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From Submission to Defiance:
Women's Personal Growth in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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of the requirements for a **Master degree in English Language,
Literature, and Civilization**

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- ❖ To all the teachers of the English Department one by one.

Dedication

I dedicate this modest work to:

- ◆ My dearest parents.
- ◆ My grandmother.
- ◆ My brother yacine and my sister nawel.
- ◆ My uncles and aunts one by one.
- ◆ All my friends, and everyone who loves me.

FATIHA BOUANANI.



Abstract

My thesis has explored the patriarchal societies' expectations, the conditions of women in marriage, and the different paths towards female gender identity in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The aim of my research has been to depict the protagonists' plight in marriage and their challenge of the society's rule. Both of them are women who progress physically and emotionally looking for love, self-fulfillment, and identity. Throughout this study, I have tackled female personal growth after a long period of oppression; physical as well as emotional suffering.

Key Words: patriarchy, expectations, female identity, plight, challenge, love, self-fulfillment, personal growth.

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General Introduction

Patriarchy is defined as a hierarchical social system in which men are the dominant while women are the subordinate (Nazrul 6). From this short definition, one might argue that relationships in a patriarchal society are clearly unequal; unequal in that men are the oppressors and women are the oppressed because they are deprived from their rights and controlled by their men, “the focal point for female oppression not only in terms of marriage, but in every aspect where women are deprived of their fundamental and secondary rights” (qtd in Nazrul 11).

Indeed, from the early ages, women used to live in a patriarchal society. They accepted having a subordinate role and position in the society. For them, being "controlled" and "submissive" was something normal in marriage; it was their destiny and they had to resist the burden. What is more is that patriarchy is hereditary; it transfers from a father to a son. Furthermore, a daughter looks to her mother's resistance as an epitome of true womanhood and motherhood. In addition, women are viewed more valuable when they conform to the mother-woman role. That is to say, they are supposed to serve their husbands and idolize their children.

However, the new woman emerged in the early 20th century to look around her surrounding, at her unbearable situation and her inner life including her feelings and her passionate desires. So, the new woman is different from the traditional one, who never dares to ask for her rights and never tries to break the shackles that tie her liberty.

The shift is made clear through literature, which is a means of portrayal of life. Several generations of writers have spilled the depth of their society by portraying characters from different walks of life. Feminist writers emerged to respond to the stereotypes made by some male authors about women, by portraying female characters as capable of self-determined

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action and self-fulfillment. They have focused on women's issues that are related to their social, economic, and political rights.

My thesis will try to explore the conditions of women in their marital life according to the social norms, through two famous works *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. I will focus on women's position in the society and the role they are supposed to play as wives and mothers. Another focus will be put on the effect of patriarchy on their psychological side and how autonomy, happiness and self-fulfillment are hard to reach. In other words, I will try to relate their desires against the society's expectations and the different ways they strive to achieve their full independence.

Chopin's novel explores the spiritual and physical awakenings of a young married woman vacationing with her husband and children on Grand Isle. There, she meets Robert and falls in love with him. Returning to New Orleans, the protagonist Edna begins to realize her position in the universe as a human being, but recognizes too, the confines of her gender and culture and begins her rebellion. The newly awakened woman seeks freedom and struggles to establish an identity. However, the social codes make her far-wretched dreams difficult to be reached, since she is at the same time a wife and a mother. Thus, she is constructing her identity as an artist, as a sensual and sexual woman, as a mother and as a woman in love. At the end, she abandons the life she was longing for due to the loss of her lover Robert.

The second work that we have chosen is Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* revolves around Janie's search for unconditional, true, and fulfilling love. She experiences different kinds of love through her three different marriages. As a result of her quest for this love, Janie gains her own independence and personal freedom. What makes a true heroine in the novel is that she strives for her own independence with great courage, ignoring the people of her community who tend to gossip on her.

Throughout this research work, I hope to establish both the similarities and differences between the two authors' works. Despite the gaps in time separating the two works, I have found many similarities between them. For this reason, I have chosen a textual and contextual study of the two novels to ensure the liaison that ties both pieces, in regard to the themes, characters and symbols. Both novels revolve around the limits of marriage and the protagonists's attempt to reach their personal growth, love, and identity. Basically, they suggest examples of how two women coming from different cultures share the same conflict of their sex and gender in a patriarchal prison.

The end of the nineteenth century was marked by a transition period from the Victorian age to the modern era. For both Europe and the United States, it was a chaotic and tumultuous period marked by radical changes, due to the theories propounded by the scientists and theorists. The American society had been engaged in a struggle over social ideologies and demands of equal rights. As Freud, Darwin, Marx and Nietzsche revealed their theories, the paradigms of the institutions of the society began to be questioned in favor of individuals, who were seeking to fulfill one's instinctive desires. In addition to these events, women's rights movement had been in progress since the first women's rights conference which was held in 1848.

Chopin was known as member of the higher echelons of society and an established author, who is famous for being a regionalist and local color writer in her earlier works. Because her writings had met a roaring success, many scholars expected more of what she was known for like a novel "rich in descriptive language, colorful characters, and the sights and sounds of Louisiana color life" (glasscity.net).

Chopin is one of the first female authors to address female issues, mainly sexuality. The reception of her novel *The Awakening* is characterized by mixed reviews. On the one hand, some critics acknowledged Chopin's gifted writing style. On the other hand, some American

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readers of the South rejected the idea of the new woman who can be self-reliant and independent. So, why did most scholars condemn the novel's theme?

Throughout her novel *The Awakening*, Chopin tried to give insight to the feminist movement that took place in the South at the end of the nineteenth century. However, she confronted the society's conventions through the portrayal of the protagonist Edna who surrenders to her sexual desire searching for her identity. By doing that, she unconsciously defies the social and moral rules of the patriarchal society where she was raised and her behaviour is seen as immoral. Adding to this, men held discriminatory and stereotypical views about women since the latter had no control over themselves and were simply considered nothing more than a property in the hands of men. Furthermore, what sparked the readers' fury was the idea of a woman abandoning her duties as a wife and mother.

As for the Harlem Renaissance, it is one of the most controversial moments in African-American history. The Renaissance era was a time of great changes and developments, which took place in the first half of the twentieth century. It was a period of hope and confidence, a proclamation of independence and the celebration of a new spirit exemplified in the birth of the New Negro. The dramatic changes include the migration of thousands of Blacks to the northern urban centers to engage in art and culture.

Zora Neale Hurston is a product of the Harlem Renaissance and one of its most extraordinary writers. She is a novelist, anthropologist and folklorist who had a fierce dislike of racial politics. She was a well-known author when she was alive, and she is still one of the best known whose works are widely read among the Afro American writers as Hutchinson claims "when an author's work is taught in colleges, and produced for television, and her face graces postage stamps, coffee mugs, calendars, notecards, and refrigerator magnets, it is a safe

bet that her status, in popular culture at least, is secure” (230). He adds that Hurston is the only one identified by her first name alone and this signifies her fame (ibid).

In Hurston’s masterpiece, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the author introduces us to the young Janie Crawford and her tragic and unsuccessful marriages. Her aim as any woman in marriage is to find respect and love. However through her experiences, Janie learns that marriage doesn’t make love. She realizes the emptiness of marriage, and by that, she starts to think about herself and becomes a woman who emerges from objectivity into subjectivity.

Marriage is the union between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them. The beginning of these novels makes the reader believe that marriage brings security, love, protection, and respect. Obviously, the protagonists enter marriage expecting nothing except emotional fulfillment and companionship. However, as the stories progress, one can learn that the authors portray marriage as an institution based on unequal relationships. Both the protagonists experience a kind of neglect, disdain, dependence, abandon, control, and oppression from their husbands. As these women become aware of their social status, they find themselves in conflict within their consciousness, because it is hard to escape such social conventions. As a reaction, they preferred to listen to their inner thoughts that drive them to rebel. The stories lead the reader to sympathize and understand better what women expect from marriage, how they are disillusioned, and how they strive to achieve personal growth.

My motivation in writing this dissertation comes from the fact of having a tendency towards social issues on the one hand, and feminist literature on the other hand. Moreover, my great motivation behind leading this comparative study between a white and a black author is that even if Chopin and Hurston wrote in two different periods and societies, they still share the same ideas about female independence and identity. Most importantly, as it is illustrated above, the novels received a harsh criticism during the period of their publication. So, my

research will attempt to highlight their great importance and the valuable messages they convey.

My findings are based on the reading of the two primary sources *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, written in the 19th century and the 20th century respectively. Furthermore, I will refer to the use of some important books of criticism that are directly and indirectly related to my research topic.

Feminist theory is devoted to the task of dealing with women's subordination, analyzing the intersections between sexism and other forms of subordination, including heterosexism, and class oppression. Moreover, feminists aim to envision the possibilities for both individual and collective resistance to such subordination (Allen <Amy.R.Allen@dartmouth.edu>). Studies consist of different literary trends and several approaches including: Marxist-feminist, Postmodern feminist, Post-colonialist feminist, psychoanalytic feminist, Post-structuralist feminist literary theory and many others.

Yet, my analysis will be achieved through relying on the feminist poststructuralist theory, which reveals the affinities between them. I find it helpful in analyzing the female protagonists' search for self and identity and their struggle against their society. According to some poststructuralist feminists, women are oppressed as a result of being different from men. They highlight that this difference is constructed by society in a given time. In my analysis of the theme of female gender identity, I will refer to Judith Butler's theory of gender identity and sexual difference. My aim is to show how society's constraints differ, and how men and women are different in terms of both their sex and gender. Butler's theory emerged to address the broad question of how and why women come to be subordinated, through a deep analysis of the social and cultural processes. What is of more interest is that Butler rejects the ability to form a coherent group; instead, she argues that women or men are different regarding

ethnicity, class, and historical context. Similarly, by referring to this, I will try to study the two protagonists in terms of such modalities.

