should I do if he stayed home? We wouldn't have anything to say to each other" (Chopin, 76).

Although Edna wants to have an independent soul, she can never escape from her mother woman identity. She is reminded her motherhood duties even by Adele, her close friend, at the end of the novel by the words; *"think of the children"* (Chopin, 122). Her main aim is to be an independent woman like Mademoiselle Reisz but however hard she tries she can not be a free woman like her, because Edna must think of her children and although she manages to solve her economic conditions, she can never get rid of her social position. Being Reisz in Creole society is very difficult for a weak

woman because she is totally isolated from society and she is accepted as an insane artist. She can not have any friends easily. Edna's friendship surprises Reisz so deeply that when Edna visits her she implies; "*I sometimes thought: she will never come. She promised as those women in society always do, without meaning it. She will not come*"(Chopin, 69).

In the novel, the only woman who encourages Edna for her relationship with Robert is Mademoiselle Reisz. She supports her idea of moving from her husband's house and move somewhere else where she thinks she can get rid of the responsibilities and create her own world:

The "pigeon house" stood behind a locked gate, and a shallow parterre that had been somewhat neglected. There was a small front porch, upon which a long window and the front door opened. The door opened directly into the parlor; there was no side entry. Back in the yard was a room for servants, in which old Celestine had been ensconced. (Chopin, 102)

Edna's new house is named a "pigeon house" because it resembles the nest of pigeons which symbolizes freedom, independence and innocence. But this kind of life was so strange for Edna because, she is used to acting in a rebellious way and she can not defy her wilder side:

... the nick name also resembles those small houses where people keep the domesticated pigeons, but Edna is more a wild creature than a domesticated one and in the end her own house does not fulfil what it promised. She feels outcast and as she was living in prison and realizes slowly that living this way is not suitable for her.⁹⁹

In Creole and Victorian culture, as mentioned before, sexual matters had to be under the control of men and, women (especially married women) had to be passive without any relationships in order to gain acceptance in the society. But, there was an ironic double standard between man and woman; while a woman's most important virtue was her purity and chastity, it was normal for a man to have a mistress and this was just like a moral rule in the Creole society. As Bauman states:

Young men were given their own quarters for entertainment purposes. They had mistresses who were Black or mulatto, but they could not marry them. Having a mistress was an accepted custom because marriages were usually business

⁹⁹ Eva Blažková, *The Awakening: Female Characters and their Social Roles*, Masaryk University Faculty of Education Department of English Language and Literature, Brno, 2009, http://is.muni.cz/th/105591/pedf_m/Kate_Chopin_dipl..txt (06.06.2012)

arrangements, not for love, and the men expected their wives to be passive and innocent lovers.¹⁰⁰

Edna's husband, Leonce frequently visits the clubs as an act of freedom given to man and it is probable that he has some sexual affairs there. As regards Robert, he is a womanizer whose next victim is Edna Pontellier:

He had lived in her shadow during the past month. No one thought anything of it. Many had predicted that Robert would devote himself to Mrs. Pontellier when he arrived. Since the age of fifteen, which was eleven years before, Robert each summer at Grand Isle had constituted himself the devoted attendant of some fair dame or damsel. Sometimes it was a young girl, again a widow; but as often as not it was some interesting married woman. (Chopin, 12)

In Creole culture, a man's friendship with another man's wife, was considered normal which is the case with Edna and Robert's relationships at the very beginning of the novel. They were just friends, and everything was under the control of Leonce. In the beginning of their friendship, for Robert and Edna, everything was very innocent and acceptable. Edna was in the thought of Robert's close behaviours as a first steps of a relationship because she was not a Creole and she did not know how a man and a woman can be friends. Knowing that, Adele warns Robert to let Edna alone:

"I only ask for one; let Mrs. Pontellier alone."

"Tiens!" he exclaimed, with a sudden, boyish laugh. "Voila que Madame Ratignolle est jalouse!"

"Nonsense! I'm in earnest; I mean what I say. Let Mrs. Pontellier alone."

"Why?" he asked; himself growing serious at his companion's solicitation.

"She is not one of us; she is not like us. She might make the unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously." (Chopin, 22)

As it is clear from the warning of Adele, it is just some kind of a close relationship which is accepted morally in the society, but Robert's close relation makes Edna think of future with him. But Edna's another relationship which is also named as an affair is with Alcee Arobin who has got a bad reputation in the society with his short affairs with married women. For Edna this was just a sexual passion as Showalter implies; "... *it leaves her illusions about love intact. Desire, she understands, can exist*

¹⁰⁰ Harriet J. Bauman, *Writing and Re-writings of the Discovery and Conquest of America: French Creoles in Louisiana: An American Tale Volume 2*, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, 1992

independently of love.”¹⁰¹ She did not feel any sorrow due to this sexual affair because nothing could compare with her pure and romantic love to Robert. But still, she was again warned by Adele to stay far away from Arobin indirectly saying that there is some gossip by people who want to ruin Edna’s name.

In her relationship with Alcee Arobin, Edna thinks of one person only and the name of this person indicates her independence in choice of the people in her life; this person is Robert instead of her husband Loence. Moreover, she even rejects any explanations for her children. For her, society is just a layer that is on her and she lives her own life in her inner world which conforms to her identity. She rejects the norms of society and chooses the person in her life:

The thought was passing vaguely through her mind, “what would he think?” She did not mean her husband; she was thinking of Robert Lebrun. Her husband seemed to her now like a person whom she had married without love as an excuse.(Chopin, 86)

Throughout the novel, Edna is stuck between her own ideas and the ideas of the society, and she is also stuck between her own American background and her husband’s Creole society. The more she wants to express her ideas and feelings, the more she is suppressed. Even her close friend, Adele, tries to heal her indirectly with some warnings.

She wants acceptance by society, in this respect she adores Adele Ratignolle, but she wants this acceptance with her own ideas and dreams. At the same time she desires to reflect her inner world to her external world; but she is diffident of exclusion from society like Mademoiselle Reisz. So Edna feels herself alone and frustrated in the society and she struggles against the repressions towards her individuality.

3.6. Janie Crawford’s Place in the Society

Though Zora Neale Hurston’s “*Their Eyes Were Watching God*” is considered the masterpiece of Southern feminist literature, she is highly criticized for not presenting a conformist female protagonist. Instead of creating a female character whose individuality was shaped in accordance with social and traditional values,

¹⁰¹ *The American Novel, New Essays on The Awakening*... p. 50.

Hurston presents her protagonist, Janie Crawford, as a reactor whose individual thoughts are above the society's expectations, thoughts and norms. Throughout the novel, Janie is under the influence of patriarchal dominance and racist discrimination; however the latter one is implied indirectly via the feedback of social and hierarchal order on black society.

In social life of African-American between 1910s and 1940s, patriarchy was rather dominant and influential in gender relations. Women of the Southern society had to deal with the limitations of the male and the racial inferiority which was imposed on them universally:

The women who were worse off from just the patriarchic rule during Modernist times were African American women who not only have to deal with the domination of their society because of their gender, but also the racism from the entire nation.¹⁰²

Hurston's creating a female protagonist out of the conventions of social order was not appropriate for the white people either, because in social hierarchy of the age, the ruler was the white and this situation was a threat for the order which was based on slavery and racism. This dominance of white people over black people is made clear in the novel via the rape of Janie's mother and grandmother by white men and via the capitalist and slavery system which was descended from white people's society, as it is stated by Nanny:

Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. (Hurston 14)

By using the similarity between the black woman and mule, Nanny wants to imply the top place of white man in the social pyramid and to identify the black woman as the owner of bottom and worst place in this social pyramid. And throughout the novel, the struggle of Janie Crawford's to become an individual and to live a way of life in accordance with her own thoughts and ideas is embodied as the survival of black woman against the order in general; however, it is seen as an individual act of hers.

¹⁰² <http://michellesobrinio.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/aml-3041-american-literature-ii-essay-2-e299a6e299a6.docx> (23.11.2012)

Janie, as a pioneer woman character of the twenty-first century, manages to observe some rules and lead life styles which were once believed to be constituted only for men. In the process of Janie's liberation, she uses her mind and makes decisions in accordance with her inner world and ideas instead of formalizing her identity with the impositions of Southern society in which woman appears as an essence lacking of power of intelligence.

The early years of Janie have great importance on shaping her personality, since she grew under the guidance of her grandmother without her mother and father, especially in a manner short of male guidance. When Nanny witnesses Janie kissing a male, she wants to protect her from the violence and sexual abuse of men. In order to make Janie's life secure, Nanny wants Janie to get married to Logan Killicks who would support Janie financially:

Janie begins her life forced to live with her grandmother's belief of the roles in which a woman should play. Nanny, who grew up in slavery believes that the role of men is to support his wife financially, moreover, a woman's role is to be an ornament of the home while accepting all the things that the husband feels is right.¹⁰³

Though Janie rejects this proposal of Nanny, she is forced to do so and she indirectly becomes a part of hierarchal order before gaining a complete individuality. Although Janie seems to agree with her grandmother over the issue of her marriage with Logan Killicks, her ideas about the gender relations which defend the equality between genders do not change; she accepts this just for the sake of acceptance by her grandmother.

Janie is compelled to marry for protection in order not to be a rape victim like her mother and grandmother. Her grandmother was continuously raped by her master and his mother was raped by her school teacher. Nanny, being aware of the danger of a black woman's loneliness, wants to break this chain of victimization and make Janie get married to Logan for the sake of safety not for love. Although love and sexual freedom are unnecessary for Nanny, these are desirable for Janie within a marriage. Comparing Nanny and Janie, it can be concluded that Janie is the follower of not advice, she wants to live up to her desires.

¹⁰³ <http://www.rhetcomp.gsu.edu/efolio/USERS/cdham27/Paper2140.doc> (26.11.2012)

In her marriage with Logan Killicks, when Janie mentions her marriage as being lack of romanticism and she is exposed to treatment like a mule, Nanny is not surprised considering it quite normal;” *Whut’s de matter, sugar? You ain’t non too spry dis mornin’ ... you and Logan been fussin’? Lawd I know dat grass- gut, liver- lipted nigger ain’t done took and beat mah baby already!*”(Hurston, 22) Through her complaining about her marriage, Janie gives the first signal of her search of individuality on social level. Seeing that, her dreams about blossoming pear tree do not realize in this marriage, she wants to get rid of being married to protection and financial power in order to reach the horizon where she hopes to find the real meaning of marriage with love. Janie, by doing so, not only wants to free herself from this marriage but also wants to free herself of marriage based on the financial protection of woman by her husband.

Although Janie runs away with Jodie Starks in hopes of a better life and moving away from the harshness of patriarchal life, meanwhile she does this under the influence of Nanny indirectly who is in favour of Janie’s being in secure under a powerful man’s control. In her marriage with Jodie Starks, Janie becomes aware of the fact that she is mistaken in her hopes to be treated like a lady by Jodie. Janie is used by Joe Starks to show himself as a big voice in the society, because according to Joe only if a man has the power of directing his wife can he rule over the society with respect. She is compelled to work on the farm like a mule in her former marriage with Logan Killicks and now in her marriage with Jodie Starks she is treated like a valuable possession of Joe’s. Indeed Janie is a valuable possession which should be protected from the other men in the society in a jealous way and thinking so, Joe feels justified to intervene with her body in order to prevent the threats towards his authority:

This business of the head-rag irked her endlessly. But Jody was set on it. Her hair was NOT going to show in the store. It didn’t seem sensible at all. That was because Joe never told Janie how jealous he was. He never told her how often he had seen the other men figuratively wallowing in it as she went about things in the store. And one night he had caught Walter standing behind and brushing the back of his hand back and forth across the loose end of her braid ever so lightly so as to enjoy the feel of it without Janie knowing what he was doing. Joe was at the back of the store and Walter didn’t see him. He felt like rushing forth with the meat knife and chopping off the offending hand. That night he ordered Janie to tie up her hair around the store. That was all. She was there in the store for him to look at, not those others. (Hurston, 55)

Disappointed at lots of things in her life, Janie feels herself alienated in the society and especially in her marital life with Jodie Starks. She reacts against the

behaviours of her husband by keeping herself in silence. Her silence instead of approving her husband good or bad, Janie shows signals of losing her faith in her marriage and in the society. And in this process, it is understood that Janie's view of marriage, which involves love, is quite different from the view of society including Nanny's perspective on marriage:

The years took all the fight out of Janie's face. For a while she thought it was gone from her soul. No matter what Jody did, she said nothing. She had learned how to talk some and leave some. She was a rut in the road. Plenty of life beneath the surface but it was kept beaten down by the wheels. Sometimes she stuck out into the future, imagining her life different from what it was. But mostly she lived between her hat and her heels, with her emotional disturbances like shade patterns in the woods – come and gone with the sun. She got nothing from Jody except what money could buy, and she was giving away what she didn't value. (Hurstun, 76)