Chopin's *The Awakening* and Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* have been an object of wide criticism by many scholars, and by that, they have been variously discussed as being novels written by feminist authors. They received an immediate criticism when they were published. In 1960, both of the novels were rediscovered when the second wave of Feminism was at its heyday, and from then on, they became subjects to many studies.

Beer Janet, in *The Cambridge companion To Kate Chopin*, collects a series of essays related to Kate Chopin's writings, including *The Awakening*. These collections of essays treat a wide range of Chopin's stories and novels in their historical, literary, and transatlantic context. For instance, Heilmann Ann, in *The Awakening and New Woman fiction*, tackles Edna's awakening from being a possession into self-ownership. She argues that quest for female self-determinism brings into line the nineteenth century females traditions of writing. As far as Chopin's treatment of sexuality, she notes that it was written in a time when women held no rights over their bodies. She adds that for this reason the novel was condemned. Moreover, she highlights that Edna suicide at the end of the novel is a kind of "assertion of her new-found identity and unconditional refusal to accept compromise" (89).

Recep Mehmet, in the journal of international social research, *Kate Chopin's The Awakening in the Light Of Freud Structural Model of the Psyche* argues that the novel has hardly nothing to do with feminism and women's rights. Moreover, she views that critics have simply misread the novel because of Chopin's life style and her protagonist's selfish behaviors which, according to Freud's theory of psychodynamic model of abnormality are morbid. She analyzed the novel using Freud's theory and highlights that "Edna Pontellier is undergoing such a psychic abnormality that due to not having a strong 'ego', she cannot

balance out the demands arousing from her subconscious area -the id of her mind” (4). She adds that “psychological illness comes about from repressed emotions and thoughts from experiences in the past” (ibid).

Likewise, Williams Christina R., in *Reading Beyond Feminism: Kate Chopin’s The Awakening*, claims that Chopin’s novel is not a feminist work. She analyzes the novel in terms of themes and motifs and suggests that they do not fit the feminist writing though it deals with a female self-discovery. Moreover, she explores the historical context in which the novel was written and argues that Edna fails to move beyond the patriarchal constraints. As for gender associations, naturalism, and imagery, she explains that it revolves around identity, regardless of sex. She adds that Edna’s desires foreshadow her awareness of her identity rather than a struggle against the social rules. In addition to this, she states that due to her lack of will, Edna ignores her awakening, “If she is unaware and inactive in her awakening, a feminist agenda has little place in the novel because Edna’s transformation is merely the consequence of nature and not of her own desire to usurp patriarchal constructs of society” (9).

Reckis, in the journal, *Drowning the Constraints of Freedom: Schopenhauer’s Freedom of the Will in Kate Chopin’s The Awakening*, argues that the novel traces Edna’s evolution of will which leads to her victory and not her death. Besides, she notes that Edna is longing for physical, intellectual, and moral freedom. Moreover, she highlights that even her will aims to be free in choice making. She states, “Edna must be free to act and choose on a ground that is determined by nothing at all” (3). She argues that to have a free will requires a break with the chains determined by her society. At the end of her essay, she ends with a conclusion that Edna’s body dies, whereas her will remains alive. In other words, she aims to clarify that it is her body which surrenders to exhaustion and not her will.

Tyehimba in his article, *Not Another Protest Novel: “Their Eyes Were Watching God” as an Unconventional Literary Narrative*, argues that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is different

from the writings of other contemporaries. According to Tyehimba, what makes it different is its richness with folklore and the depiction of an independent black woman. She points out that the novel's themes of love and marriage take on important roles in the novel and merit primary attention. She adds that Janie Crawford survives three types of marriages, two of them dysfunctional, and all of them characterized by domestic violence. Furthermore, she views that the protagonist Janie acts according to her interest not according to her relationships with men.

Tasharoffi in his article, *Domestic Violence in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God: A Feminist Reading* offers a global definition of domestic violence and exemplifies the forms of violence that each husband uses against Janie, including verbal and physical violence. Besides, he claims that Janie's decision to run off with Joe reflects her victory over patriarchal oppression. He concludes that Janie's decision to tell her story aims at teaching the women of her community a lesson from her experiences by raising their awareness.

From this review of literature, it is apparent that both the novels received different interpretations from different scholars and critics. Their contributions show the literary texts' significance and value. However, following my humble reading of the theme, I noticed that the different scholars did not provide a comparison between the two novels. Moreover, they did not take into consideration the reasons and the different strategies that lead the protagonists to a personal growth. In my research paper, I will focus on the matter of love and self-fulfillment in a marital life. Moreover, I will show how patriarchy affects both men and women. Males use oppression as a sign of their masculinity, while females experience oppression in a passive way to show their femininity. The authors approached the novels in dissimilar ways. Despite these differences, they share the same components: women's submission and defiance of the social rules, oppression, quest for independence, and personal

growth. Thus, the aim of my dissertation is to cover a wide range of female issues by providing answers to these questions:

- ◆ How are the protagonists' expectations different from society's expectations of women?
- ◆ Why are these women so averse to marriage and how did the authors attempt to counteract what they perceived to be the prescribed gender roles for women?
- ◆ What do love, sexuality, and identity mean for women?
- ◆ Do they successfully reach fulfillment? If so, what is their fate?
- ◆ What is the message communicated through their fate?

To implement this orientation to my present research, I shall rely on a three-chapter Outline. The objective of the first chapter is to allow the reader follow the steps of my analysis and arguments. I will start with the general socio-historical background of *The Awakening*. Then, a short biography of the author Kate Chopin stressing on her works, and the novel's summary. Furthermore, I will move to the study of the socio historical background of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Then, a biography of Zora Neale Hurston; including her life, her works and her major work will be provided. Adding to this, at the end of this chapter, a plot summary will be provided so that the reader can follow with me the steps of my research. The second part of this chapter will be devoted to an overview of the approach that is used in my research, starting from an introduction to feminism, its history, and key figures. Then, I will refer to Butler's theory of sexual difference and gender identity.

The second chapter will be devoted to the study of the place of a married woman in both the American as well as the Afro-American societies which expect from her to be a dutiful and obedient wife and tendered mother. Both the female characters undergo the same process of marriage and have the same responsibilities as wives towards their husbands and respect of

the social codes. Adding to this, a stress will be put on the protagonists' oppression in marriage as depicted in the novels.

The third chapter will include the conflict of the women's inner side, which fuels them to break out of their routines. Thus, they begin to recognize their sexuality, freedom and inner happiness with other men rather than with their husbands. Consequently, they choose to rebel and strive to regain their identity and self-fulfillment through different means, including abandoning their roles and families, sexual autonomy, quest for female gender identity, and quest for romantic love. .

At the end a general conclusion will be provided to sum up the whole work, highlighting my findings and contributions to the field of research. To end with, a morality that the reader can learn from the stories and the protagonists' fate will be provided.

Introduction

To depict everyday's life, authors took their pens to show the true reflection of the reality of the past and the present. It is reflected through the use of characters, symbols, and deep insights into social issues that characterize each era and society. Thus, in this chapter, I will give an insight to the historical and literary background of the two novels; *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Kate Chopin attempts to hold up a mirror to her society and the movements that took place in the turn of the nineteenth century. Another important figure of the Renaissance era, Zora Neale Hurston mirrors the Afro-American society during the Renaissance era. Throughout this chapter, specific attention will be provided to the biographies of the two authors, as both of them are influenced by their societies. The study will draw on the one hand, upon the influences of the movements and how Chopin's novel was misunderstood. On the other hand, I will examine the Harlem Renaissance and its literary tendencies and how Hurston was considered an outsider with outrageous ideas. Besides, I will explore how these writers were ahead of their time writing about themes that were so hard for readers as well as critics to comprehend. The section will be devoted to the theoretical framework. I will provide an overview of feminism and Judith Butler's theory of Sex and Gender Identity.

I. Historical Background:

I.1. 19th Century America:

The Awakening was published in 1899. It is based on the French Creole society in Louisiana, which was constructed on morals and traditions. At that time, The American society was undergoing remarkable changes and had been engaged in a struggle over social ideologies and demands for equal rights.

Basically, urbanization and industrialization was the main factor behind these changes. In the essence, the turn of the century was marked by “uncontrollable forces”, “energy”, and “evolution”, (High 98). Writers were influenced by Zola’s scientific study of man, Darwin’s theory of evolution, and the ideas of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Hence, they started to think about traditional morality in a new way, asking whether an individual had really the ability to make choice (ibid). These writers were convinced that individuals were controlled by other internal forces, as Nietzsche argued that each person is driven by a “will to power” in his famous phrase” beyond good and evil” (99).

The Awakening is set at the end of the Victorian era, which is a period of concern with manners, prosperity, and morals. Therefore, from the society’s point of view, a married woman should conform to certain codes and rules. She is expected to be the perfect wife, who is dutiful, obedient, and silent. Indeed, she is only used to worship her husband and idolize her children and in most cases, her feelings and desires are suppressed since she became the legal property of her husband. As for divorce, it was considered as preposterous and women had to accept such codes of the patriarchal environment.

After the Civil War and at the turn of the century, women in Louisiana began to claim for equal position and brought their private issues of home and family into the public arena. Moreover, in the 1890’s many women’s organizations were created to fuel the demands of equal treatment., In fact, their protest was a challenge of the society’s conventions, but by the end, the movement was extremely influential. Thus, the role of women began to face a change and they became more aware of their social status and by that they got the right to vote.

At that time, the concept of “the new woman” emerged to signify the liberated woman who was able to stand by herself towards obtaining education, careers, dress reform, and suffrage.

The new woman enjoyed her newfound identity, freedom, and power and was longing for improvement of her living standards.

As far as Chopin's previous works are concerned, she was regarded as a regionalist writer and known for realism and local color. However, at this period of transformation, Chopin's novel *The Awakening* was released to face a harsh criticism for its portrayal of a woman's strong desire to be independent which is against the society's norms. Consequently, its theme was condemned by most critics and considered immoral.