Although, Janie is a respected woman in the society as the wife of the mayor, she is not happy and she feels herself handicapped by the dominance of Jodie Starks over her. The only thing that makes her powerful is her hope of a future in which Jodie Starks does not exist. Accordingly, the process of her husband's illness and death is the beginning of the emancipation of her soul. That is to say her gradual loss of innocence turns into an experience for Janie and as a consequence of this, Janie breaks her silence while Jodie is ill in his deathbed, and for the first time in her marriage with Jodie Starks, Janie shows the powerful side of her individuality rather than obedience. She reminds Joe to be generous about love so that he can be loved indeed and she points out his mistakes to him:

And now you got tuh die tuh find out dat you got tuh pacify somebody else besides you'self if you wants any love and any sympathy in dis world. You ain't tried tuh pacify nobody but yo'self. Too busy listening tuh yo' own big voice. (Hurstun, 87)

Feeling handicapped during her marriage with Joe Starks, Janie does not mourn and cry upon his death which is expected by society, but she turns back to her independent individuality instead because this is a chance for Janie to realize her dreams of an independent soul and blossoms, beyond the traditional concept of compelled marriage of society. This is a beginning of a new life for Janie and this act of liberation affects her womanhood via her behaviours and change of her style:

She went over to the dresser and looked hard at her skin and features. The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place. She tore off

the kerchief from her head and let down her plentiful hair. The weight, the length, the glory was there.(Hurston, 87)

After being unchained from the ties of Joe Stark's patriarchal dominance over her, people of the town especially the men start to make use of her womanhood and wealth by approaching her in the name of honour and the respectful place inherited from her husband, the mayor of town:

When Janie emerged into her mourning white, she had hosts of admirers in and out of town. Everything open and frank. Men of property too among the crowd, but nobody seemed to get any further than the store. She was always too busy to take them to the house to entertain. They were all so respectful and stiff with her, that she might have been the Empress of Japan. They felt that it was not fitting to mention desire to the widow of Joseph Starks. You spoke of honor and respect. And all that they said and did was refracted by her inattention and shot off towards the rimbones of nothing....A Sanford undertaker was pressing his cause through Pheoby, and Janie was listening pleasantly but undisturbed. It might be nice to marry him, at that. No hurry. Such things take time to think about... (Hurston, 92)

Through her freedom after the death of her husband Joe Starks, she becomes aware of not only her own individuality but also the reaction of the society towards her as a widower. After Joe Starks' passing away, people start to see Janie as an essence that does not have any importance in the absence of her husband remarking this; "*Uh woman by herself is uh pitiful thing*" (Hurston, 90). While she was formerly treated as a property in her marriage, now it is the society that treats her the same way, this behaviour is transmitted to society in the absence of her husband. In this sense, the common ideals of society emerge from obscurity and she becomes a sexual object in the eyes of men and owing to being so, she is excluded by the women of society because of their jealousy which results from her process of blossoming out:

The men buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume; then her pugnacious breasts trying to bore holes in her shirt. They, the men, were saving with the mind what they lost with the eye. The women took the faded shirt and muddy overalls and laid them away for remembrance. It was a weapon against her strength and if it turned out of no significance, still it was a hope that she might fall to their level some day. (Hurston, 2)

As she becomes alienated from the society and moves away from the thoughts and expectations of society, she hopes to find a true love in her relationship with Tea Cake who has far more different characteristics from the other men in society in terms of masculine ideals which are over women. In fact Tea Cake is a man who does not give

any importance to materiality, but in the eyes of public, he is a man who makes use of Janie and her wealth. However, contrary to the prejudgements of society, Janie finds happiness and love and she is also embraced and accepted by Tea Cake as a real source of love instead of a valuable property of a husband. During her relationship with Tea Cake, Janie, for the first time in her life, rejects social conventions and particularly out of Nanny's ideals which argue that marriage is an economical protection of a woman in Southern society. And so Janie feels herself vulnerable and worthy of Tea Cake's love and her suppressed identity gradually develops in accordance with her own wills and desires: "*He [Tea Cake] drifted off into sleep and Janie looked down him and felt a self-crushing love. So her soul crawled out from its hiding place.*" (Hurston, 128)

She seems a powerful woman who does not belong to any class of society even after her returning back to the Eatonville following the death of Tea Cake. Her being a non-conformist and her powerful stand give rise to gossips among the people of porch. The people of Eatonville ask each other about her lost wealth and current poverty and they are jealous of her masculine power and attractive appearance in spite of her age:

[The porch gossips]: "What she doin coming back here in dem overalls? Can't she find no dress to put on? – Where's dat blue satin dress she left here in? – Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her? – What dat ole forty year ole 'oman doin' wid her hair swingin' down her back lak some young gal? – Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid? – Thought she was going to marry? – Where he left her? – What he done wid all her money? – Betcha he off wid some gal so young she ain't even got no hairs – Why she don't stay in her class? –" (Hurston, 2)

Although Janie looks like a subservient female figure like Southern women for her husbands and conveys this seemingly feature of hers both outwardly and inwardly, she experiences many climaxes that belong to the traditional concept of woman in marriage and she, therefore, develops her identity and prepares herself to be a non-conformist rambler who is in search of a love marriage. What is more, by exploring her inner world and ideals about Southern society, it can be seen that she is a powerful individual of society trying to realize her own individuality without social pressure on her:

Furthermore, if we do acknowledge an element of subservience in her, then we must also acknowledge the short yet significant displays of her power over men,

whether that be her leaving Killicks, her public humiliation of Starks or even her shooting and killing of Tea Cake.¹⁰⁴

When Janie is put on a trial after shooting Tea Cake, both Janie's position as a powerful individual in the society and position of the black society in globalized white community become clearer. During the trial, Janie is given a chance to defend herself. At the court, the black people are ready to listen and follow the decision of the court, but surprising enough these people, including former friends of Janie, stand against her. For the black society, it is obviously seen that the black society has become conditioned to be in a ceaseless struggle as they are in racial issues. Their weapon of speech and language, which was once used against the white society, is now used against Janie Crawford, a woman of their own society. They try to speak at the court of white people, and white men manage to mute this defensive community and prevent the unconscious and insensible destructive intention of black society:

Then she saw all of the colored people standing up in the back of the courtroom. Packed tight like a case of celery, only much darker than that. They were all against her, she could see. So many were there against her that a light slap from each one of them would have beat her to death. She felt them pelting her with dirty thoughts. They were there with their tongues cocked and loaded, the only real weapon left to weak folks. The only killing tool they are allowed to use in the presence of white folks. (Hurston, 185)

[...]

"Mistah Prescott, Ah got somethin' tuh say," Sop-de-Bottom spoke out anonymously from the anonymous herd.

The courtroom swung round on itself to look.

"If you know what's good for you, you better shut your mouth up until somebody calls you," Mr. Prescott told him coldly.

"Yassuh, Mr. Prescott."

"We are handling this case. Another word out of you, out of any of you niggers back there, and I'll bind you over to the big court."

"Yassuh." (Hurston, 187)

In the court, Janie achieves the freedom of speech for the first time in her life without any interruption at a fair place, in front of both white and black society. Janie is anxious there because of the possibility of being understood about the strength of her

¹⁰⁴ John Howarth, *Their Eyes Were Watching God: Janie Crawford and the Attainment of Individuality*, Illuminazioni, 2011, p. 11.

love towards Tea Cake, and she tells at the court about the powerful love bond between her and Tea Cake. Although the court is made up of only white male officials, Janie is acquitted contrary to the expectations of black society and she is given support especially by white females instead of the women of black society.

Janie's ostracism from her own people also shows the alienation of the Southern black society from their own society and from the rest of the world. In their search for a respectful place in the world, black society has always defended themselves with the opposite ideas of white people and by doing so, they have created an opposing power of speech and world perspective challenging even their own black people. Needless to say, in such a society in which Janie lives, a courageous woman like Janie is not allowed to control her identity and essence in concrete ways; instead, she is only allowed to have a controlling and limiting voice in their spiritual journey:

In her masterpiece, Janie is a black woman and being black in a society of that special era, early 20th century, means being invisible, and on the margins of society at large. As a result of this invisibility, they are forced to leave the circle of power and remain on the margin. They cannot control their bodies and their invisibility. Bodies have definite forms and cannot be altered; instead they can control their spirit and their soul.¹⁰⁵

Being on the margins of the society, Janie accomplishes her spiritual development in her inner world by being compelled to do so because of the barriers that take her away from the traditions and prevent her from participating in the rituals of society. In this respect, instead of being a marginalised individual Janie chooses this invisible growth on account of the compulsory effects that emerge from her ideals different from those of the oppressive society in which patriarchal rules and ideals are dominant. Having no other choice for independence, Janie creates an inner world which is strange and invisible to the eyes of people who approach the woman as a property of male dominance:

Janie is watched and gazed at by her community members; she is visible in terms of body and invisible in terms of power. When she returns from burying Tea Cake, she is seen by porch talkers, "their eyes flung wide open in judgment". Although, they are "eyeless" all day long, when they see her, the narrator explains that "the porch could not talk for looking".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Mahmood Daram, Sepideh Hozhabrsadat, *Invisibility of the I's in "Their Eyes Were Watching God"*, Internal Journal of English and Literature Vol. 3(4), 2012, p. 84.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 84.

Actually Janie's invisibility in the society is the minimized version of African American people among the races of the world. For ages black people have always felt as if they were discriminated by other nations because of their physiology and this psychological assumption has gradually led them to ignore their own existence on an international basis. In other words, since the black man does not feel himself as a full person, he makes the black woman think the same ideas within their own black society, and Janie, who chooses to experience an invisible development in the society, is not an exception.

According to people in Eatonville, she is only visible due to her physical beauty attracting men who are unaware of Janie's intellectual thoughts. That is why, it is normal in the course of the novel to observe Janie's political thoughts derived from an experienced inner world confrontation with the norms of society in general. The physical beauty of Janie, her visible part, is also important for her to create difference and to strengthen herself among the women of the society. Through her beauty, she is able to transmit her invisible thoughts and ideas to her visible side and with the advantage of her beauty, she can address to a wider mass. It would be right to say that by combining her beauty and intelligence, Janie gradually interacts with society and defends her own sexuality as she quarrels with Joe by attacking each other's gender and appearance:

[Janie when Joe implies she is old]: "Naw, Ah ain't no young gal no mo' but den Ah ain't no old woman neither. Ah reckon Ah looks mah age too. But Ah'm uh woman every inch of me, and Ah know it. Dat's uh whole lot more'n you kin say. You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but 'tain't nothin' to it but yo' big voice. Humph! Talkin' 'bout me lookin' old! When you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life." (Hurston, 79)

In Janie's quarrel with Joe Starks, it can also be said that the ideals of Janie are far more powerful when accompanied by her physical beauty, and this situation is enough to surpass the respectful image of Joe in the society in that especially when Joe dies, the men of the porch want to see her attractive side of vision which is allowed by herself in order to hide her inner world and keep it secure. In the eyes of the society, Janie is like a bird whose wings are broken after Joe's death and she loses the characteristics of a high class woman upon Stark's death. And although Tea Cake gets closer to Janie with his sincere emotions and identity, this intimacy is solely because of his desire of abusing Janie in people's opinion. Considering the tendencies of society, it

is clear that both Janie and Tea Cake are the victims of society's distinctive gender moulds by making an analogy with Annie Tyler who was abused by her younger fiancée:

She was broken and her pride was gone, so she told those who asked what had happened. Who Flung had taken her to a shabby room in a shabby house in a shabby street and promised to marry her next day. They stayed in the room two whole days then she woke up to find Who Flung and her money gone. She got up to stir around and see if she could find him, and found herself too worn out to do much. (Hurstun, 119)

Janie is unable to enlighten her vision of race and individual power until her marriage with Tea Cake. She is also angry with Nanny because of her wrong guidance about the ideas of love, which has great impact on her first two marriages:

Some people could look at a mud-puddle and see an ocean with ships. But Nanny belonged to that other kind that loved to deal in scraps. Here Nanny had taken the biggest thing God ever made, the horizon – for not matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you – and pinched it in to such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter's neck tight enough to choke her. She hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love. (Hurstun, 89)

Her former husbands, Logan Killicks and Joe Starks, are not able to see the real inner visions of Janie, which constitute her character and these men are only keen on the physical appearance of Janie. At this point Tea Cake is different from the others with the ability of seeing beyond the appearance of Janie and this is why Janie calls Tea Cake "*the light at daybreak*" (Hurstun, 159) because of his companionship throughout the process of transforming the invisible side of Janie into visible side.

The settings throughout the novel also indicate Janie's gradual integration into society. For example in her marriage with Logan Killicks, Janie has to live in "*a lonesome place like a stump in the middle of the woods where nobody had ever been*" (Hurstun, 21). Janie feels the great loneliness and lacks of communication as a reflection of her inner world through which she can get away from the oppression of materialistic marriage restricting her. In addition to this, she is not able to maintain her personal growth as she does not enjoy any individualization.

Janie's second marriage is notable for providing the transition from loneliness to integration with society in her life. In her marriage with Joe Starks, Joe's house includes a porch through which Janie experiences a kind of communication with society, but

even this communication is also limited for her because of being under the shade of her mayor husband. Although Janie is happy being among the people of Eatonville, she is not allowed to enjoy this as much as she wants by her husband because he is convinced that a mayor's wife should be aware of the class distinctions and she should not be among the ordinary people of Eatonville. Joe wants to maintain his patriarchal dominance over his citizens arising from being the founder mayor of the town:

A society is considered patriarchal when men establish or inherit a social order where they dominate positions of power and authority or when important achievements and historical events are attributed to the actions of men¹⁰⁷

As the owner of an esteemed position in the society, Joe warns his wife to be careful: "*the wife of the Mayor was not just another woman as she had supposed. She slept with authority and so she was part of it in the town mind*" (Hurstun, 46). Moreover, to Joe Starks, Janie is like an ornament of the house who does not know anything about her individuality and anything else that is related to it. Especially he says about owning self knowledge that *mah wife don't know nothin' bout no speech-makin* (Hurstun, 43). Having strong patriarchal ideas, Joe Starks tries hard to keep Janie away from the people of Eatonville and what is more, he continually accuses Janie of not running the store properly and not fulfilling her domestic duties.

Eventually in her third marriage with Tea Cake, Janie is integrated into the society of Everglade in which there is no mechanism of social classes like Eatonville, and so Janie obtains the chance of complete integration as an ordinary individual in the society via this marriage. Apart from her former marriages, in her third marriage, Janie is surrounded by the continuous love of her husband even while Tea Cake is working in the bean fields. The most important aspect which makes them always together is the structure of society in which women are allowed to work in the fields in order to contribute to household economy. So it can be argued that on examining the social divisions of society, Everglade is the place where she realizes her individuality by integrating into the society as an independent individual rather than as the wife of Tea Cake.

Janie Crawford alters her outgoing individuality and her role in the society in accordance with her marriages:

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.mediahex.com/Patriarchy#A%20society%20is%20considered%20patriarchal%20when> (21.07.2012)

Janie Crawford from Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, whose race limited her to only being a part of the black town of Eatonville, Florida, and whose gender limited her to being only what her husband wanted her to be within the society.¹⁰⁸

Janie manages to liberate herself from the patriarchal dominance of her first two marriages during her time with Tea Cake who encourages Janie to explore her own identity. Under the guidance of Tea Cake, Janie starts to play checkers which was identified with male intelligence. This act of Janie is some kind of manifestation of the intelligence and power of her inner world. With the help of Tea Cake's encouragement, she decides to live the Janie who is hidden in her mind and she moves herself away from the ideals of Nanny who is the representative of traditional black woman's moral teacher in the novel:

Cause Tea Cake ain't no Jody Starks, and if he tried tuh be, it would be uh complete flommuck. But de minute Ah marries 'im everybody is goingtuh be makin' comparisons. So us is goin' off somewhere and start all over in Tea Cake's way. Dis ain't no business proposition, and no race after property and titles. Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means tuh live mine.' (Hurston, 114)

Janie displays her power and strength of her inner world to outer world by shooting Tea Cake in order to defend herself. She is brave enough to kill her precious husband without anyone's guidance. Janie's behaviour here reflects her independence in acting freely:

Janie's spiritual journey is positive. With each of her three marriages, the first two of which result in frustration and spiritual discontent, Janie is able to claim more of herself, and she becomes stronger and more independent as she learns who she is and what she needs from life. While the story seems to end tragically, for her true love dies at her own hand, Janie is an autonomous person at novel's end.¹⁰⁹

Throughout the novel and process of her establishing a place in the society, Janie manages to escape from the oppression of the society by creating a sense of an inner world and outer world. During her journey to an inner enlightenment, Janie learns not by advice but by going through numerous experiences. Although Janie seems in particular to be the sound of her own individuality throughout the novel, she represents the suppressed identity and voice of black women in general.

¹⁰⁸ <http://michellesobrino.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/aml-3041-american-literature-ii-essay-2-e299a6e299a6.docx> (23.11.2012)

¹⁰⁹ Carolyn Perry, Mary Weak – Baxter, *The History of Southern Women's Literature*, LSU Press, Los Angeles, 2002, p. 304.

CHAPTER IV

4.1. Self-revolution of Edna Pontellier

As a novel “*The Awakening*” gained its deserved significance nearly fifty years after it was written and it made Kate Chopin the pioneer of Southern literature with the ideas and narration of the novel:

Likewise, as Chopin’s artist-woman Mademoiselle Reisz performs Frederic Chopin’s “prelude” in the novel, *The Awakening* is yet to be studied as Kate Chopin’s “prelude” to the Southern Renaissance canon.¹¹⁰

In the years it was written, the feminist ideology was not popular enough to defend the rights of women and how they feel individually. The most important reason of this was their being under the control of male dominant society and they were something just only when together with their husbands or with their family. And that is why instead of a sudden awakening, the gradual awakening of the female heroine Edna Pontellier takes place in the novel as it is in the real life:

Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relation as an individual to the world within and about her. This may seem like a ponderous weight of wisdom to descend upon the soul of a young woman of twenty-eight—perhaps more wisdom than the Holy Ghost is usually pleased to vouchsafe to any woman. But the beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such beginning! How many souls perish in its tumult! (Chopin, 16)

Kate Chopin reflects her own individual self in *The Awakening*. She is a woman who lives under her own decisions and her own desires and if it requires her to leave her decisions, she can give up all these without any hesitations. For example in the end of Chopin’s relationship with Alber Sampite, Chopin leaves him like her many characters in her novels as Emily Toth says; “*in the end, Chopin left to her mother’s home, choosing a mother’s love over a man’s uncertain passions*”.¹¹¹ And Kate Chopin misses her mother and her husband after they pass away and she writes down:

If it were possible for my husband and my mother to come back to earth, I feel that I would unhesitatingly give up every thing that has come into my life since they left it and join my existence again with theirs. To do that, I would have to

¹¹⁰ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened*... p. 48.

¹¹¹ *Unveiling Kate Chopin*...p. 172.

forget the past ten years of my growth-my real growth. But I would take back a little wisdom with me; it would be the spirit of perfect acquiescence.¹¹²

In the novel, Kate Chopin uses the symbol figure of bird as a representative of Edna's personality, makes some similarities between them. The caged birds in the beginning of the novel symbolize Edna Pontellier, before her awakening process, who is restricted within the borders of social and traditional conventions. These birds do not have their own sounds and they repeat the sounds of their owners similar to Edna who lives in accordance to the society's expectations. Edna also calls her house where she moved after leaving Robert as "*pigeon house*" (Chopin, 94). With the symbol of pigeon house Edna associates herself with a domesticated but a free bird. Through the novel, as Edna awakens her soul, she becomes aware of the fact that her existence is nothing and does not have any importance as long as she can not transfer her inner side into the real life. But the social structure in which she lives does not allow this and, the uncaged bird's falling down into the sea with a broken wing, at the end of the novel, symbolizes Edna's defeat in her struggle for realizing herself within the borders of society.

As it is revealed in the novel, it is required to have a courageous soul in order to have a place in the society as an individual. From this point of view, there is a great similarity between Kate Chopin and her character Edna Pontellier. And this is especially indicated in many biographical books written by Emily Toth. Emily Toth identifies Kate Chopin as:

...a woman filled with passion and desires. She was her own woman and would make her own rules. She went after what she wanted and she said what she thought, even when it was scandalous. Kate did not restrict herself to a certain way of living, acting, or writing, which is obvious in her stories and novels. In a time that it was not acceptable for women to speak out about independence and sexuality, Chopin has enough courage to discuss it in her writing. She wrote of a time in the future, about women's freedom to write what they felt, but she did it in a time when it was not considered desirable. Through her writing, she told a story of women's better life, their independence and freedom that left her outstanding among others¹¹³

When we are to take a look at the factors which awaken Edna's soul, we need to underline several milestones that play important roles in this awakening process. Among these are Edna's motherless childhood, her position as a middle child (birth order), her interest in art and painting, her friendship with two women who are against

¹¹²Per Seyersted, *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography*, Louisiana State University Press, Los Angeles, 1969, p. 58-59.

¹¹³ *Unveiling Kate Chopin...* p. 170.

each other on account of socially assigned roles, her wrong choice of husband which is also a revolt against her father and the beliefs of Presbyterian Church, the Creole society which teaches her freedom of expression about her feelings, her hidden ability to swim, and her rapprochement with Robert Lebrun as two lovers.

As a child Edna was raised as the middle child in the family without a mother control over them. And in family order, middle siblings are usually the neglected children among the family because they are stuck between the older and younger ones. As a result of this, they become more independent, imaginative, stubborn and powerful especially when they become adults. Birth order is something which is often believed to shape the psychological development of individuals and its effects. According to some researches which are implied in the book *'The Effect of birth Order on Personality'*, many middle children are against the hierarchical system and they do not get on well with the strict rules that belong to his society and family. When this fact is taken into consideration, the origin of Edna's awakening can be clarified in a more sensible way. Art is also another effect which prompts Edna's soul to awaken. Art is important for middle children in that they are generally interested in arts, sales and advertising just like Edna's interest in music and painting.

The signs of Edna's awakening appear in a concrete way when she is blended with Creole society in Grand Isle. Their intimate relationship among themselves is very effective for Edna's awakening because she learns from them how to express her feelings frankly. In Creole society, people were all relaxed in their social life, and women could be friends with young men and this situation was accepted to be a normal behaviour of individuals. In origin Edna is an American woman who comes from an environment with the strict rules and controls of Presbyterian Church which are substantially different from Creole society and their beliefs.

The process of Edna's evolution takes place in Creole community and she is highly affected by three figures of this society; Adele Ratignolle who represents the traditional devoted mother-woman, Mademoiselle Reisz who is derelict great artist and the contrasted figure of Adele, and Robert Lebrun who has not fully accomplished the traditional and male values yet.

Edna's friendship with Adele Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz is also crucial for the self-development and spiritual awakening of her. Edna's awakening through art is prompted by the songs of Mlle. Reisz. As Edna listens Reisz playing the piano, she sheds tears as a consequence of her refreshed emotions:

It was not the first time she had heard an artist at the piano. Perhaps it was the first time she was ready, perhaps the first time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth (Chopin, 29).

As Edna listens Reisz, she decides to follow her ambitions in the field of art. And when Edna tells Mlle. Reisz about her ideas of becoming artist, Mlle. Reisz warns her about the self sacrifices of becoming a real artist:

To be an artist includes much; one must possess many gifts—absolute gifts—which have not been acquired by one's own effort. And, moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul (Chopin, 70).

She knows that Edna is a mother woman and she is not as liberated as herself.

In the individual development of Edna, Mademoiselle Reisz is the person who awakens the rebellious side of Edna by her artistic expression and outlook of world. With her artistic side and solitary soul, Mademoiselle Reisz forms a type of character who is able to stay far away from being handicapped by the rules of society in return for being solitary, as Dilek Direnç states “*Adele symbolizes the cultural ideal of Southern womanhood whereas Mademoiselle Reisz stands for an alternative path to the ideal, though rarely chosen.*”¹¹⁴ Imitating the pioneer artist Mademoiselle Reisz, Edna shapes her ideals in the guidance of her and determines to have a powerful soul to explore her identity and abilities above the level of a traditional Creole woman.

In this Creole society, Edna is also deeply and sincerely affected from Mrs. Ratignolle though she is completely the opposite of Edna in terms of outlook to the society. The most important reason of this is her process of motherless and vulnerable childhood. Edna finds the protective and the caring interest for the first time when she establishes a mutual relation with Adele Ratignolle:

...one of them was the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm. If her husband did not adore her, he was a brute, deserving of death by slow torture. Her name was Adele Ratignolle. There are no words to describe her save the old

¹¹⁴ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 62.

ones that have served so often to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams. There was nothing subtle or hidden about her charms; her beauty was all there, flaming and apparent: the spun-gold hair that comb nor confining pin could restrain; the blue eyes that were like nothing but sapphires; two lips that pouted, that were so red one could only think of cherries or some other delicious crimson fruit in looking at them. (Chopin, 10)

In fact Edna is greatly affected from Adele's motherhood and her appearance, because she has that great power to devote herself for her children and family. Edna tries to fulfil the space of her mother with Adele, which empowers her soul and makes her believe in doing something as an individual. As Edna spends daytime with Adele, she remembers her own rare happy days from her childhood and Edna finds a chance of intoxication and comfort by telling her suppressed ideals and inner world to Adele. It is clear that Edna restarts her uncompleted awakening from her childhood, as she rejuvenates her memories of past:

"The hot wind beating in my face made me think-without any connection that I can trace-of a summer day in Kentucky, of a meadow that seemed as big as an ocean to the very little girl walking through the grass, which was higher than her waist. She threw out her arms as if swimming when she walked, beating the tall grass as one strikes out in the water. Oh, I see the connection now!"