I.2. The Harlem Renaissance:

During the First World War, millions of southern blacks migrated to the north to fill the jobs left in a booming economy. By the end of the war, 100,000 had settled in cities like Harlem, which was a very stunning city that became home for many cultural and political groups. Therefore, these groups shared the sense of adventure and rebellion and created what is called now the Harlem Renaissance. It was expressed in various ways. Torfs claims that "the creativity of black Americans undoubtedly came from a common source – the irresistible impulse of blacks to create boldly expressive art of a high quality as a primary response to their social conditions, as an affirmation of their dignity and humanity in the face of poverty and racism" (9). The Harlem Renaissance was a decade marked by dramatic changes in urban and racial landscapes including the new image of the Negro and the phenomenon of gender inversion where the new woman and the same sex desire emerged too.

In its own time, the Harlem Renaissance was called the Negro Renaissance. Negro signified "a word of pride, of strong vowels and a capital N" (Hutchinson cambridge.org). The term Negro Renaissance arose in the early to mid 1920s to signify "a general cultural awakening and moment of recognition-both self-recognition and recognition from without" (ibid). Indeed, the term New Negro used to signify "militant self defense against white

supremacy, intellectual aspiration, and political radicalism” and was also used as a protest against the racial oppression of blacks (ibid).

However, today the movement is referred to as the blossoming of literary arts mainly after Alain Locke’s publication of his anthology *The New Negro*. The term signifies no more a political movement but rather “a cultural affirmation of Negro identity”. Clearly, the notion of the new negro came to overcome those “old Negro” stereotypes to include a reevaluation and feeling of pride in black history and heritage(ibid).

In the course of 1930s, the shift from political to cultural emphasis has received a strong criticism. Jeffery Stewart argues that the movement has extended to the late 1940s and beyond which in its role set the ground for the Civil Rights movement in the late 1950s.

In literature, the Harlem Renaissance was the most influential movement in the history of African American Literature. It laid the basis for all later works and had an enormous impact on black literature worldwide,” In poetry, fiction, drama, and the essay, as in music, dance, painting, and sculpture, African Americans worked not only with a new sense of confidence and purpose but also with a sense of achievement never before experienced by so many black artists in the long, troubled history of the peoples of African descent in North America” (Torfs 8). Many black writers were gathered as groups and were associated with scholars as Allain Locke and Charles S, Johnson. The key figures of this movement include E. B. Du Bois, Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude Mc Kay, and Langston Hughes. These authors of the Harlem Renaissance were considered as the “New Negroes”. Basically, they did not have one single literary philosophy to guide them, but they were linked together by a common black experience:

The adoption of the concept of Black Power is one of the most legitimate and healthy developments in American politics and

race relations in our time. ... It is a call for people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society (qtd in Torfs 11).

The remarkable period of artistic production came to an end in 1929 due to the stock Market Crash and the great depression. Millions of Americans lost their jobs, which caused America's entering a new period of social anger and self-criticism (Hughes 161). Consequently, many artists began to leave Harlem and that interest in black literature had been torn into pieces. In this respect, High asserts, "the economic collapse of 1929 destroyed the happy, confident mood of America in the "Jazz Age" twenties". "It was borrowed time anyway", F.Scott Fitzgerald wrote (ibid).

II. Authors in Context:

II.1.Kate Chopin:

In this section, I will try to focus on Kate Chopin's life and works, which are interrelated. In *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*, Beer highlights that Chopin was animated by a strong ambition to satisfy her own standards and gain professional recognition. As a female writer, she attempted to share her knowledge acquired from years of observation as a student, wife, mother, widow, lover, social leader, and social outsider (25).

Kate Chopin was among the first American writers to write truthfully about women's issues; hidden lives, passionate desires, sexuality, and other complexities. She is also considered by some critics as a forerunner of the feminist authors of the 20th century.

Kate Chopin was born Katherine O'Flaherty in 1850 in St. Louis, Missouri to Eliza and Thomas. She was the third of five children but her sisters died in infancy, and brothers died in their early twenties. Her mother came from an old French family and her father was a highly successful Irish-born businessman. The latter died when Kate was only five years old.

After her father's death, Kate developed a close relationship with her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. The latter taught her French, music, and some stories on the St. Louis women of the past, such as her great-great-grandmother. This woman was able to run her own business and make her own decisions though being separated from her husband and having children while unmarried. Basically, Kate grew up in a matriarchy, surrounded by smart, independent, single women who were an example of strength. When she was sixteen, she lived with a married couple, her uncle and his wife, and had an opportunity to form traditional notions about marriage and submissive wives.

In 1855, she was sent to the Sacred Heart Academy, a catholic boarding school in St. Louis. After finishing her education, Chopin entered St. Louis society, where she met Oscar Chopin, a French Creole born cotton factor. She married him in June 1870 and they moved to New Orleans. Between 1871 and 1879, she had six children. Like the characters in *The Awakening*, Edna and Léonce Pontellier, the Chopins vacationed during summers on Grand Isles.

Kate found herself in a state of depression after the loss of both her husband and her mother. She found herself obliged to run her husband's general store and plantation for over a year. Before she left Cloutierville, Chopin had an affair with a local married man, who is said to be similar with Alcéé Arobin in *The Awakening*. Then, to support herself and her family, she began to write.

As a writer, she was immediately successful and wrote rapidly without much editing. From 1892 to 1895, she wrote short stories for both children and adults, which were published in magazines as *Atlantic Monthly*, *Vogue*, *The Century Magazine* and many others.

Chopin's major works include *Bayou Faulks* (1894) and *A Night in Acadie* (1897). Her important short stories include *Desiree's Baby* (1893), *the Story of An Hour* (1894) and *The Storm*(1898). Chopin also wrote novels: *At Fault* (1890) and *The Awakening*(1899), which both are set in New Orleans and Grand Isles. The people in her stories are inhabitants of Louisiana.

As far as Chopin's treatment of themes is concerned, she had witnessed different lifestyles during her life which provide a perfect analysis of the late 19th century American society. Elizabeth Nolan appraises her writings as "quite properly considered in terms of its sophisticated engagements with romanticism, transcendentalism, literary realism, naturalism, and New woman fiction and anticipating the concerns of feminism and literary modernism" (119).

Her works are based on the portrayal of women's lives and their continual struggle to establish their own identity. In the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*, Beer notes that one of the features of Chopin's writing is the "appearance and reappearance of the family members, including the same characters and the main stage". Indeed, many scholars agreed that Kate Chopin's work often included stories surrounded by or about Creole characters, "she was often very descriptive about their mannerisms, dialect, and unique way of life" (Loyno.edu).

Basically, Chopin was greatly influenced by her Creole heritage and surroundings since both her mother Eliza Faris and her husband Oscar were part of prominent French Creole

families. In addition, Kate and her husband lived in New Orleans, where the Creole culture was greatly celebrated. In most of Chopin's novels, the Creoles' freedom, appreciation of art and music and isolation from other members of society are clearly present. Chopin's female characters such as Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* were often tormented by the strict rules and mores of Creole society and they were limited by the role of wife and mother relegated to the Creole woman (loyno.edu).

Richard Fusco traces Maupassant's influence on Chopin, identifying structural similarities across the writing and discussing her judicious "borrowing of his trademark surprise ending as it is in *Desirée Baby*" and *The Story of an Hour*" (qtd in Nolan 121).

However, her most famous and last novel *The Awakening* created a kind of controversy among critics. This novel is about women's issues, morality and the confines of an oppressive society. It was condemned for Edna's lack of remorse about her behavior and Chopin refusal to judge her. As a result, Chopin was deeply discouraged by this harsh criticism and decided to turn to write short stories.

In her last years, health problems made her writing difficult. Her death came suddenly; she died on August 22, 1904 of a massive cerebral hemorrhage. In fact, she was mostly forgotten for a half a century. However, within a decade of her death, Chopin was widely recognized as one of the leading writers of her time when Per Seyersted, a Norwegian graduate student studying in the USA, rediscovered her in 1960.

II.2. Zora Neale Hurston:

Zora Neale Hurston was born on January 7th, 1891 in Notasulga, Alabama to John Hurston, a carpenter and Baptist preacher, and Lucy Potts Hurston, a former school teacher. When she was three years old, her family moved to Eatonville, Florida, where her father served terms as

a mayor. In 1917, she enrolled in Morgan Academy in Baltimore, where she completed her high school education. Then, she enrolled at Howard University and began her writing career and earned an associate degree. Later on, the university literary magazine published her first story in 1921.

In 1925, Hurston moved to New York and became a significant figure in the Harlem Renaissance, which is a black art movement of the 1920s, that worked to re-establish black culture and the slogan “black is beautiful” was carried by the movement. A year later, she, Langston Hughes, and Wallace Thurman organized the journal *Fire!* which was considered one of the defining publications of the era.

Adding to this, she enrolled in Barnard College and studied anthropology. Hurston’s writings were greatly influenced by her living in Eatonville and her anthropological research as well. Indeed, she lived in the first incorporated, self-governing, all black town in the United States, which helped her in gaining experiences regarding her sense of racial identity. She describes her experiences in her essay, “*How It Feels Colored Me*”.

In addition to continuing her literary career, Hurston served in the Faculty of North Carolina College for Negroes. She travelled extensively in the Caribbean and the American South where she immersed herself in local culture practices to conduct her anthropological research. Black folklore plays an important role in her works. In 1935 she wrote “*Mules and Men*” documenting African-American folklore.

In 1936 and 1937, Hurston travelled to Jamaica and Haiti for research. Her anthropological work “*Tell My Horses*” (1938) documents her account of her fieldwork studying spiritual and cultural rituals in Jamaica. During her last decade, she worked as a freelance writer for magazines and newspapers, a substitute teacher, and a maid.