"Where were you going that day in Kentucky, walking through the grass?"

"I do not remember now where I was going. I was just walking diagonally across a big field. My sunbonnet obstructed the view. I could see only the stretch of green before me, and I felt as if I must walk forever, without coming to the end of it. I do not remember whether I was frightened or pleased. I must have been entertained.

"Likely as not it was Sunday," she laughed; "and I was running away from prayers, from the Presbyterian service, read in a spirit of gloom by my father that chills me yet to think of."

"And have you been running away from prayers ever since, ma chère?"

"No! Oh, no!" Edna hastened to say.

"I was a little unthinking child in those days, just following a misleading impulse without question?"(Chopin, 19)

Adele behaves Edna so closely that Edna finds the relief and peace of having a mother with Adele:

Madame Ratignolle laid her hand over that of Mrs. Pontellier, which was near her. Seeing that the hand was not withdrawn, she clasped it firmly and warmly. She even strokes it a little, fondly, with the other hand, murmuring in an undertone, "Pauvre chérie." (Chopin, 19)

And this intimacy between them awakens Edna's sensuality and hidden romantic figure which reveals the sense of love.

Love is just a sense of escape for Edna especially in the period before her marriage. The absence of her mother caused her to love some impossible men and even gave rise to her marriage with Leonce. In her realm of love, Edna is not aware of the essence of real love; nor can she feel how to love or whom to love and the sense of being loved. She is so inexperienced and innocent in the matter of love that she even falls in love with a photograph on her table and this goes on for a while. And then she falls in love with the fiancée of her sister's friend. By doing so, Edna blends the reality with her fantasies and her dreams. She must do this in order to create her own world. Edna is on her own in her younger ages, so her "dream love" is just a way of escaping from hurting and annoying reality. It is obvious that as she grows up the less sincere the people around her, the more obsessed she becomes with her dream loves. Likewise, the non-conformist side of Edna is obvious in her dream-loves; much as the man she loves is engaged to another girl, she just ignores this fact and goes on loving him. Apparently, even in her younger ages and in her adolescence, she is a decisive individual; she does not give up till she does not want it anymore.

Her marriage with Leonce Pontellier is also very dramatic because she gets married to him with hopes of passionate love. Edna regards this marriage as a way of escaping from her father. But her marriage to Leonce does not go on as she hopes initially. That marriage is lack of sincerity and connection; both of them live their own lives. There are no feelings of desire and intimacy which are the main components of marriage for Edna. When she faces the realities, she becomes aware of the fact that her dreams and ideals are now far away from her:

Her marriage to Léonce Pontellier was purely an accident, in this respect resembling many other marriages, which masquerades as the decrees of Fate. It was in the midst of her secret great passion that she met him. He fell in love, as men are in the habit of doing, and pressed his suit with earnestness and ardour that left nothing to be desired. He pleased her and his absolute devotion flattered her. She thought there was a harmony of thought and taste between them, in which fancy she was mistaken.

Add to this the violent opposition of her father and her sister Margaret to her marriage with a Catholic, and we need seek no further for the motives, which led her to accept Monsieur Pontellier for her husband. (Chopin, 21)

Edna's marriage to Leonce Pontellier and world of thoughts represent the conflict between traditional patriarchal and materialistic ideals of woman within marriage. For Leonce Pontellier, Edna was a valuable individual for him not because of the ties of love between them. Leonce and Edna were married and this situation made Edna a valuable possession of Leonce rather than his valuable wife. As Edna digresses the borders of society and its norms, she begins to learn how to resist against the society's traditional norms on her identity, and how to be an independent individual rather than Leonce's handicapped possession and wife.

As Edna becomes aware of her essence in the universe, she isolates herself from the society and the women of her society. In the Creole society, motherhood and dependence on husband are important ideas which make a woman virtuous in the eye of people. But Edna, however she tries can not be a real mother-woman as exemplified by her total ignorance of her husband in her suicide act. Similar to her difference from the other women in the society, her children are also different on account of independence from the other children who "*apt to push crying to mother's arms for comfort.*"(Chopin, 10)

Edna's main transformation from a mother-woman and a wife into an independent individual woman starts solemnly and physically when she swims for the first time on the Grand Isle. Before this incident, her soul just starts to awaken as she tells Madame Ratignolle about her past memories and her story. And when Edna swims for the first time with Robert, she steps into a process through which she feels herself as a renewed being. To Edna the sea is a place of rebirth and eternal power. When she enters into the sea in order to learn swimming for the first time, she flutters and stumbles in the water in order not to drown, like a child who attempts to walk for the first time and seeing her own scramble, Edna becomes aware of the power which has always been hidden until that very time. After many attempts to swim, Edna finally learns swimming and she is happy for the victory over her fears. Once Edna learns to swim, she starts swimming far away from the shore "*where no woman had swum before*"(31). Swimming alone is the strength of her gradual independence in the society. Whenever she realizes that she has her own power of achieving something alone, she feels herself alone in the repressive society and she is no longer dependent on the people around her:

She turned her face seaward to gather in an impression of space and solitude, which the vast expanse of water, meeting and melting with the moonlit sky, conveyed to her excited fancy. As she swam, she seemed to be reaching out for the unlimited in which to lose herself. (Chopin, 31-32)

Discovering new things awakens Edna's soul step by step. Since the very beginning of marriage with Leonce, Edna has always been under the control and oppression of her husband and Creole society's norms of marriage, and through swimming independently in the sea, she encourages herself to be an independent and self fulfilling individual. And she feels sorrow for not having gone through this experience before; *"How easy it is!" she thought. "It is nothing," she said aloud; "why did I not discover before that it was nothing. Think of the time I have lost splashing about like a baby!"* (Chopin, 31)

While in the water, Edna awakens her childhood memories and she feels herself as happy as she was in her childhood, as if she were running in the meadow happily. As Edna interacts with water, she feels the protection of a mother too. Swimming is like the womb of a mother, where one is protected and feels secure under the control of a caring mother. Anca Parvulescu states in her article that *"swimming and flying are metaphors of woman's access to power"*¹¹⁵. Just like these metaphors, Edna becomes more rebellious against her husband, her society and her subdued self as she learns swimming. She does not obey the commands of her husband, she abandons him and she even has sexual affair with the one she chooses just like Arobin. All the same, although Edna's soul is awakened gradually and however far she goes away from the shore, she can not escape from her background because that was the first time in her life she moves herself away from the influence of society and this makes her scared and forces her to turn back to the shore because of the obscurity. Moreover, she is more like a mother-woman than a wife, having to take care of her children and this fact acts like an invisible wall which is to be demolished by Edna's steps.

Another one of Edna's physical awakenings happens when she takes a nap while she is on a journey with Robert. This nap is like a process which divides Edna's life into

¹¹⁵ Anca Parvulescu, *To Die Laughing and to Laugh at Dying: Revisiting "The Awakening"*, *New Literary History* Vol. 36, No. 3, Critical and Historical Essays, Summer 2005

two periods because Edna feels herself comfortable with Robert during this journey and at the same time they are away from the social pressure and the expectations of the island:

When Edna wakes up the island seems to her changed:

“How many years have I slept?” she inquired. “The whole island seems changed. A new race of beings must have sprung up, leaving only you and me as past relics. How many ages ago did Madame Antoine and Tonie die? And when did our people from Grand Isle disappear from the earth?” (Chopin, 42)

According to Edna the more time she spends with Robert, the more addicted she is to him. Edna gradually becomes aware of the changes and awakening in her soul. She is now aware of her physical appearance which has never been implied by her husband in any way for years.

Robert Lebrun is the only male complementary character in the process of Edna's evolution. When compared to the other male figures in the Creole society, Robert who has not accomplished to the conventions of traditional man, who is rigid and owner of patriarchal values. His being like that affects Edna who thinks that Robert is different from the other males in the society in terms of his point of view to the life and gender relations.

As Adele Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz guide to awake the psychological and artistic side of Edna, Robert makes Edna become aware of her physical power and sexual beauty of her body. During the times, they had together in the Gulf water, in guidance of Robert, Edna learns how to swim and this is the incidence which encourages Edna to pass beyond the traditional borders of society where no woman could manage before.

Although Robert leaves Edna and goes to Mexico, his role is very important in the awakenings of Edna Pontellier. When Edna leaves her husband and starts to live on her own, she is quite hopeful with the idea that she will be able to live with Robert independently when he is back from Mexico. But when Robert is back, there is great discrepancy between them; Edna has got rid of the social pressure on her and she is a fully non-conformist. But although Robert has not been in Grand Isle for a long time, conventions of the society are still of great importance for him and he is not able to escape and break the rules of society, that is he is a great

conformist. At this point Edna feels a great deal of vain because of Robert's these behaviours. Edna, once again, is faced with the social realities and their victim Robert, and she awakens her soul to reality for the last time, leaving all her hopes. Yet Robert still suggests that Edna leaves Leonce and they live together. Robert behaves her like a property of her husband, Leonce Pontellier:

You have been a very, very foolish boy, wasting your time dreaming of impossible things when you speak of Mr. Pontellier setting me free! I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose. If he were to say, 'Here Robert, take her and be happy; she is yours,' I should laugh at you both." His face grew a little white. "What do you mean?" he asked. (Chopin, 119)

Edna feels that if Robert loves her, their relationship will be based on the ownership of Edna. Robert wants to own her and Edna once again faces the painful reality that she will never be able to find the true love as she wants and she falls in desperation. From now on for Edna, Robert is just a coward individual who is stuck between the society's thoughts and his free will. Edna understands that Robert does not have more different characteristics than the males of Creole and he is handicapped suppressed by the social and traditional conventions:

The hold of social ideology proves to be too strong on Robert; he can neither understand nor tolerate the kind of independence and equality with which Edna approaches him. Edna's newly constructed identity confounds him and drives him off.¹¹⁶

As it is mentioned earlier, another person influencing Edna to awaken her soul is Adele Ratignolle. Adele Ratignolle becomes very important for Edna when she calls Edna for her birth giving. Adele is a perfect mother-woman who tries to remind Edna of her children and maternity as if she was assigned to do this mission:

With an inward agony, with a flaming, outspoken revolt against the ways of Nature, she witnessed the scene of torture. She was still stunned and speechless with emotion when later she leaned over her friend to kiss her and softly say good-bye. Adele, pressing her cheek, whispered in an exhausted voice: "Think of the children, Edna. Oh, think of the children! Remember them!" (Chopin, 122)

Edna is reminded about her children during the childbirth of Adele. She feels the torture of her own giving birth. Although she wants to escape from her own

¹¹⁶ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 64.

fate, she can not do this because she is already a mother woman with responsibilities. Now there are two choices for Edna; the first one is going on her life as a mother and as the wife of Leonce Pontellier giving up her desires and ambitions, and the other way is to sustain her rebellion and to make her inner self free enough to live that way. But although she thinks of her children, she would never sacrifice herself and her desires for the sake of nothing:

I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me (Chopin, 53).

She thinks so because all the other thoughts and everything except her desires are just the sorrows of her unawakened soul.

Edna's drowning in the sea has always been a matter of discussion; whether it is a defeat or a victory against the society. Or is her drowning accidental or deliberate? This is an important matter because in the process of Edna's last awakening, that is her drowning, Kate Chopin wants to portrait death just as an ordinary part of life. For her how this death comes to happen is important; is it a revolt or a consequence of a defeat? Also in the novel, Edna wants her act of drowning to be seen as an ordinary act of a courageous soul, therefore before she sets her soul free into the ocean, she behaves just as normally as she lives a part of a common day and says Victor about her hunger and talks about her desire to go to beach for a wash; "*but, do you know, I have a notion to go down to the beach and take a good wash and even a little swim, before dinner?*"(Chopin, 126). That is why, it is obvious that Edna wants to show her last action as a revolt which can be achieved only by a brave soul.

The last action of Edna Pontellier, committing suicide, is remarkably prompted by two people; Robert Lebrun and Adele Ratignolle. Both of them have always been with Edna from the beginning of Edna's awakening until her crucial end.

Edna's death has always been under debate by students and critics since it was written in 1899. Although her death is accepted as a defeat of Edna by some critics, it is an evident victory against the coward and hard conditions she

experienced in that the death was believed to offer better conditions afterlife. Edna behaves in such a courageous way that she devotes her life in order to step into further happiness and to achieve an independent soul:

Ultimately we want death: 'A febrile unrest within us asks death to wreak its havoc at our expense.' And we want it because 'the luxury of death is regarded by us in the same way as that of sexuality; first as a negation of ourselves, then – in a sudden reversal – as a profound truth of that movement of which life is the manifestation' (Bataille *qut.* in Dollimore 255).¹¹⁷

It is clear that drowning in the sea is just the beginning of big steps and everything is like an endless circle. The role of the sea is like a womb where life starts. In other words, sea is gendered in literature. While sea is a fearful object for men, it is something which gives relief to women in literature:

T.S. Eliot, for instance, warns men to "fear death by water," because the vortex of the sea is, like the vagina dentata, a snare for phallic power and peace of mind, and Joyce's images of the "white breast of the dim sea," the "scrotumtightening sea," which is "a great sweet mother," resonate familiarly with Jungian archetypes.¹¹⁸

And when it comes to women, sea is like a mother that enables independence and power which are highly desired by females. That is to say, drowning in the sea and the terms relevant to this happening make women characters more powerful as a gendered theme peculiar to women as Herman Melville explains a situation similar to this in his book *Moby Dick*:

Why is almost every robust healthy boy with a robust healthy soul in him, at some time or other crazy to go to sea? Why upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land? Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, and own brother of Jove? Surely all this is not without meaning. And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.¹¹⁹

Drowning is the ultimate act of the novel which solves the problem of women and fulfils their needs. And in *The Awakening*, drowning is a way of escaping from the trap of marital conventions and the oppression of society over her. Edna is stuck, in the

¹¹⁷ http://is.muni.cz/th/266112/pedf_b/Bachelor_thesis_Renata_Moudra_2010.txt p. 35. (19.11.2012)

¹¹⁸ Helen V. Emmitt, "Drowned in a Willing Sea": *Freedom and Drowning in Eliot, Chopin and Drabble*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 12. No. 2, Autumn, 1993, p. 315.

¹¹⁹ Herman Melville. *Moby Dick*, Collector's Library, Hampshire, 2004, p.33-34.

novel, between the expectations of society and what she desires. But she is a regal woman being able to stand alone and she can uprise for the sake of her desires. And of course she pays the price of this rebellion with her awakening to solitude. Sea is a seductive place for her and she finds the remedy of loneliness there, but the embrace of the sea results in her death with eternal tranquillity, as it is defined in the very beginning of the novel with the seduction of the sea:

The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation.

The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace. (Chopin, 127)

According to Edna, sea is like a protecting mother who gets in touch with Edna's soul. The sound of the sea is like Mademoiselle Reisz's piano which gives great pleasure and relief to her. The sea image is a source of flashback taking her back to her childhood and making her remember the meadow she used to run in her happy days. As she swims in the ocean, she feels as if she were walking in this meadow. Edna commits suicide in this ocean because she was judged to "*never to take another step backward*"(Chopin, 63) and she wanted to take a step into the unlimited realm and to encapsulate her past and her desires forever.

Considering the decisive behaviours of Edna Pontellier, it is obvious that Edna never thinks of giving up her struggle. She never feels sorrow for anything she experiences and for whatever she loses for the sake of it; nor does she want to be blamed for anything she does. She says Dr. Mandelet; "*Do not blame me for anything*"(Chopin, 123). She is the main advocate of her own desires and soul. From this point of view, Edna shows great similarity to and also some important contradictions with Jane Eyre. Jane Eyre makes this clear by the words; "*Anybody may blame me who likes*" in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Although Jane Eyre defines her acts as faults of her own, Edna Pontellier defines her acts as the acts of a rebellious soul. Taking these ideas into account, Edna's final act, committing suicide is a spiritual triumph against society, meaning the defeat of society. In this respect when every condition is evaluated, "*Chopin chooses physical death for her character rather*

than the alternative of spiritual death by returning to conventional life”¹²⁰. But it is also obvious that her being a mother prevents separation of spiritual and physical essence. However, because of her decisions and the circumstances she is forced into, she does feel neither sorrow nor guilt for herself. She is already stuck between nature and society, marriage and fantasy, her own desires and her duties. The only way to cope with this situation is suicide for Edna and she feels comfortable in her decision. Edna only wants to be an individual who lives in accordance with her own decisions. She does not want to be an Edna who has fake manners, who is afraid of water, who lives under restrictions. She is unwilling to live in a world where no man is able to answer her needs and desires. Judith Fryer interprets on Edna’s suicide as:

Edna chooses to die because it is the one, the ultimate act of free will open to her through she can elude those who would drag her down, it is a kind of re-birth out of a world which has no place for her.¹²¹

The Awakening reflects the life of Southern woman’s place in the traditional society, her own ideas and desires against the society’s wishes and her psychological struggle against the order and especially women’s life and experience within a marriage. Chopin handles the internal conflicts and the personal struggle of independence of a woman within the smallest structure of the society, in the family. Chopin was not a writer and voice of social problems and life of the age and in this respect she was different from the other writers of the era:

Showalter makes the same point when she underlines the parallel between the experiences of the writer and of her protagonist; while Edna moves away from the conventional life of domesticity, her creator moves away from “the conventions of literary domesticity”(83). Showalter suggests that *The Awakening* can be read “as a parable of Chopin’s literary awakening”; while Edna tries to go beyond the social conventions to achieve “an emancipated womanhood,” Chopin’s attempt is to go beyond the convention of “female plots and feminine endings” to “an emancipated fiction (83).¹²²

In the novel, Kate Chopin presents the personal, psychological and sexual awakening of Edna Pontellier within the structure of female development and its themes; pregnancy and birth as it is clear that Edna’s process of awakening is accomplished in nine months of pregnancy of Adele:

¹²⁰ Carol P. Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1980, p. 39.

¹²¹ Judith Fryer, *The Faces Of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth Century American Novel*, Oxford University Press, USA, 1976, p. 256-257.

¹²² *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 49.

One evening Edna spends hours with Adele during her delivery, unable to leave her although she is intensely agitated by this scene of agony. The following day, she stands naked on the beach at Grand Isle; her own “nine month gestation of self” is completed and she has given birth to a new self (Papke Verging 86).¹²³

In general, *The Awakening* reflects the struggle of a woman against her society in which patriarchal ideas are dominant. Kate Chopin narrates the struggle using feminist approach by giving feminine examples and metaphors.

In Edna’s struggle of finding her voice within the society, she chooses committing suicide instead of struggling against pressure of the society. For Edna, drowning in the sea where no woman could reach before is the ultimate victory of hers, because for her, living in a society in a suppressed way is not different from slavery and giving her own decisions, even if it is committing suicide, is the most prosperous thing for her.

4.2. Self Revolution of Janie Crawford

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* represents the growth and gradual awakening of the protagonist Janie Mae Crawford both sexually and mentally. She grows, develops and changes and enlightens her vision towards life from the beginning to the end of the story. In this respect this novel can be named as the bildungsroman of Janie. In the very beginning of the novel, Janie is represented as a naive, innocent, inexperienced and dependent girl who needs protection and maintenance of another person though she does not want any. Throughout her evolution, she faces many difficulties, pain and harshness which help her maturing, and at the end of the novel, Janie transforms into a mature, smart, independent and self-confident woman. Zora Neale Hurston conveys this transformation through Janie’s three relationships and their effects on Janie. In her each relationship, with Logan Killicks, Joe Starks and Vergible Tea Cake Woods, she develops her personality and learns some new things that contribute to her ultimate freedom.

In this narration Zora Neale Hurston uses the metaphor of tree within the theme of nature, by resembling it to Janie’s development. In the beginning sections of the novel, when Janie is at the age of sixteen, she is resembled to the tree with “*glossy*

¹²³ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 58.

leaves and bursting buds”(Hurston, 11) because of her innocence and her being lack of experience with social realities of her own black society and its background. As she grows older, the metaphoric tree of innocence turns into some experienced fully developed essence. It is clear that each incident she lived through her life affected Janie and developed her individuality as it is understood from her sequence of surnames of her husbands:

Throughout the novel Janie survives “a succession of marital identities” and acquires diverse “social experience” reflected by the range of her names” as Janie Mae Crawford Killicks Starks Woods (Gilbert and Gubar 238).¹²⁴

As Janie tells her story to her friend Pheoby after turning back to Eatonville upon death of Tea Cake, it is seen that Janie divides her life into two sections according to the two turning points and issues. These are the moments of awareness of her race and womanhood. Janie becomes aware of her race at the age of six when she sees herself in a picture as the only black child among the children. This moment is Janie’s first awareness of her difference from the whites and the awakening force of her development. *As the typical bildungsroman depicts the protagonist’s progress from ignorance to self-knowledge, Janie’s discovery of her “blackness” is a necessary step in this progress.*¹²⁵ Janie’s second awareness happens, upon her discovering her womanhood and losing her innocence under the pear tree. As she sees the bees’ relationship and sinking into the blossoming pear blooms, Janie wants to experience marriage, inspiring by nature. But Janie’s vision of marriage within love is handicapped and suppressed by her grandmother Nanny, who wants to protect Janie from slavery and rape as the one who experienced these in her background and wants her to get marry with the one she wanted. As Janie wants to explore life by learning spontaneously, Nanny prevents this, knowing the painful realities of life:

Thus, only moments after her first vision of marriage glimpsed through nature, in which masculine and feminine forces are mutually dependent and active, Janie is presented with the official ideology’s vision of marriage, that is, marriage as subordination, protection, and social respectability.¹²⁶

The evolution of Janie takes place in many ways through pulling herself out from the control of society with the help of knowledge and experience:

¹²⁴ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p.95.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* , p. 96.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* , p. 99.

To a very large extent, the primary struggle in the novel centers on who should know for Janie. As Levecq states, the novel is about "Janie's epistemological status; in many ways the representation in the novel of Janie as a black woman is contingent on a question of knowledge"(92). Gender, race and class are therefore central to the production and experience of knowledge in the novel.¹²⁷

Janie's dreams can be called as seemingly completed dreams because her dreams are chained by the ultimate desires of Nanny. Janie's first marriage with Logan Killicks happens without any desire and love between them, because Janie is made to marry to Logan by her grandmother, just for protection and financial facilities:

If you don't want him, you sho oughta. Heah you is wid de onliest organ in town, amongst colored folks, in yo' parlor. Got a house bought and paid for and sixty acres uh land right on de big road and...Lawd have mussy! Dat's de very prong all us black women gits hung on. Dis love! Dat's just whut's got us uh pullin' and haulin' and sweatin' and doin' from can't see in de mornin' till can't see at night. (Hurston, 23)

Janie goes through her first relationship at the age of sixteen with just an innocent kissing and she is still a very naive young girl who does not know anything about marriage and affair. Although there is no love or affection between Janie and Logan, Janie hopes that one day she might love her husband and believing this possibility, she endures this marriage:

Yes, she would love Logan after they were married. She could see no way for it to come about, but Nanny and the old folks had said it, so it must be so. Husbands and wives always loved each other, and that was what marriage meant. It was just so. Janie felt glad of the thought, for then it wouldn't seem so destructive and mouldy. She wouldn't be lonely anymore. But anyhow Janie went on inside to wait for love to begin. The new moon had been up and down three times before she got worried in mind. (Hurston, 21)

But as the time passes, Janie loses her hopes of the marriage of her dreams which is based on love and intimacy, because she sees that there is no love blossoming for their marriage and moreover she is treated badly by her husband as if she were a property of him. To Logan, Janie is not something different from a mule working on his farms:

Six months back he had told her, "If Ah kin haul de wood heah and chop it fuh yuh, look lak you oughta be able tuh tote it inside. Mah fust wife never bothered me 'bout choppin' no wood nohow. She'd grab dat ax and sling chips lak uh man. You done been spoilt rotten."
So Janie had told him, "Ah'm just as stiff as you is stout. If you can stand not to

¹²⁷ Patrick S. Bernard, *The Cognitive Construction of the Self in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Purdue University Press, Purdue University, Volume 9, 2007, p. 6.

chop and tote wood Ah reckon you can stand not to git no dinner. 'Scuse mah freezoly, Mist' Killicks, but Ah don't mean to chop de first chip.(Hurstons, 26)

In terms of the roles of partners within a marriage, Janie and Logan differ greatly from each other because of gender attributions. For Janie, both male and female have their own duties and places; the stereotypical role of a wife must be cooking and other households while her husband works on the farm and earn money and represent the marriage in public sphere. But as for Logan, a wife's duty should be all the things she can do from cooking to chopping woods and planting potatoes. And again according to Logan, a wife's duty is just to make life easier for her husband.