Her first novels were published in the 1930s; “*Jonah’s Gourd Vine*” in 1934, “*Their Eyes Were Watching God*” in 1937 which is considered as her masterpiece, and “*Moses, Man of the Mountain*” (1939). Many readers objected to the representation of African American dialect in her novels as a caricature of African and American culture rooted in a racist tradition. They argued that the use of folklore and dialects echoes the minstrel show to entertain the white audience.

During a period of financial and medical difficulties, Hurston was forced to enter St. Lucie county welfare home, where she suffered from a stroke. On January 28th, 1960 she died of hypertensive heart disease. Her remains were in an unmarked grave until 1973 when the novelist Alice Walker put a mark on it.

II.3. Plot Summary of *The Awakening*:

The story opens in the late 1800s in Grand Isle, a summer holiday resort popular with the wealthy inhabitants of New Orleans. Edna Pontellier is vacationing with her husband Léonce and their children at the cottage of Madame Lebrun. Léonce is a kind and loving man who is always busy with his work. However, his frequent absences disgust his wife. Consequently, she spends most of her time with her friend Adèle. From this relationship, Edna’s process of awakening and self-discovery begins. Most importantly, it accelerates when she comes to know Robert Lebrun who is a man who chooses a woman each summer.

This summer, he spends his time with Edna; bathing together and talking for long hours. As time goes, the two grow closer and Edna starts to paint again, learns to swim and becomes aware of her sexuality and independence. Thus, she becomes depressed at night with her husband and feels better during her moments with Robert. When the two reveal their love for one another, Robert decides to leave Grand Isle and Edna returns to New Orleans as a changed woman.

In New Orleans, Edna pursues her painting and ignores all her responsibilities. Léonce observes his wife's behavior and starts to think about guidance from the family's physician. The latter advises him to let her without control. As Léonce is away for business, Edna moves to another home of hers to live alone.

Then, she starts an affair with Alcée Arobin who satisfies her sexual needs. At this point, the old pianist, Mademoiselle Reisz, warns Edna about the sacrifices of an artist. Thus, she often visits her and is eager to read the letters sent by Robert. After that, Reisz discovers the love affair and encourages Edna to act upon her feelings and desires.

One day, Robert returns to New Orleans to express his love to Edna, but he reminds her that their relationship is impossible since she is married. Despite that, Edna insists that she is free, ignoring all her responsibilities. Later, her friend, Adèle, recognizes that the couple's relationship is intensified. Therefore, she reminds her to think a little about her innocent children and husband. So, Edna starts to realize that she acts selfishly.

When her Adèle undergoes a difficult childbirth, Edna goes to visit her. As Edna returns home, she finds that Robert is gone and left a note on the table informing her about his departure. Consequently, she is haunted by thoughts of her children and realizes that even Robert fails to fulfill her desires and is left alone.

As a reaction, she decides to return to Grand Isle where she experienced the best moments of freedom, emotional, sexual, and intellectual awareness. As she swims, she remembers her freedom from her husband and children, Robert who provides her love and tenderness, doctor Mandelet's words, and Mademoiselle Reisz's courage. Finally, she commits suicide.

II.4. Plot Summary of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

The story opens when Janie Crawford returns to Eatonville, Florida, after a long absence. The people of the town begin to question and gossip about her. When Janie meets her friend Pheoby, she starts to narrate her ambiguous story. It is through this meeting that she reveals her first marriage with Logan Killicks who was chosen by her grandmother. The latter raised Janie after her mother ran off; she insists that she marries Logan to offer her protection and security. Then, Janie married this old farmer but finds herself miserable because he is unromantic and does not fit her.

One day, she meets an ambitious man called Joe Starcks and began to flirt with him in secret for a couple of weeks. After that, they decided to run away and marry. They travelled to Eatonville where Jody, as she calls him, became the mayor, postmaster, storekeeper, and the biggest landlord in town. She soon discovers that she also wants to take part in the social life in town, but Jody does not permit her.

After two decades of their marriage, he mistreats her by insulting and beating her. Therefore, their marriage breaks down and Jody becomes ill. One day, she went to visit him on his death bed and as she berates him, he dies. After his death, she is relieved and freed from his mistreatment, and she does not want to accept any suitor because she prefers to enjoy her newfound independence.

However, Tea Cake, a man twelve years younger than her attracts her. Despite the people's gossip, they marry, sell Jody's store and leave to Jacksonville. Few days after their marriage, he steals her money, but he comes back and apologizes to Janie. Then, they moved to the Everglades to work during the harvest season. After two years of marriage, a hurricane bursts into the town. While trying to flee, a rabid dog bites Tea Cake. Three weeks later, he falls ill. It is Janie who takes care of him. However, one day, he takes a pistol and tries to fire

her. In defense, she kills him. Fortunately, all white and male jury finds her not guilty and by this she returns to the first setting of the novel, Eatonville.

Throughout this section, I will try to trace the main features that characterize the feminist theory and how it affected the literary productions of the women who write about women's experiences. Basically, the theoretical part of this thesis will provide a ground on which the analysis put forward in the coming chapters will be built. The feminist theory and the feminist thought brought women together into a collective struggle to undo patriarchy and male domination. In this chapter, I will discuss the history of feminism and its waves. Then, I will focus on Butler's theory of Gender Identity.

III. Theoretical Framework:

III.1.Feminism:

No one is so well calculated to think for woman kind as woman herself. In the province of administering to the wants of her sex, no one can be so well adapted as she. Her advancement is in no better way proven than by her progress in medicine and literature, to say nothing of the reform movements which she is steadily carrying on for the benefit of her sex. (Bressler 167)

Patriarchy has long been embedded in Western culture. In its historical context, its roots go back to the ancient Greeks, who betted gender discrimination by declaring the superiority of men over women. They used to prevent women from attaining their full potential. In the centuries that followed, some philosophers and scientists carried on the same gender discrimination (171). For instance, Charles Darwin argued that women are of a "characteristic of ...a past and lower state of civilization" (ibid).

Feminism and feminist are terms coined by the French philosopher and utopian socialist, Charles Fourier, which appeared first in France and the Netherlands in 1872 as "les

feminists”. Later on, they appeared in Great Britain in (1890s) and in the US in (1910). They refer to a collection of feminist movements and ideologies, which flourished to address the broad question of how and why women are oppressed in a patriarchal society.

Despite the difference in time, culture, place, causes, and goals, most of western feminist historians assert that all the feminist movements share the same objective: to obtain women’s rights, should be considered feminist movements. In contrast, some of them think that the term should be limited only to the modern feminist movement and its descendents while they referred to the earliest ones as “protofeminist”.

Feminism came to existence as a response to all those stereotypes made about women as the inferior sex. Their main aim was to define and establish defining roles based on equality between men and women. In the introduction to her seminal text *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach To American Fiction*, Fetterly asserts that “feminist criticism is [also] a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read” (qtd in Bressler 16). However, one should bear in mind that their campaigns took different forms and directions, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work, to fair wages or equal pay, to own property, to education, to enter contracts, to have equal rights within marriage, and to have maternity leave.

Another important issue that feminists have also worked was to promote bodily autonomy and integrity, and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence in a patriarchal society, where men are the dominant. The latter embrace phallocentrism, which is the belief that identifies the phallus as a source of power in both culture and literature (Bressler168).

As a matter of fact, the feminist movement received a kind of criticism, concerning its taking into account only white, middle-class, and educated perspectives. Thus, this led to the creation of ethnically specific or multiculturalist forms of feminism.

III.2. Critical History of Feminism:

As far as the history of the modern feminist movement is concerned, it is divided into three waves and each wave embodies a set of approaches dealing with different aspects of the same feminist issues.

III.2.1. First-Wave Feminism:

The first wave of feminism started in the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in the UK and the USA. The term “first wave” was coined after the term “second wave” started to be used to refer to a new feminist movement. It focused on equal contract, marriage, parentage, working conditions, educational rights for girls, property rights for women, and women’s Suffrage Movements, such as the right to vote. Some of the American first-wave feminists belonged to conservative Christian groups and others resembling the diversity and radicalism² of much of second-wave feminism. In 1910 and 1913, Major issues included. One of the most important achievements of the feminist movement in the USA was the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1919 that gave women over the age of 30, the right to vote.

Virginia Woolf was one of the key figures of the first wave who wrote *A Room of One’s View* (1929). In her seminal work, she developed Mary Wollstonecraft’s ideas about women’s rights. Wollstonecraft is considered as the most famous feminist writer of the time and one of the first philosophers. Her work remains a cornerstone of feminist thought in which she argues that women’s education and upbringing leads to the limitation of their expectations (ibid). Woolf introduced the notion of woman’s own voice and writing. In the

introduction to *Feminist Literary Criticism*, Mary Eagleton suggests that Woolf is “the founding mother of the contemporary debate” (1).

Moreover, Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) was heralded as the foundational work, which played a major role in laying the grounds for both the first and the second wave of feminism. She dealt with the notion of women as the other or second class citizen, since a woman is not a male. She also asserted that French society and Western societies in general are patriarchal (Bressler 172).

III.2.2. Second Wave of Feminism:

The second wave took place during the 1960s and lasted to the late 1970s. This was a time when “there was an increasing entry of women into higher education, the establishment of academic women's studies courses and departments and feminist thinking in many other related fields such as politics, sociology, history and literature, and a time when there was increasing questioning of accepted standards and authority”(ibid). In other words, this feminist movement focused on the social as well as political inequalities.

In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan explored “the roots of the change in women's roles from essential workforce during World War II to homebound housewife and mother after the war, and assessed the forces that drove this change in perception of women's roles” (ibid). In the early 1970s, feminist writing ranges from Gloria Steinem’s *Ms. Magazine* (1970) to Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1949), in which she considers that sex is politics and politics is power imbalance in relationships. She also expresses her pessimism when she describes the world women live in as “the desert we inhabit” (ibid).

III.2.3. Third Wave Feminism:

As for the movements of the 1990, the focus of feminists, also called post-feminists was about women’s experience under patriarchy. It came as a continuation and reaction to the shortcomings of the second wave, as it is explained in this passage:

Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's "essentialist" definitions of femininity, which (according to them) over-emphasized the experiences of upper middle class white women. A post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality is central to much of the third wave's ideology. Third wave feminists often focus on "micropolitics", and challenged the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females (ibid).

The mid-1980s were a moment of great change in feminist theory. It was a rich, sometimes vexed and convivial in which words like sisterhood appeared. Furthermore, what made it different from the second wave is the post-structuralist interpretation of gender and its celebration of sexuality as a means of female empowerment. Adding to this, they argued about the difference in terms of sex and gender. French feminism was mainly associated with the work of the psychoanalytical feminist theory came from the key figures: Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helen Cixous, who developed the concept of "écriture féminine".

III.3. Butler's Theory of Gender Identity:

Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity is one of the most influential books in feminism and queer theory. It was written by the German philosopher Judith Butler in 1990. Butler begins her critique of identity and gender by opposing the feminists' ideas about the distinction often made between sex and gender. In this distinction, she refers to sex as biological while gender is culturally constructed. She argues that sexed bodies cannot signify without gender, and the apparent existence of sex prior to discourse and cultural imposition is merely an effect of the functioning of gender. That is to say, both sex and gender are constructed. She explains that feminists use the term "women" to denote a common identity. She states, "the political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often

accompany the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination” (7).

Butler, in her introduction to *Gender Trouble and Subversion of Identity* argues that gender is performative: no identity exists behind the acts that supposedly "express" gender, but they constitute rather than express the illusion of the stable gender identity. In short, it means that it comes to existence through actions. She adds, if the appearance of “being” a gender is thus an effect of culturally influenced acts, then there exists no solid, universal gender; that is to say, constituted through the practice of performance, the gender "woman" as well as gender "man" remain contingent and open to interpretation and "resignification." In this way, Butler provides an opening for subversive action. She calls for gender trouble, for people to trouble the categories of gender through performance. Butler says, “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; ... identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (25). In other words, gender is a performance; it's what you do at particular times, rather than universal, because gender is variable. By this it means that you are under environment control. Butler asserts that “there need not be a ‘doer behind the deed,’ but that the ‘doer’ is variably constructed in and through the deed” (142). There is no such thing as a “self” that exists before one is immersed into a culture which means that people are identified according to their actions.

Adding to this, contrary to feminism, she argues that women and woman are different categories, complicated by class, ethnicity, sexuality, and other facets of identity, rather than being fixed (7). As she asserts, “Without the compulsory expectation that feminists actions must be instituted from some stable, unified, and agreed upon identity, those actions might well get a quicker start and seem more congenial to a number of ‘women’ for whom the meaning of the category is permanently moot” (15). In other words, gender should be seen as

a fluid variable which shifts and changes in different contexts and at different times. As Butler asserts,

If one “is” a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered “person” transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities (3).

Indeed, this notion holds particularly true when intersecting gender with other domains of identity, including race, socio-economic status, culture, among others. In terms of identity politics, many tend to assume that the identity exists prior to a political response. As for Butler, she eschews identity politics in favor of a new, coalitional feminism that critiques the basis of identity and gender. She considers that sex is seen to cause gender, which is seen to cause desire towards the other gender.

Furthermore, the contemporary feminist debates over essentialism raise the question of the universality of female identity and masculinist oppression. The universality presumed by these terms parallels the assumed universality of the patriarchy, and erases the particularity of oppression in distinct times and places. In other words, the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete arrays of “women” are constructed.

III.3.1. The Reading strategies of the novels:

In this section, I will attempt to disclose gender perspectives as depicted in Chopin’s *The Awakening* and Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. By referring to the theme of female search for love, self fulfillment, and identity in a patriarchal society, many of Butler’s thought about gender identity will be highlighted through some female characters, with a

focus on the female protagonists. According to Butler, feminists failed to liberate women since the difference between male and female is still marked on their bodies. That is to say they are different in terms of their sex and this is the main reason behind women's oppression. Instead, she suggests that since sex is biological, gender is not stable, but variable through time. In other words, society at a given time influences individuals' behavior, so it is changeable and not fixed. As she says in *Gender Trouble*, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (33). Therefore, this is what I aim to show here; the characters differ in their behaviors towards their society; some of them accept the social norms and others rebel against them.

III.3.1.1. *The Awakening*:

Clearly, female gender identity is a salient theme in Chopin's novel *The Awakening*. It is pointed out through the female characters of Adele Ratignolle, Mademoiselle Reisz, and Edna Pontellier. Furthermore, the depiction of the characters' behavior is so much related to the principle of gender as constructed by the society.

The first perspective of female identity which is portrayed in Adele Ratignolle is her behavior towards her society. She is Edna's best friend who represents the ideal Victorian woman by devoting herself to the welfare of her husband and children. Thus, she represents a subject with a coherent identity in the Victorian society. In this essence, she is given a full identity because she conforms to the society's rules and succeeds in drawing meaning in her life. As Butler argues, only those who conform to the social expectations are considered normal. Indeed, Adele is a perfect example of a good domesticated wife, who worships her husband and idolizes her children. She feels very comfortable in her marital life and considers

her home as her pride. It is very clear that she accepts her status as a wife and a mother and by that her happiness as well as her identity lie in her home.

Another female character in the novel is Mademoiselle Reisz. She is a single woman, who is fond of music. She disregards the Creole society's expectations by being in a self-satisfied environment. Because she is the only artist-woman that Edna is familiar with, Edna sees her lifestyle as an example for all artist-women.

Edna Pontellier is the protagonist of the story. She is a wife and mother in her late twenties. As the novel progresses, she becomes increasingly aware of her dissatisfaction with her lot in life. Her infatuation with Robert, her lover brought Edna through a process of emotional and spiritual evolution. She starts a subtle subversion to the society's expectations to achieve her independence and pursuit of happiness. At this stage, she discovers her new found identity when she recognizes that she is a human being. However, being controlled by a sense of social property, Edna recognizes the impossibility of her happiness without Robert. Therefore, her inability to reconcile her responsibilities as a wife and mother, leads to her downfall and her commitment of suicide. In other words, because she does not fit in the Creole female gender identity, Edna finds herself rejected.

III.3.1. 2. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

Without doubt, Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a feminist novel. In addition to her depiction of the Afro- American society through Folklore, Hurston gave a great deal of importance to women's plight in a patriarchal society. While portraying women's situation from slavery till the early twentieth century, one can easily notice the female characters's shift in identity as time passes on. This concept of identity will be highlighted through the female characters in the novel.

To start with, Nanny is Janie's maternal grandmother. She is an old woman born into slavery on a plantation near Savannah. She experiences a harsh life during and after slavery. Accordingly, she is raped by her white master and bears Leafy, who is her white master's daughter. Disappointed with this child, Nanny, who has no given name, dotes on her granddaughter Janie, who is also a product of rape. She is a very experienced woman, who has tasted the bitterness of both slavery and patriarchy. Therefore, her identity is suppressed due to her skin and being a female slave.

Leafy is Nanny's daughter and Janie's mother. Her life resembles her mother's one. She is a victim of a black school teacher, who destroys her dreams and completely ruins her life. His cruelty lies in raping Leafy while Nanny thinks her daughter goes to study. Consequently, she runs away of her village and disappears. From this, one understands that females are victims, at the mercy of men.

Janie Crawford Killicks Starks Woods is the protagonist of the novel. Her long, beautiful hair and attractive appearance are described throughout the novel. As a girl, Janie leads a sheltered and conventional life with her grandmother. She starts to discover her identity as a black person when she is six years old. At the age of seventeen, her feminine sexuality is awakened after a kiss with a boy. However, Nanny's anxiety about her granddaughter's future leads Nanny to think about marriage as a solution. Twenty four years and three marriages later, Janie has experienced both love and personal growth. Through her first two marriages, she holds on to an unrealistic and unfulfilled ideal of love and happiness. She is disappointed because she is only considered as a mere property in the hands of her husbands. In other words, her freedom is tied by her marriages. In her final marriage to Tea Cake, Janie is allowed the freedom to be herself and to love in her own terms. Interestingly, marriage is the frame for Janie's movement into self-knowledge, maturity, and identity. When Janie returns back to the village where she was raised, people start gossiping on her because she violates

the society's conventions. Basically, her disobedience of the society's rule lies in her search for love and self fulfillment from one marriage to another. Therefore, Janie's quest for her identity takes her in a journey through three different marriages.

Conclusion:

This chapter has discussed the historical and literary background of Chopin's *The Awakening* and Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. It has shown the American society at the turn of the nineteenth century and the Afro-American society during the Harlem Renaissance. The chapter has also provided with the biographies of the authors as well as a plot summary of the novels. Moreover, it has dealt with the theoretical framework: feminism and its history, Butler's theory, and the reading strategies of the novels based on Butler's theory. In the following chapter, I will deal with the Creole and the Black societies' expectations from women. Then, I will try to disclose the different forms of oppression that the protagonists in Chopin and Hurston's novels experience throughout their marital lives.

Introduction:

Throughout this chapter, which is part of the core of my study, I will explore the major theme of women's oppression in a patriarchal society, which is common in, *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Men and women are two different sexes, who occupy very different roles. Women are not only considered the weaker sex but are fundamentally defined by the society's constraints toward their relationship to men. But, one should bear in mind that each society imposes its rules on individuals' behavior in different ways. Therefore, I find it necessary to have a look at both the Creole and Black Folk societies' expectations from a married woman.