Because of her silence in her marriage with Logan, Janie created two different worlds that belong to her; her inner world which tries to act in accordance with the free will of Janie and her outer world which keeps her silence. In this process she becomes aware of the fact that this duality and unwanted marriage would be destructive and as she maintained this marriage, she would lose her innocence in the name of love and relationship. Janie, therefore, decides to break her silence against Logan and she wants to abandon him, otherwise she would live as a slave wife who is lack of affection, respect and love. And one day when Logan treats Janie harshly, Janie responds him; *"'Youse mad 'cause Ah don't fall down and wash-up dese sixty acres uh ground yuh got. You ain't done me no favor by marryin' me'"* (Hurstons, 31). She rebels for the first time during her marriage against Logan and she leaves him. This rebellious act is also the first step of Janie's gradual awakening.

She has to behave in a rebellious way, which shows great difference from other women in the society who yield and obey whatever their husbands command them. The thing that makes Janie different from other women is her symbolic view of pear tree and its meaning of love. *"Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Dawn and doom was in the branches"* (Hurstons, 8). Janie's life before her marriage was shaped under her pear tree and similar to it. Pear tree was the only thing with which she could make herself happy and hopeful about her future in her pitiful life. And now in her relationship with Logan, there are many differences between her hopes and bitter realities. The tree does not contain any blossoms. She is aware of the fact that her ideals are far more idealistic when compared to her life experience.

In her relationship with Logan, Janie is aware of the risk that if she goes on this relationship with Logan, her all hopes and dreams will die eventually, thus her dream, journey to the horizon, will not realize:

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men. Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly. (Hurston, 1)

Elapsing of time is the enemy of coming true of ideals according to Janie, namely for Hurston, because once you close your eyes on a ship while looking at the horizon, you may not catch it again; your dreams and ideals might vanish. Some are lucky to have their ships while some like Janie have to be strong to reach their goals. Reaching the ship on the horizon, according to Janie, means reaching her own dreams of her childhood and the memories which construct the image of pear tree.

Upon Janie's decision to leave Logan, she starts a new relationship with Joe Stark who gives Janie hope of reaching the horizon. After breaking up with Logan and starting a new journey with Joe, Janie regains her self-confidence, her own voice, liberating power which was smothered by Logan Killicks. When compared to Janie as the wife of Logan, Janie the wife of Joe is behaved better and a good socio-economical status is offered to her. However, Joe Starks does not care about the desires of Janie since he is a man of his own ambitions and he uses Janie as a means of his ambitions and restrains her strictly. As he becomes powerful as a businessman and mayor in the town, he gradually behaves Janie in patronizing behaviours and Janie's *image of Jody is shattered when she realizes that he is determined to use her as a symbol of his elevated status and privileged position within the community meanwhile totally ignoring the cost to her and to their relationship*¹²⁸. Moreover he restricts her speaking in public and her having fun with her friends. Happiness of Janie does not mean anything to Joe:

"I god, Janie," Starks said impatiently, "why don't you go on and see whut Mrs. Bogle want? Whut you waitin' on?"
Janie wanted to hear the rest of the play-acting and how it ended, but she got up sullenly and went inside. She came back to the porch with her bristles sticking

¹²⁸ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 104.

out all over her and with dissatisfaction written all over her face. Joe saw it and lifted his own hackles a bit.(Hurston, 70)

As Joe treats Janie badly and sees her happiness inferior to his own happiness and desires, Janie puts a formal and emotional distance between herself and her husband as a reaction to his behaviours and she begins to call him “*Starks*” (Hurston 70) instead of “Joe” or “Jody”. Janie does not behave Joe in the way she did her former husband Logan. Sometimes she keeps her silence not because of being humiliated but on account of her growing inner rebellious act which would awaken her outer side soon.

Joe holds the point of view that women, especially the black women, are inferior to men and, according to him, the limits of a woman’s ability to think is no more than a child’s ability to think and a woman can think maximum as much as a child can. As Joe uses his big voice, he weakens this relationship by suppressing Janie’s voice. And when Janie uses her voice as a reaction to Joe, Joe defends the superiority of him over her and tries to humiliate and insult her in order to protect and maintain his authority;

[Joe]: "Somebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none theirselves."

"Ah knows uh few things, and womenfolks thinks sometimes too!"

"Aw naw they don't. They just think they's thinkin'. When Ah see one thing Ah understands ten. You see ten things and don't understand one." (Hurston, 71)

The beauty of Janie matters to Joe because she has to be superior to other women in the town as the wife of mayor. But at the same time, Joe wants to suppress her beauty in order not to bring in Janie the feeling of trust because of her beauty. In an incident, Joe wants to kill the voice of her wife, insulting her about her gender, sexuality and beauty, although he is aware of the fact that his wife is far more beautiful than any other woman in the town. At this point Janie can no longer put up with being humiliated before the people of town especially by her husband and she regains the power she needs and reawakens her self-realizing woman in her inner world and starts to humiliate Joe about his manhood before the other people. This rebellious act of Janie is a castration of him both physically and psychologically. As it is known, men feel themselves superior to women as long as they protect their sexual power, and Joe is devastated by Janie’s humiliating verbal attack towards himself and manhood power. When compared to Janie, Joe is wounded psychologically and socially more than Janie when he is insulted by Janie, a black female. Joe draws himself from society and Janie

after this incident and even refuses to have sex with Janie. To protect himself from being mocked by society, he chooses to live alone. That is to say, this incident is the victory of Janie's voice for the first time in her relationship with Joe Starks in verbal way:

Then Joe Starks realized all the meanings and his vanity bled like a flood. Janie had robbed him of his illusion of irresistible maleness that all men cherish, which was terrible. The thing that Saul's daughter had done to David. But Janie had done worse, she had cast down his empty armor before men and they had laughed, would keep on laughing. When he paraded his possessions hereafter, they would not consider the two together. They'd look with envy at the things and pity the man that owned them. When he sat in judgment it would be the same. Good-for-nothing's like Dave and Lum and Jim wouldn't change place with him. For what can excuse a man in the eyes of other men for lack of strength? Raggedy-behind squirts of sixteen and seventeen would be giving him their merciless pity out of their eyes while their mouths said something humble. There was nothing to do in life anymore. Ambition was useless. And the cruel deceit of Janie! Making all that show of humbleness and scorning him all the time! Laughing at him, and now putting the town up to do the same. (Hurston, 79-80)

When Joe falls into his deathbed, Janie behaves him so powerful and critical that this act has always been criticized by some authors and critics arguing whether it was a convenient behaviour or not. But when this situation is observed through Janie's point of view, it is not that difficult to understand how an appropriate behaviour she conducts. During twenty years of marriage with Joe Starks, she is always insulted by him both verbally and physically whenever she responds any of Joe's behaviours and ideas. Therefore the period of Joe's illness is the best time for her to have a right to speak without any intervention by her husband. Even the speech of Janie in which she questions the lack of love in their relationship is perceived as an insult to him by Joe. As Janie makes her speech spiritually, Joe perceives this in accordance with material life and the weaker he feels, the more and the harsher he goes on insulting her as his final flutters:

Janie Starks: [to Joe on his deathbed] Even now, you got to die with me being obedient, instead of just letting me love you.

Joe Starks: I hope thunder and lightning kill you. (Hurston, 86)

Janie goes on talking and flinging in Joe's face his mistakes and she uses her speech as a victorious power against Joe. She blames Joe for negligence of his wife and

states that the thing she required was to feel herself as a wife instead of a wealthy property of her husband:

Tain't really no need of you dying, Jody, if you had of – de doctor – but it don't do no good bringin' dat up now. Dat's just whut Ah wants tuh say, Jody, You wouldn't listen. You done lived wid me for twenty years and you don't half know me atall. And you could have but you was so busy worshipping de works of yo' own hands, and cuffin' folks around in their minds till you didn't see uh whole heap uh things yuh could have. (Hurston, 86)

Upon the death of Joe, Janie is expected to get dressed and behave like a woman who mourns after her husband. But this death is an incident which gives Janie's soul back to her and she transforms into an independent woman from a dependent and chained woman; "*Tain't dat Ah worries over Joe's death, Pheoby, Ah jus' loves dis freedom*" (Hurston, 93). Joe was not only trying to control her appearance but also her existence by taking the control of her own body and by limiting her ideas. Several years later, she becomes aware of her own beauty once again in spite of insults of his husband towards her beauty and age. She discovers that her beauty has always been hidden under the head rags which she was forced to wear by her husband and she decides to get rid of them immediately in order to remove the repressive effect of Joe. Now she becomes gradually aware of the awakening of her power, sexuality self-love and above all the recovering of her subdued voice:

Then thought about herself. Years ago, she had told her girl self to wait for her in the looking glass. It had been a long time since she had remembered. Perhaps she'd better look. She went over to the dresser and looked hard at her skin and features. The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place. She tore off the kercheif from her head and let down the plentiful hair. The weight, the length, the glory was there. (Hurston, 87)

Her relationship with Vergible Tea Cake Woods constitutes the ultimate part of her quest for spiritual fulfilment and realizing self-hood. Janie experiences the true meaning of love and happiness in an unreturned way for the first time in her life. Being very different from her previous relationships, she can speak freely and reflect her inner voice explicitly, because Janie is not inferior to him according to Tea Cake and he treats her equally and justly. Moreover she is highly respected by Tea Cake because of her own nature and autonomy which were ignored by her former husbands. It is evident that Logan Killicks, Joe Starks and Nanny have made great contributions, though

unknowingly, to the success of the relationship of Tea Cake and Janie, because Janie's growing to maturity is achieved through the hardships they caused Janie to go through.

When the course of relationships of Janie is considered in terms of horizon, she gradually gets closer to realize her own desires which constitute the horizon. By means of her grandmother's efforts to force her a marriage with Logan Killicks, the horizon that Janie dreams of wants to be suppressed. She feels the enforcement of society's ideals which try to create obedient wives. Her second marriage takes place following her rebellious act against Logan as a result of the promise of that long-missed horizon. But nevertheless, as in her first marriage, she is expected to behave just like a property of her husband. And finally in her third and last relationship with Tea Cake, she experiences the horizon which has been so far to her up to that moment and she feels fear for losing this:

Naw, We been tuhgether round two years. If you kin see de light at daybreak, you don't keer if you die at dusk. It's so many people never seen de light at all. Ah wuz fumblin' round and God opened de door.(Hurston, 159)

For Tea Cake, woman and man are created under equal conditions to live equally and in harmony. This thought makes him different from Joe and Logan. A most striking example of this thought is given in the novel by Tea Cake's encouraging Janie to play checkers, which was a forbidden act for her because of Joe. Joe does not allow her to play checkers because according to him, Janie is not smart enough to learn and play checkers which is perceived as a male game by him. Doing so, he constitutes a psychological press over Janie, which makes her think about herself as inferior to Joe, and so she is hampered to be aware of her own strength. Different from Joe, Tea Cake invites her to play checkers saying that it is an easy game and if he can play that game, she can play this better. With this treatment of Tea Cake, Janie encounters an equal treatment from a male for the first time in her life:

"Yuh can't beat uh woman. Dey jes won't stand fuh it. But Ah'll come teach yuh agin. You gointuh be uh good player too, after while."
"You reckon so? Jody useter tell me Ah never would learn. It wuz too heavy fuh mah brains."
"Folks is playin' it wide sense and folks is playin' it without. But you got good meat on yo' head. You'll learn." (Hurston, 96)

During her companionship to Tea Cake, she works harder than she used to before. Although she was behaved like a princess by Joe during her former marriage,

she was not happy with him, because she was under the control of Joe just like a personal possession without any love and desire. She was turned into a passive, weak and incapable woman by Joe. When it comes to living with Tea Cake, Janie starts to work on the farm with him; she starts to live under hard conditions when compared to her former life, she works voluntarily without any compulsion by Tea Cake. But this voluntarily working makes her aware of her own physical strength. Also on the farm, Janie gets the opportunity to socialize with town people, which was banned by Joe before.

Although Tea Cake behaves Janie equally, he has also a dominant side which comes into being gradually. But this domination is different from Logan's and Joe's domination; their domination is also based on some kind of jealousy because they see Janie as a personal possession of their; but Tea Cake's domination is based on purely jealousy as a consequence of love:

In this liberation, however, just as in Joe's liberation, there is also a reverse side, a side of domination. This domination appears most explicitly in Tea Cake's jealousy and subsequent abuse of Janie.¹²⁹

When Tea Cake works on the farm, he comes back to home, in the middle of the day to check her several times. Janie, being experienced about the nature of men, asks him the reason of that in a stinging way; "*Maybe you think Ah ain't treatin' yuh right and you watchin' me*" (Hurstons, 133). Upon that, Tea Cake also defends himself saying that I miss you and he tries to hide his jealousy. Janie also starts to work on the farm with Tea Cake upon this incident. Some critics also fall into division of opinions at this point; while some defend the idea that Janie starts to work with Tea Cake just because of his worries on jealousy while he is away, some defend the idea that Janie works on the farm just to be together with him. According to Jay Walker, Janie works on the *farm* "*neither out of need nor greed but simply of the desire of Janie and Tea Cake to be together, to share their experiences*"(qtd. In Ferguson 196).¹³⁰

By time, the love and passion develops between Janie and Tea Cake, Tea Cake shows physical abuse to Janie. This is probably because of the fact that, as Janie develops herself, awakens her soul, and as she has bigger voice than before, Tea Cake

¹²⁹ Todd McGowan, *The Feminine "No!": Psychoanalysis and the New Canon*, SUNY Press, New York, 2001, p. 94.

¹³⁰ <http://voices.yahoo.com/feminism-present-zora-neale-hurstons-their-eyes-188487.html> (21.12.2012)

wants to show his manhood over her in this way. When Janie is introduced to the brother of Mrs. Turner who is a racist, Tea Cake wants to show his existence by beating Janie for his expression of love. This is also an indicator of that while Tea Cake behaves initially in an equal way to Janie, and later he starts to behave her under the control of his jealousy and his manhood desires. Janie, being experienced by her former relationships, is also aware of that this physical abuse is not for an overwhelming reason but because of the requirement of gender differences and love:

When Mrs. Turner's brother came and she brought him over to be introduced, Tea Cake had a brainstorm. Before the week was over he had whipped Janie. Not because her behaviour justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her reassured him in possession. No brutal beating at all. He just slapped her around a bit to show he was boss. (Hurston, 147)

Similar to the case of playing checkers, Tea Cake teaches Janie how to fish and how to fire a gun. For Janie, firing a gun is important for her to complete her self-quest and realization. Ironically, as Tea Cake teaches Janie how to handle a gun, she becomes a better shooter and meantime he prepares his own death through the end of the novel. During a hurricane, Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog and he gets sick suddenly. With the effect of rabies, he becomes irrational and in a state of jealousy, his subdued feeling of jealousy emerges and he accuses Janie of cheating on him. Janie realizes that Tea Cake is going to kill her and upon this Janie shoots him in order to defend herself. Janie's this act is the finishing behaviour of her self-realization because now she is powerful enough to defend and save her own life against the person whom she is in love with profoundly:

By teaching her how to shoot a gun, ironically, he provides her with the tools that ultimately kill him. Janie's decision to save herself rather than yield her life up to the crazy Tea Cake points to her increasing sense of self and demonstrates that Tea Cake's ultimate function in the novel is not to make Janie dependent on him for happiness but to help her find happiness and security within herself.¹³¹

With Janie's defending herself in that a way, it becomes clear that Janie does not need anyone in order to realize herself or to live. Her relationship with Tea Cake is just a process for her which helps her to gain her own self confidence and voice which were suppressed by Nanny, Logan Killicks and Joe Starks before Tea Cake. With this defensive action of Janie, she transforms her existence from an object to a subject who

¹³¹. <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/eyes/> (29.06.2012)

can effect on circumstances that is related to her. This is the first time Janie divides her existence from other individuals including Tea Cake for the sake of her own life:

McGowan agrees, and states "Hurston shows Janie coming to a tragic recognition: when Tea Cake is attempting to fire a pistol at her, she recognizes that her love relationship-what has saved her-is precisely what threatens to destroy her. This threat has been present all along, but here Janie recognizes it as such. For a moment, the moment of firing the gun, Janie breaks from the Other" (116). Tea Cake is "the Other," yet Janie is willing to "break" from him for her own well being. This demonstrates her feelings of independence and self discovery. Janie realizes she does not need Tea Cake in order to live, she only needs herself.¹³²

At the end of the novel, when Janie turns back to Eatonville alone, everybody thinks that she is cheated and left by Tea Cake. But since Janie completed her self-realization with her defensive act against Tea Cake, she is powerful and self-contained enough to live alone instead of living under the protection or name of anyone or another husband. For the first time in her life, she puts an end to her relationship with a man with her own decision and her own will. In the very beginning of the novel, while Janie decides something in accordance with other people's opinions (Nanny's role in her decision to marry with Logan Killicks), at the end of the novel, Janie ignores the people of Eatonville and behaves as she wants. Her double personality; inner and out world, which comes into being with her marriage with Joe Starks, rolls into one after Tea Cake, because in her experience with Tea Cake, she is taught to behave how she wants by Tea Cake and this makes her live her own desires, her inner world and her own voice which has always been smothered by another bigger voice.

When looked back to the youth times of Janie, it is clear that Nanny has a great effect on Janie as a provider of unwanted goals and life style. Nanny wants Janie to get married with a wealthy man in order to prevent Janie from sharing the same fate of her own mother. But Janie looks for fulfilment, freedom and love more than the protection which was desired by her grandmother in the name of Janie. This shows that Janie is different from her grandmother in many ways because she feels herself strong and sufficient enough to catch her dreams.

In the novel the male characters also have quite contrary roles on Janie's journey of self-realization; while they prevent her from being herself, they

¹³² <http://voices.yahoo.com/feminism-present-zora-neale-hurstons-their-eyes-188487.html> (21.12.2012)

unconsciously help her grow herself and find her own voice simultaneously. In her first two marriages with Logan Killicks and Joe Starks, she is behaved like a possession of her husbands and she creates her inner world which helps her to awaken her own identity and desires, namely she strengthens her guard against oppressive manners of her husbands. They mediately help her to create her own life ideals which are opposite to her way of living. When her relationship with Tea Cake starts, she becomes aware of her own beauty, her femininity, her place in the society, her own decisions, her own voices and her own choices. Tea Cake allows her to live a life as she desires which also made her to kill Tea Cake for the sake of her own life.

In the development of an individual in a society, interaction and communication with people have important roles. In ecological system, an individual has to own this features in order to realize her self-formation. According to Patrick S. Bernard; cognitive psychology, in particular, affirms that the self develops through cognitive and cultural interconnections .In the novel, it is obvious that Janie chooses to develop herself through interaction with people around her and experiences she has, so the society has an important place in her gradual awakening; “*she had been getting ready for her great journey to the horizons in search of people; it was important to all the world that she should find them and they find her*” (Hurston, 89). As Janie constructs her own ideals in her mind, she gets ready for a new life without submitting any demands on how she should live and act. Janie becomes aware of the fact that she can not realize herself under the direction of people around her and so she has to discover her own life throughout new experiences with her own will. She wants to see what she will encounter during her journey to horizon whether the consequence is good or bad. For her, the only choice to realize herself, is reaching the horizon:

She realizes that the self emerges from the interaction between her cognitive learning and her society, represented primarily by her Grandma, first, second, and third husbands, Logan Killicks, Jody Starks, and Tea Cake respectively, and generally by the Eatonville community, which wrongly believes that the categories of woman and self are mutually exclusive.¹³³

Janie emphasizes the importance of experimentation in the end of the novel to Pheoby. Although she is left alone by Tea Cake, she feels herself at peace with the happiness of reaching her own horizon. She also emphasizes that one must catch her

¹³³ *The Cognitive Construction of the Self in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God...* p. 2.

own horizon without staying under the effect of anybody like mother, father or any other controlling agents. *Where “tuh find out” posits self-formation as a process of discovery and adaptability, an observation, an experience, and a quest to obtain knowledge, awareness and consciousness.*¹³⁴:

It’s an unknown fact, Pheoby, you got tuh go there tuh know there. Yo’ papa and yo’ mama and nobody else can’t tell yuh and show yuh. Two things everybody’s got to do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go to tuh God and they got tuh find out about livin’ fuh theyselves. (Hurstun, 192)

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, for Janie, reaching the horizon means to think, act, and speak in accordance with the inner world. But in the course of the novel, she has always been banned to think because of social and cultural characteristics of the African- American society. Janie wants to think with the idea of that thinking gives birth to reasoning and questioning about the essence of human being.

In the beginning of the novel, Janie’s grandmother tries to teach Janie not to think and question their essence as black females and to live in accordance with the norms that have been set up by society and especially by whites. Her grandmother’s speech “*Ah don’t know nothing but what Ah’m told tuh do cause Ah ain’t nothin’ but uh nigger and uh slave*” (Hurstun, 17) reflects that her point of view is quite different from Janie who believes in one’s life should be based on the decisions of own will and socialization should be formed through interaction, questioning, and behaving independently. Nanny states her ideas saying that; “*Ah was born back in slavery so it wasn’t for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do. Dat’s one of de hold-backs of slavery. But nothing can’t stop you from wishin*” (Hurstun, 16). Nanny wants to reflect her own age and take some precautions for Janie to have a secure place in the society. In doing so she ignores Janie’s free will and wants to impose her own ideas on Janie and decides in the name of Janie. For the first time in her life, Janie’s wish on reaching horizon is hindered by Nanny and so she does not love her grandmother any longer as she used to do:

Here Nanny had taken the biggest thing God ever made, the horizon – for not matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you – and pinched it in to such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter’s neck tight enough to choke her. She hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love. (Hurstun, 89)

¹³⁴ *The Cognitive Construction of the Self in Hurstun's Their Eyes Were Watching God... p. 3.*

Janie's second frustration happens during her second marriage with Joe Starks. As Joe Starks tries to have a big voice in the society, Janie is suffered under Joe's this desire. As Janie desires to being loved by Joe, and to have a relationship in equal standards, she can never find a chance to reveal her thoughts. In the novel, Joe brings an abused and weak mule to the town just in order to be perceived like a strong and merciful man by the people of town. In this case, Janie shows great similarity to the mule because Janie is also brought to Eatonville to make Joe a more powerful and mighty man in the town. Although there are similarities between Janie and mule, mule is more independent and free than Janie, because while Janie is always in the store under her husband's control, mule is free in the town. And for Joe there is not a difference between these kind of farm animals and women, because both of them cannot think logically and they are inferior to men and adds: "*Somebody got to think for women and chillun and cows. I god, they sho don't think none theirselves... When Ah see one thing Ah understands ten. You see ten things and don't understand one.*"(Hurston, 71)

When Janie is expected to make a speech in the opening of the street lamp, she is hindered by Joe. Because for Joe, similar to thinking, women are not skilful to make a speech and to have a voice in the society and he says: "*Thank yuh fuh yo' compliments, but nah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home*" (Hurston, 43). As Janie is hindered to have her own place, she gradually becomes aware of that through thinking she can find and discover alternative ways to construct and realize herself. Although all these seem to suppress identity of Janie directly, Janie is provoked to awaken her horizon indirectly. That is to say, the more Janie's external world is tried to taken under control, the more her inner world maturates to make Janie a self-realized and self-fulfilling.

The voice and language play crucial roles throughout the novel, as in her relationships, the most important thing is her extinguishment by her first two husbands which caused Janie's silence. While she is in relationship with Logan and Starks, she is not aware of the power of her own speech, but when Tea Cake gives her a chance to use her voice, she manages to balance between speech and silence when required. During her relationship with Logan Killicks, as a consequence of her upbringing by Nanny,

Janie was incapable of expressing her ideas and thoughts, moreover when she tried to communicate with him, she could not have a feedback from Killicks. Because, for Killicks, Janie was not different from a mule that is working on the farm. And Janie realizes that if she is decided to have her own voice and expression, she has to leave Killicks.

In her second marriage, Joe Starks gives importance to voice and language when compared to Logan Killicks. This is also another reason for Janie to have a relationship with Joe Starks, because; for Janie, Joe Starks was the source of hope for the pear tree fulfilment. But in this relationship, Joe does not give importance to the equality in voice. For Starks having the big voice is crucial in order to be powerful in society so he does not also give a chance to speak to Janie:

She [Janie] had never thought of making a speech, and didn't know if she cared to make one at all. It must have been the way Joe spoke out without giving her a chance to say anything one way or another that took the bloom off of things. But anyway, she went down the road behind him that night feeling cold. He strode along invested with his new dignity, thought and planned out loud, unconscious of her thoughts. (Hurstons, 43)

As it is stated before, when Janie is invited to speak in front of the people as the wife of mayor, her speech is declined by her husband, Joe Starks. At this point Janie sees that, this marriage will not be different from the former one and the dream of pear tree will not be realized because of inhibition of her speech; the pear blossoms will be failed. And she feels that there is an inner world that blossoms as her external world withdraws. This continues until Janie has chance to pour her heart out when Joe lies down in his deathbed and this is ultimate victory of Janie in terms of language and speech against Joe.