Moreover I will focus on the two works' protagonists in their marital life and how they are disillusioned. Though patriarchy is universal, its forms are various and differ from one society to another and from one man to another. For this reason, I will attempt to explore the different forms of oppression through each protagonist. Thus, this leads to a better understanding of the protagonists' disillusionment because of the limits of marriage. The latter puts an end to their dream for love and self-fulfillment and ties their freedom by putting them in a cage whispering in silence. At the end, one can answer the following questions:

1. What do the Creole and Black Folk societies expect from women as wives? And how do they delimit women's roles? Are their expectations different or similar?
2. Do these women have to follow them? If so, how are they perceived by their husbands?
3. How do the protagonists view marriage at the beginning? And how does their vision alter at the end of the novels?

I. Society's Expectations:

I.1. What are the Creole Society's Expectations from Women?

The Awakening is a novel based on the lifestyle of French Creoles in the late nineteenth century. It is through her characters that Chopin brings out the essence of the Creole culture and takes us to delve inside the Creole women's consciousness, way of life, personal relationships, and etiquette. On the other hand, Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is set in the Folk culture of Southern Florida from the period of slavery to the beginning of the twentieth century. To have a better understanding of the novels, an overview of the societies is necessary. Morlas provides us with an overview of the Creole culture as well as Creole women in the following passage:

Creoles served as the first and largest example of diversity in the American story; before the onslaught of immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century added their heterogeneous mix to the American melting pot, Creoles, who spoke a different language, practiced a different religion, and held vastly different legal and governmental beliefs than most Americans, faced the challenge of how to maintain their own culture while at the same time become part of a country known as the United States. Theirs is the great American story, set years before the first waves of Irish, Italian, and German immigrants excited native born Anglo-Americans into Know Nothingness. Creole society also distinctly contrasted with American mores in that it put fewer constraints on women; Creole women could and did own property, possess assets separate from that of their husbands, and act as successful and respected business owners (15).

Creole is a term of Portuguese origin, which refers to a native born, whether African or European person born in Louisiana. Specifically, in Louisiana they were descendents of French and Spanish settlers of 1700, Native Americans or of African descent, who formed a group known as Creoles. The latter include both Blacks and Whites. They share a common European heritage, including the French language and the Catholic religion.

As for their culture, Louisiana culture was different from the other parts of the United States due to the French and Spanish influences. It was a very rich culture, based on traditions and values. Moreover, it is said that despite the large influx of Americans, the Creoles in Louisiana continued to preserve their unique culture even fifty years after statehood at the time of the Civil War (5). Eventually, Art and music were a central part of their culture. As far as family in Louisiana was concerned, it was the core of the Creole society. It was based on the teachings of Catholicism. Families lived in close proximity and married between them. Accordingly, marriages were arranged between fathers.

In the Creole society, Morlas argues in her abstract that women in Louisiana were different from women in the rest of the United States in their language, religion, legal system, and traditions. She adds that Catholicism provided them with “the Blessed Virgin Mary, a powerful model of female authority and virtue absent in the Protestantism dominant in the rest of the country at the time” (49). The coming section will explore marriage in the Creole society to understand better the dilemma that Edna suffers from along with her society.

1.2. What are the Black Folk Society's Expectations from Women?

Zora Neale Hurston's novel is based on the Black Folk Culture. Throughout the novel, Hurston gives a great deal to both the African American culture and women's issues from the age of slavery to the construction era. It is through her characters that she enlightens us

with her ideas about the Black culture and the African heritage. In addition, the status of women in the two different eras is clearly depicted. Further, her anthropological studies are clearly apparent in her work. As Cox says in his dissertation, "Understanding the intertwining of Zora the artist and Zora the anthropologist remains integral to deciphering the folk world of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Hurston, an anthropology student of Franz Boas, should be lauded for the historical value of *Their Eyes*, as an elegy to a folk culture on the verge of disappearance" (20).

Hurston in her depiction of the Folk culture says, "I know I cannot straighten out with a few pen-strokes what God and men took centuries to mess up. So I tried to deal with life as we actually live it" (ibid). From her words, one understands that Hurston tried to mirror reality as it is, by melding elements of the past with distinct indications of a modernizing New South (ibid).

Moreover, in her well-known foreword to Robert Hemenway's biography of Hurston, Alice Walker cites "racial health" as "the quality [she] feels is most characteristic of Zora's work . . . , a sense of black people as complete, complex, *undiminished* human beings, a sense that is lacking in so much black writing and literature" (qtd in Conzett 72). Paterson, in his book *Zora Neale Hurston and a History of the Southern Life*, argues that it is through Hurston's writing that we know about the past and the present, "to understand what she meant, we must enter imaginatively into the world in which she lived, into a particular time in our country's past that formed the contours of Hurston's lived experience" (7).

The term "Southern", according to James C. Cobb, in his book *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*, refers to the sociocultural and geographic distinctions that differentiate the south from the North (9). The South was inhabited by both the Whites and

Blacks. The latter were not newcomers to America, but their existence there is rooted through the history of slavery.

Slavery can be described as the ownership, buying and selling of human beings for the purpose of forced and unpaid labor. Like most other regions in the world, slavery existed in America since ancient times. It took a variety of forms and included men, women and children. Basically, slaves were transported from Africa to America through the middle passage of the triangular trade. They were considered as a property in the hands of white men.

As far as slave women were concerned, they suffered from a double oppression. On the one hand, they are females and on the other hand they are black. In other words, they were victims of their sex and race. Consequently, this led to the subjugation of their bodies through rape and violence. African American women had to endure the threat and the practice of sexual exploitation. There were no safeguards to protect them from being sexually stalked, harassed, or raped, or to be used as long-term concubines by masters and overseers. The abuse was widespread, as the men with authority took advantage of their situation. Even if a woman seemed agreeable to the situation, in reality she had no choice. Slave men, for their part, were often powerless to protect the women they loved.

Women experienced all sorts of violence and those who tried to confront the whites gained a strong admiration for their courage,

Since the days of slavery, black women have resorted to violence to protect themselves and their own. Female slaves who had the courage to confront their masters and mistresses earned the admiration of their communities. It was not unusual for women and men to consult their African beliefs to find both solace and justice in a world that provided them neither (Paterson 96).

In 1900s, Black women's roles in the South were not easy because most of the south's economy was based on agriculture when they had to work alongside men. In addition, women's main responsibilities centered on the domestic sphere; they were busy with the household, raising the children, cooking the food, as well as working in the field when needed. However, despite all their efforts, black women had no voice in legal matters. Therefore, any abuse they faced would not be taken into consideration by the courts. So, the only way to deal with abusive issues was to survive them the best way they could.

II. Women's Oppression in *The Awakening*:

II.1. Marriage and Patriarchy in the Creole Society:

Marriage is the sacred union that ties between men and women. In a patriarchal society, men and women have different roles. Men are required to be strong and represent the heads of a family. Moreover, masculinity in a patriarchal society plays a great role in the formation of males' identity. They are expected to play their role perfectly, because they are "not permitted to fail at anything they try because failure in any domain implies failure in one's manhood" (ibid). Indeed, when a man fails in his role as a patriarch, he is seen as feminine, "whenever patriarchy wants to undermine a behavior, it portrays that behavior as feminine" (ibid). For this reason, men try to preserve their image of masculinity and dominance as defined by their society.

As for women, their role is very limited. It consists of taking care of their husbands, their children and the household. In a patriarchal society, a woman's greatest wish is to marry and have children. She is not allowed to partake in any business, which means she should not be able to take care of herself financially, "male power [must insinuate] itself

into the psyche of women, teaching them to collaborate in defining themselves as subordinate to, and dependent on, men" (*ibid*).

In the nineteenth century America, when a woman conforms to the social rules mentioned before, she is seen as a true woman. According to Butler, relations between the sexes are based on hierarchy and they are consolidated by identity formation that requires the conformity to the social norms. Indeed, the nineteenth century established some criteria and conditions of womanhood. This term is not applied for any woman, but only those who conform and respect those rules. In a patriarchal society, it is required that a woman should prioritize the welfare of her family and suppress her wants and needs. In other words, she should occupy herself by her domestic role as a wife and a mother.

Concerning wives in the Creole society, Shaffter states that "Creole women are without superiors; loving and true, they seldom figure in domestic scandal" (138). Also, they generally, "are good housekeepers, are economical and industrious" (*ibid*). In addition, these women had to follow strict rules and mores and they were limited by the role of wife and mother. Thus, they were responsible for preserving their culture.

Basically, in the Creole society, the husband was the sole guardian in traditional Creoles marriages, and was given custody of children in a divorce. Indeed, women of this era possessed few options. For instance divorce and remarriage laws became stricter around the year 1900, which made more difficult for women to ask for divorce (Bomarito 9). Strow provides us with some statistics about women and divorce:

In 1900, 43.5 percent of single women worked, while only 4.6 percent of married women worked. Overall, 75 percent of all working women were unmarried. At the turn of the century, culture dictated that married women be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic. The few married women who tried to take on careers often found the balance of domestic duties and work to be

precarious at best. "Marriage bars" existing from the end of the 19th century through the beginning of the 20th century kept many married women out of the labor force and caused numerous women to quit working at the time of marriage. (Ibid).

Throughout *The Awakening*, Chopin portrays different types of women and the different perception of their roles as wives and mothers. Thus, this enables the reader to compare and contrast between them and judge Edna's Character and behavior. In her *Reading Chopin through French Feminist Theory*, Worton Michael describes mother-women as the ones who idolize their children, worshipped their husbands, and most importantly, "esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels"(110).

Edna is a wife and mother in her late twenties. She lives in a Creole Catholic society with her husband and two sons. She lives in a patriarchal environment, where men control women through economic and social forces. Edna marries with the older Mr. Pontellier, because she believes that he thinks differently on how a woman should be treated in a relationship. Moreover, she is trying to defy her father because he refuses Léonce for being a Catholic.

Like any woman who is engaged in marriage, Edna expects to conduct a happy life with Léonce, "there was a sympathy of thought and taste between them [...] He pleased her; his absolute devotion flattered her" (Chopin 31). However, she is disillusioned to find that her husband equals her father; both of them are patriarchs.