In the novel, language is a crucial pattern in the evolution of Janie because it symbolizes the awakening process of her. As language emerges as a means of communication and interaction, it shows that there is coherence between mind and consciousness:

[...] Functional theories of language refer to as language capacity, meaning the complex relationship of language, mind, brain, consciousness, and culture. Language capacity posits that language is both embodied and the product of social experiences. In addition, it reflects our cognitive ability to express

language concepts as a dynamic process of growing new connections, neural, social and otherwise.¹³⁵

Through the end of the novel, Janie gains the freedom of speech and act with Tea Cake. In her each marriage, she desires and tries to have her own language-freedom of speech-and with this hope she leaves Killicks for Starks:

From now on until death she was going to have flower dust and springtime sprinkled over everything. A bee for her bloom. Her old thoughts were going to come in handy now, but new words would have to be made and said to fit them. (Hurstun, 32)

But her desire fails again with Joe Starks and ultimately she lives her dreams with Tea Cake. Her each experience develops her capacity of language. Janie calls the freedom of speech that is recognized by Tea Cake, as “*maiden language*”(Hurstun, 115) because years after, she is behaved as a maiden for the first time in spite of the disparity in age between Tea Cake and Janie:

Ah'm older than Tea Cake, yes. But he done showed me where it's de thought dat makes de difference in ages. If people thinks de same they can make it all right. So in the beginnin' new thoughts had tuh be thought and new words said. After Ah got used tuh dat, we gits 'long jus' fine. He done taught me de maiden language all over. Wait till you see de new blue satin Tea Cake done picked out for me tuh stand up wid him in. High heel slippers, necklace, earrings, everything he wants tuh see me in. (Hurstun, 115)

The revival of language in the novel shows that Janie goes back to her youth and compensates the idle years before Tea Cake. She regains the innocence which is lost when she is compelled to marry with Logan Killicks by Nanny. And as she shows her inner side on her out side, she shapes her own personality in many ways and so this reflects on the language that Janie uses:

She makes two crucial points here: first, that language is learned, a claim that is cognitively irrefutable; second, she posits maturational changes in language, where “maiden language” is distinguishable from the baby and rhyme talk that defined her beginning. Maiden language suggests a formulative and pragmatic language that incorporates her self, mind, voice, and consciousness.¹³⁶

As Janie has her own voice, it is clear that she awakens her soul and self-awareness. In this vein, as American psychologist Ulric Neisser suggests, there is a connection between voice, consciousness and self-realization. When Janie becomes capable of using her mind in accordance with her voice, she says Joe that; “*Naw! Mah*

¹³⁵ *The Cognitive Construction of the Self in Hurstun's Their Eyes Were Watching God...* p. 7.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

own mind had tuh be squeezed and crowded out tuh make room for yours in me" (Hurston, 86). She tries to emphasize that men try to be over the women by silencing them or making their own voice bigger than women. And so Joe's attempt to silence Janie is a kind of intrusion to the reflection of her thoughts to voice. So as Janie breaks the chains that holds her by voice, she enlightens herself and soul and it can be said that as Patrick S. Bernard suggests; "*In fact, Their Eyes presents a theory and practice of the mind as voice*".¹³⁷

As the story of the novel progresses, Janie passes from the idle world to world of thoughts; *she demonstrates how thinking opens connections between her memory and mind, her past, present and future, and the experiences of language, body, mind, race, and gender they engender.*¹³⁸ At the end of the novel, Hurston focuses on the self-revelation and self-formation that Janie achieves. Janie is happy now in connection with the real love she experienced with Tea Cake with her own free will. Although Tea Cake is dead now, Janie acknowledges this death just physically and Tea Cake will live in her mind as long as she continues on preserving her thinking capability:

Of course he wasn't dead. He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. 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 of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see. (Hurston, 193)

When Janie's second husband Joe Starks dies, Janie feels herself out of social suppress of marriage and feels free to realize her journey to the horizon. In the eyes of Southern society, a respectful man should be dominant in the marriage, materialist and be at the centre of public sphere. Tea Cake does not have any of these characteristics of social conventions and "*Teacake represents an alternative gender construction outside the definitions of conventional manhood*".¹³⁹ By having a relationship with Tea Cake, Janie steps outside her Nanny's expectations of marriage and for the first time in her life, Janie experiences a marriage of love, but not for protection or money, with her own free will. And Tea Cake is the one who gives Janie a chance to realize her pear tree vision within the equality of genders instead of dominant patriarchal values. In her

¹³⁷ *The Cognitive Construction of the Self in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God...* p. 10.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹³⁹ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 102.

journey to the horizon, Tea Cake is her companion rather than a dominant and ruler husband figure. *In her relationship with Teacake, Janie is able to transcend Nanny's experience of dehumanization, her mother's experience of victimization, and her own experience of objectification in her marriage to Jody.*¹⁴⁰

In the text, each husbands of Janie and Nanny contribute the characteristics of Janie both consciously and unconsciously. Janie learns how to behave, when to keep her silence, where to act and how to be an independent woman and a more different woman from them. Moreover, she divides her identity into two; outside and inside, during her marriage with Joe Starks. She manages to achieve her voice as a consequence of the conflict between her inner world and external world. Each experience under the frame of whole interaction and multiple evolutions help her to gain a more stronger, independent and self confident voice in terms of her inner world in the society:

Feminist epistemology does not insist, for example, on the absolute nature of knowledge characterized by impermeable categories of discrete and unrelated boundaries, but rather on the interrelated aspects of human experiences, where the paradigms of cognition are not divorced from the other cultural and public experiences.¹⁴¹

Janie's journey of reaching horizon shows the hardships struggles of being a black woman in a black society. In this journey, Janie uses language as a tool for discovering and transferring her inner world to the external world. In her success of achieving her goal, the power of her inner world in searching knowledge against social forces is crucially important. Ultimately, her experiences make Janie a woman who can operate on mind, language and free will.

¹⁴⁰ *Sheltered Eyes Awakened...* p. 107.

¹⁴¹ *The Cognitive Construction of the Self in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God...* p. 11.

CONCLUSION

In this study, both Edna Pontellier and Janie Crawford's spiritual and physical awakenings are explored within the frame of feminist approach. It is obvious that while Kate Chopin and Zora Neale Hurston were writing their novels, they tried to create their protagonists by reflecting their own life experiences on them. Both authors had various difficulties in conforming their behaviours to the people of their age in terms of their world of ideas and thoughts inasmuch as they both were determined to live in accordance with their own decisions instead of living under the pressure of traditional and dominant patriarchal structure. They never gave up on their struggles and never accepted to live as handicapped individuals. Even if their works of art were not that popular during their life time, they reached their righteous fame years after their death. Owing to these facts, it can be argued that both Kate Chopin and Zora Neale Hurston managed to go beyond their time with their foreseeing ideas and personalities.

They wanted to express their somehow rebellious ideas and thoughts, which they had no chance to express in social and public life, by giving their own personalities to their characters. That is why there are many similarities between the authors and their protagonists, and they are continually in a rebellion to make society accept them just as they are.

In both novels, Edna and Janie are in search of identity and they explore their identity through their emotions and relationships. Much as the novels show great similarities to each other, fates of protagonists are quite different and they have open endings for interpretations and further studies.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie is oppressed and restricted by her grandmother and her relationships with Logan Killicks and Joe Starks. She is perpetually dominated by them either physically or psychologically. According to Logan Killicks, Janie is nothing more than a worker on the farm and to Joe Starks, she is a valuable possession rather than a wife and she is not allowed to participate in society life. Being under such a rigid control, she creates her inner world in which the images of blossoming pear tree and reaching the horizon symbolize the hope. Whenever

she is oppressed, she keeps her silence patiently and escapes her inner world where she finds consolation.

Although Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* is not exposed to cruelty or abusive behaviours like Janie, she is not satisfied with her marriage. The reason is very simple; Edna is a granted wife in the eyes of her husband and she does not need any care or affinity. So Edna starts to behave like a non-conformist and she sets off on a quest of a relationship in which she can find love, care and happiness, and she wants to feel herself like an individual rather than a valuable possession.

Lack of fulfilment, love and care makes them search for new relationships in which they can have the opportunity of communication and fulfilment. Janie reckons her third marriage with Tea Cake as the right decision since Janie, for the first time in her life, has the opportunity of reaching horizon and fulfilling her dream of pear tree. Tea Cake accepts to share a life with Janie equally rather than establishing a dominance over her.

Like Janie, Edna also escapes from her husband Leonce Pontellier to Robert Lebrun in the hope of love. Edna ignores all the traditional values although she is married to Leonce Pontellier and she establishes a relationship with Robert to fulfil her identity. During their relationship, he teaches Edna swimming which would help Edna to gain her self-confidence and appreciate herself as a female.

That is to say, Edna and Janie flee from their relationships both physically and spiritually to find a relationship in which they would be accepted as they are.

Robert Lebrun and Tea Cake help the protagonists to realize their dreams and fulfil themselves, but they have also some contrary characteristics. While Tea Cake is not submissive to the thoughts and values of society and lives according to his desires, Robert is a conformist who is afraid of the values of society; however he loves Edna anyway. Tea Cake chooses a life with Janie Crawford and they settle in Jacksonville. But, when compared to Tea Cake, Robert is a coward and to him, what matters is the values of society and they are more important than the love of Edna. He leaves Edna and goes to Mexico leaving a note which says “*goodbye because I love you*”. Once again Edna understands that as long as she does not obey the traditional values, she will

be alone in the society and contrary to her expectations, Robert is not different from the other males in the society.

Despite the fact that Edna is left alone, she manages to fulfil her identity, because in the process of self discovery and awakening Edna behaves individually, experiencing her identity at a more personal level, and she does not need any help of others except some interactions. Edna's awakening process begins during her vacation on Grand Isle and she discovers how to be an individual rather than a female obeying her husband. Her relationship with Robert contributes to her personal evolution as well, but this relationship is not the final complementary of her identity. By learning swimming from Robert and the affection of music by Reisz and through having interaction with Creole society, she begins her quest individually. She even decides to live alone instead of living with her husband.

When it comes to Janie Crawford, this awakening process is finalized with her marriage to Tea Cake. Janie experiences many things for the first time like playing chess, hunting and participating in the gossips of society, which she had not experienced in her former marriages. Janie reaches the horizon of her inner world with her marriage to Tea Cake and she feels the blossoming pear tree inside herself, so it can be argued that Tea Cake is a catalyst for Janie's self discovery. Moreover, she shoots Tea Cake with the courage given by him and the shooting skill which was taught by him. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that while Janie's evolution occurs gradually with the help of her husbands, Edna's evolution occurs individually and it happens within herself.

As a result of their self discovery and self realization, Edna chooses death and Janie dooms herself to alienation and solitude by killing Tea Cake to defend her own life. Although these may seem as their defeat against society and traditions, they achieve a victory over their handicapped personalities and society. Edna Pontellier, in spite of her children and responsibilities, shows the courage of committing suicide in the ocean which no woman could reach before her. Moreover, she makes this decision without anyone's consent or pressure. When she understands that she is alone in the society with her ideas which are ahead of her time, she does not want to live in

accordance with the norms of traditions and as a deed of a courageous soul, she ends up her life.

Similarly, Janie Crawford shoots Tea Cake and turns back to Eatonville alone, but she feels herself accomplished and happy for experiencing a love marriage. In her marriage with Tea Cake, she is presented the real horizon as well as the freedom of speech which was banned for her by her former husbands. It is clear with this marriage that Janie experiences a great evolution from silence to freedom of speech and act. After giving in to the pressures of Logan Killicks and Joe Starks, she is brave and encouraged enough to kill her beloved husband in defence and she defends herself via her speech in front of a white judge and trial jury and she acquires her freedom and victory over the society.

Upon reading between the lines, it is possible to recognize several interesting facts. Much as racism and gender segregation constitute a challenging barrier against women in the Victorian Age, Janie Crawford faces hardly any racism during her childhood and adolescence. Another fact is the loneliness of Janie; in general loneliness is something undesired and regarded as a defeat against society, however as for Janie, it can be viewed as a victory more than a defeat. Because she has the power to stand up to everything as a black woman. When it comes to Edna, committing suicide is loaded another meaning. It is an obvious fact that committing suicide is a forbidden act and considered a great sin in nearly all religions. Moreover, it symbolizes the defeat of a person, but I take it as a victory on behalf of Edna. She reaches her salvation and freedom through it.

Another interesting point is that both writers, differently from their contemporaries, did not write and create work for the sake of money. They wrote only because they wanted to do so and felt the need for doing something to make things better for women.

Both Kate Chopin and Zora Neale Hurston were the writers who were ahead of their era and society in terms of their ideas which defend the righteous place of woman within the society, so they wrote their novels *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were*

Watching God accordingly. They were writers with a vision and for this reason; their novels have become popular in literary world many years after their death.

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