At the beginning, she feels comfortable in her marriage to Léonce, though her marriage puts an end to the passion of her youth. In fact, before her marriage she has experienced

many previous relations with other men. Lee R. Edwards, writing about Edna's infatuations, says that "the warmth aroused by these men [...] could never blaze in reality; her marriage to Léonce signals her acceptance of the chilly deadliness of life" (*ibid*).

Accordingly, as a Creole wife and mother, Edna realizes that her marriage is a set of responsibilities, since she is expected to fulfill certain social obligations. She is the responsible of managing her household. In addition, like all Creole women, each Tuesday, she receives the wives of her husband's associates in her house. These receptions are basically related to her husband's status. Adding to this, she is a mother of two sons; Raoul and Etienne. This means that she is responsible of her children's nursing, raising, and education. Besides, they need her care, love, and tenderness.

Adele Ratignolle is another figure in the novel, who represents the ideal wife in the Creole society. She submits to the behavior of a wife that is prescribed by her society. She enjoys her role and likes to manage her household herself. She is described in the novel as the "embodiment of every womanly grace and charm" (Chopin 18). She is devoted to the welfare of her family. She shows interest to both her husband and children. For instance, it is illustrated in the novel when "Ratignolle spoke "[h]is wife was keenly interested in everything he said, laying down her fork the better to listen" (Chopin 82). As for her children, she is very fond of them. The narrator says:

She stood watching the fair woman walk down the long line of galleries with the grace and majesty which queens are sometimes supposed to possess. Her little ones ran to meet her. Two of them clung about her white skirts, the third she took from its nurse and with a thousand endearments bore it along in her own fond,

encircling arms. Though, as everybody well knew, the doctor had forbidden her to lift so much as a pin (27).

As for Mademoiselle Reisz, she is a single woman whose main concern is her music. She is a pianist who functions as Edna's guide in art. She explains to her that a true artist is the one who has the soul that dares and defies. Reisz is depicted as a woman who denies her femininity and who adopts instead masculinity. Chopin illustrates that she has no patience for the crying of babies and has a body which is marked by "ungraceful curves and angles that gave it an appearance of deformity" (116).

II.2. Marriage and Motherhood:

In 1977, Julia Kristeva pointed out in *Stabat Mater* that the virgin Mary, who for centuries had been "the central icon of self-sacrificing motherhood, was becoming less and less appropriate a model for women in the late twentieth century and in 1979, in "woman's time", she stressed that "motherhood is creation in its highest form, an activity that entails being deeply attentive to a child, bonded to it in enveloping gentleness and in a love that is forgettable of the self" (qtd in Beer 110).

Significantly, the Creole mother idolized her children and worshiped her husband as it is illustrated here, "A mother's relationship with her children is usually very close, loving, caring with a constant pampering of the children. Chopin describes Creole women, ". . . were women who idolized their children, worshipped their husbands, and esteemed it holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels" (Chopin 16).

Interestingly, Madame Ratignolle, represents the epitome of the conventional Creole mother-woman. She perfectly plays her role as a wife and mother. She has been married for seven years and has three children and is expecting another one. Unlike Edna, she is very happy with her pregnancy. Streater Kathleen views that Chopin employs Adèle in the novel to demonstrate a Creole woman who shows a kind of resistance. Her conformity to the patriarchal rules gives her a strength and feminine identity.

Indeed, Butler suggests that gender is related to the difference between individuals. Adding to this, she argues that only those who conform to the social rules are given full identity and considered as normal. In other words, she aims to suggest that identity is related to gender, which means to performance. It is what you do in a given period of time and in a certain social milieu that reflects your identity. Streater argues that many critics relate Adele with passive femininity and domesticity. This interpretation values Adele's status as a mother and as a domestic angel (7). She adds that Adele is lacking selfhood because she chooses to be a mother (8). In the essence, she is denied her subjectivity. According to Butler, those who conform to the patriarchal rules are denied of their subjectivity.

In addition, even her performance of music is played for the sake of her children as this quote from the novel indicates, "She was keeping up her music on account of the children, she said; because she and her husband both considered it a means of brightening the home and making it attractive" (Chopin 27).

Clearly, though Edna loves her children, she, at the same time, views them as a burden. In short, she considers motherhood as a pressure. It is very clear that she keeps herself distant from her children, as the narrator illustrates," The children appeared before

her like antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days' (151).

Eventually, Edna and Adele's conversation about self-sacrificing motherhood reveals the difference between them, though they both share the same position as mothers, "the two women did not understand each other" (Chopin 27). It is through Adele that one observes Edna's lack of a motherly affection towards her children. For instance, Adele enjoys her pregnancy and is happy in her marriage. Edna's behavior towards her children is depicted through the novel as follows:

"She was fond of her children in an uneven, impulsive way. She would sometimes gather them passionately to her heart; she would sometimes forget them. The year before they had spent part of the summer with their grandmother Pontellier in Iberville. Feeling secure regarding their happiness and welfare, she did not miss them except with an occasional intense longing. Their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself. It seemed to free her of a responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which Fate had not fitted her" (24).

In addition, one should consider the fact that she does not even address her children by their name. Instead, she views them as a responsibility that prevents her happiness and well-being. Her behavior is noticed by everybody that is why Leonce interferes and claims that she is not doing her role, "Mr. Pontellier does not feel that Edna is successfully fulfilling her duties as a mother and wife: He reproached his wife with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. If it was not a mother's place to look after children, whose on earth was it?" (Chopin 15).

II.3. Marriage and possession:

Human beings are born free. Both male and female have their own rights. During the era of slavery, slaves were treated as commodities; they were sold, whipped, and prevented from freedom. After slavery, people were freed. However, one category is still struggling to liberate itself from being one's possession. In marriage, men are regarded as the ones who replace the white masters and women as slaves. The latter suffer from the fact that their own husbands treat them as possessions not as free human beings.

Clearly, throughout the novel, Mrs Pontellier is a victim in the hands of her husband Leonce. Though he showers her with material satisfaction, but he views her as one of his possessions, "he greatly valued his possessions, chiefly because they were his, and derived genuine pleasure from contemplating a painting, a statuette, a rare lace curtain - no matter what - after he had bought it and placed it among his household gods." (Chopin 50). Accordingly, even his wife is considered as one of his properties.

Christina R. Williams argues that Edna's femininity is best illustrated by her interaction with her husband, which suggests the objectification of the heroine through the male gaze. When Edna returns from the shore, Leonce "fixed his gaze" on his wife and regards her "as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage" (Chopin 4). She clarifies that the emphasis on his perception of her establishes a male gaze that objectifies Edna as a woman (4_5 scholarcommons.sc.edu).

As a matter of fact, women had no control over themselves and were perceived to be nothing more than a property in the hands of men. When Edna discovers that she is a property, she asserts that a wedding is "one of the most lamentable spectacles on earth" (Chopin 87). Furthermore, she even refuses to attend her sister's wedding. At this point, one understands that she denies all the principles of marriage, as if she is the spokeswoman

on behalf of all women who experienced patriarchy. Moreover, she cannot see her sister as a property in the hands of a man.

Even for Robert, she is not willing to be his possession though she loves him," I am not 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 (143). It is apparent that she refuses to be treated as a property, but as a human being. In addition, her refusal to be possessed by a man reflects her desire to take revenge through possessing Robert, whom she uses as an object to satisfy her needs. "She could picture at that moment no greater bliss on earth than possession of the beloved one" (148).

III. Women's Oppression in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

In this part, I will try to demonstrate how Janie is oppressed in her marital life by her three husbands. Each of them has his own way to exercise patriarchy over Janie through domestic violence, silence, and sexuality.

III.1. Domestic Violence:

Domestic Violence is defined as a result of "jealousy, anger, coercion, humiliation, threatening" (Tasharoffi 1). From this definition, we can say that domestic violence is both physical and psychological, including physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse. Its severity depends on the partner's consistent efforts to maintain power and control over the other (ibid). Lynda Marie Jordan claims that women are the major victims in heterosexual relationships. According to her, most African American women experience domestic violence by their African American men (ibid).

Janie Crawford survives three marriages, and all of them are characterized by domestic violence. In each marriage, she undergoes domestic violence differently and for different reasons. Tasharofi notes that Hurston skillfully reveals her heroine's undergoing of domestic violence by her husbands, each in different ways (ibid).

Janie and Killicks:

Through her marriage with Logan Killicks, Janie experiences domestic violence because of jealousy. Jealousy is one of the main factors that lead to domestic violence, “it is most likely the primary cause of spousal violence” (qtd in Tasharoffi 3). When Logan doubts about Janie's betrayal, he uses verbal violence and he feels insecure and jealous. He says “Ah thought you would 'preciate good treatment. Thought Ah'd take and make somethin' outa yuh . . . you won't git far and you won't be long, when dat big gut reach over and grab dat little one, you'll be too glad to come back here” (Hurston 29-30).

Moreover, his use of verbal violence extends to a point of threatening Janie to kill her, he says:

Don't you change too many words wid me dis mawnin', Janie, do Ah'll take and change ends wid yuh! Heah, Ah just as good as take you out de white folks' kitchen and set you down on yo' royal diasticutis and you take and low-rate me! Ah'll take holt uh dat ax and come in dere and kill yuh! You better dry up in dere! Ah'm too honest and hard-workin' for anybody in yo' family, dat's de reason you don't want me! . . . Ah guess some low-lifted nigger is grinnin' in yo' face and lyin' tuh yuh. God damn yo' hide! (30).

Tasharoffi argues that because Logan believes that by providing her with material security, Janie is satisfied and will never look at another man. In other words, because he

ignores what love and marriage mean, he thinks that what a woman needs is just material security (ibid). But, as it will be discussed in the next chapter, Janie needs more than material security; she needs true love and self-fulfillment.

1. Janie and Joe Starcks:

As a result of Logan's oppression, Janie decides to leave him in search for better love with Joe Starcks. When she leaves Logan hoping to find happiness with Joe, the narrator says: in her way, she finds that "[t]he morning road air was like a new dress" (Hurston 31). Joe promises her to live a better life with him, "You behind a plow! You ain't got no mo' business wid uh plow than uh hog is got wid uh holiday! You ain't got no business cuttin' up no seed p'taters neither. A pretty doll-baby lak you is made to sit on de front porch and rock and fan yo'self and eat p'taters dat other folks plant just special for you" (29). Janie's innocence and strong belief that marriage brings love leads her to another journey of self-consciousness with Jody as she calls him.

However, she soon discovers the emptiness of her dreams. At the beginning of their relationship, he treats her well. However, she later finds herself for the second time at the mercy of an abuser. Unlike Logan, Joe uses both verbal and physical violence out of jealousy and of patriarchal stand. Out of jealousy, he often reminds her that a woman's place is to stay at home. In his store, he permits Janie to be there just to enjoy her beauty, but only for himself. His jealousy is apparent when he forces her to cover her hair, "she was there in the store for him to look at, not those others" (43).

Furthermore, he always resents her youth. As she becomes older, he considers her useless, "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" (182). As a patriarch, he considers women unintelligent and this leads Janie to feel disdained for being a woman.

Tasharoffi observes that the reason behind the mistreatment of his wife is due to his position in the community (3). So, he feels inferior if he really expresses his true emotions to her. Moreover, he claims that both Joe and Logan believe that love drives to an end (8).

Janie and Tea Cake:

Though their relationship is based on true love, Janie experiences with Tea Cake another form of domestic violence. But, it is different because it is the result of his love, passion, jealousy, and fear of losing her. To start with, his jealousy arouses when Mrs Turner brings her brother to Joe's store to be introduced, then "Tea Cake had a brainstorm: Before the week was over he had whipped Janie. Not because her behavior justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her assured him in possession. No brutal beating at all. He just slapped her around a bit to show he was boss" (Hurstons 99). He justifies his beating in this quote, "Ah didn't whup Janie 'cause she done nothin', Ah beat her to show dem Turners who is boss. Ah set in the kitchen one day and heard dat woman tell mah wife Ah'm too black fuh her. She don't see how Janie can stand me" (99). At this point, his beating is just to put an end to that burning fear that torments him, to "relieve that awful fear inside him" (147).

Moreover, love and passion play a great role in domestic violence. According to Marks, Tea Cake's beating of Janie is a sign of passion and love. Similarly, Racine agrees that a slap is socially acceptable because it is used to express possessive love and authority (qtd in Tasharoffi 7). To have a better understanding of the domestic violence that occurs between Janie and Tea Cake, an illustration from the novel would be very insightful, they "wrestled on until...their clothes had been torn away...doing things with their bodies to express the inexpressible" and wake up teasing and flirting over the whole event" (Hurstons 137).

Another important factor behind the use of domestic violence is to show the power of masculinity over the passivity of femininity. Jackson affirms that Hurston presents domestic violence between Janie and Tea Cake in an “insensitive and maladaptive” way by promoting “incorrect assumptions of romanticism and normal masculinity” (wmst2010.blogspot.com). Hurston hints that Tea Cake’s action aims to show that he is the boss (147). Bealer too confirms that Mrs Turner threatens Tea Cake’s masculinity in a society based on hierarchies. Thus, he responds in a physical and aggressive violence by beating her. The reason is that because his feels that his masculinity is threatened, and he wants to show to all the community that he is masculine and adequate too (aar.slu.edu/).

III.2. Marriage and Silence:

Both men and women are human creatures, and what differentiates them from other creatures is the mind. Both of them have ideas and yearn to express them. They are either feelings or points of view. Freedom of expression is the right to express one’s self freely and the listener should respect and listen carefully to the speaker. However, in a patriarchal society, this right is suppressed for women and voice is given to men. Men can give orders, express points of view, make claims and insults which women are supposed to hear, obey, and willingly or unwillingly accept. Their silence, though, shows a sign of obedience, but it also hides their inner crying, their disgust, and their suffering. The reason is that their men prevent them to express their burning feelings. Moreover, when a woman dares to speak, she is seen as a disobedient wife who does not show respect to her husband and society in general. For all these reasons, most women prefer to be silent.

Though Joe’s big voice attracts Janie, but later, it becomes her source of suffering. Her marital life with him turns to be a prison in which Janie is imprisoned and tied by the shackles of his patriarchal belief. The latter stifles her development by silencing her and

keeping her in isolation. Indeed, Joe prevents Janie from actually participating in the community, Janie expresses her disgust through her words, “You’s always off talkin’ and fixin’ things, and Ah feels lak Ah’m jus’ markin’ time” (Hurstons 43).

Since she is the mayor’s wife, Janie wants to share her ideas with the people of the community, but, Joe prevents her to take part in the conversation:

Janie loved the conversation and sometimes she thought up good stories about the mule, but Joe had forbidden her to indulge. He didn't want her talking after such trashy people. 'you'se Mrs. Mayor Starks, Janie. I god, Ah can't see what uh woman uh yo' stability would want tuh be treasurin' all dat gum-grease from folks dat don't even own de house dey sleep in. Tain't no earthly use. They's jus' some puny humans playin' round de toes un Time . . . Joe would hustle her off inside the store to sell something. Look like he took pleasure in doing it (43).

When the mule that Joe buys for Janie dies, a funeral is held for it, but Janie is prevented to attend it. Joe claims,

“You wouldn't be seen at uh draggin'-out, wouldja? Wid any and everybody in uh passle pushin' and shovin' wid they no-manners selves? Naw, naw. . . . Ah'm uh man even if Ah is de Mayor. But de mayor's wife is somethin' different again. Anyhow they's liable tuh need me tuh say uh few words over de carcass, dis bein' uh special case. But you ain't goin' off in all dat mess uh commonness. Ah'm surprised at yuh fuh askin’” (46).

From this passage, we understand that Joe reminds her that she is a woman, and he is a man, so he is the one who has the right to speak to the community. Bressler views that for Joe, Janie’s resignation and acceptance are a tacit compliance because she does not express any objection. He adds that Joe’s purpose behind this is to make out of her “angel

in the house” who conforms to the virtues associated with patriarchal femininity. Therefore, it is very clear that she has no right to think about her needs and wants. In other words, her rights are replaced by the duties she has to fulfill towards Joe.

Joe does not cease to insult her, as if her being a woman is the reason behind her oppression. It is revealed when Jody looks for some documents and does not find them, accusing Janie of stupidity:

"You ain't put it where Ah told yuh tuh. If you'd git yo' mind out de streets and keep it on yo' business maybe you could git somethin' straight sometimes." And then he adds: "Wid you heah, Ah oughtn't tuh hafta do all dat lookin' and searchin'. Ah done told you time and time agin tuh stick all dem papers on dat nail! All you got tuh do is mind me. How come you can't do lak Ah tell yuh?" Janie replies: "You sho loves to tell me whut to do, but Ah can't tell you nothin' Ah see!" Then again Jody tries to answer back: "Dat's 'cause you need tellin', it would be pitiful if Ah didn't. Somebody got to think for women and chillum and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none theirselves." Then Janie says: "Ah know uh few things, and womenfolks thinks sometimes too," Jody answers her : "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 51).

As it is clear through his words, we notice that his harshness reveals that she has no right for error. What is striking is that Janie tries to respond to his comments about women and what is to be a woman, she cannot convince him because his patriarchal notions about the inferiority of women are traced in his mind. So as a result, she submits, “she fought back with her tongue but it didn't do her any good. . . . He wanted her submission and he'd keep on fighting until he felt he had it” (51).

III.3. Marriage and Sexuality:

Human beings are "social animals", who have their own desires for sexuality in heterosexual relationships. Sexuality is a natural instinct in which a husband and wife express their committed love not only with words, but with the language of their bodies through the intimacy of sexual relations that characterize any heterosexual relationship. Both husband and wife have the right to be sexually fulfilled and have the duty to satisfy the other partner. As a matter of fact, sexuality plays a major role in marriage, not just because it deals with satisfaction, but because it may create problems too when one of the partner or both cannot reach satisfaction.

Marriage is an institution which ties men to women legally. The relationship that combines them is a heterosexual one. Before marriage and in most cultures, sexual relationships are not allowed. For this reason, people marry to have access to these relationships and to reproduce on earth.

Hurston's *Their Eyes were Watching God* is a novel which deals with sexuality as one of the prominent themes and issues that are of great importance. It weaves together several issues related to sexuality as a natural and social construction. The representation of sexuality throughout the novel is implicitly depicted through metaphors in a naturalist approach.

At the age of sixteen, Janie witnesses a sexual awakening. Her awakening is related to nature. As she is in a garden, she observes the bees in a pear tree, "she saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight" (Hurston 11). It is under that tree that Janie answers the burning feelings of her sexual desire when she kisses Jonny Taylor. *In Myth and*

Violence in Their Eyes Were Watching God, Wenger compares Janie's kiss to Adam and Eve in the Eden," and just as Adam and Eve enter into life when they eat of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, so Janie's "life commence[s] at Nanny's gate" (Prizedwriting.ucdavis.edu). This scene leads Janie to raise many questions in her mind and starts to imagine about love. Bealer in *Kiss of Memory: The Problem of Love in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*, describes the scene as follows:

This impulse is fully realized in her reading of the bees surrounding the blooming tree. The interaction between bee and bloom undoubtedly suggests sexual contact between a man and a woman. The bee is imagined as masculine, while the "thousand sister-calyxes" are termed feminine, corresponding to the bees' actual function of pollinating the plant. The image of the "dust-bearing bee" sinking into "the thousand sister-calyxes" which "arch to meet the love embrace" is strongly sexualized, undoubtedly a metaphorical representation of sexual penetration (Bealer aar.slu.edu/).

Though sexual desire is natural, Nanny punishes Janie for the kiss. As a very experienced woman in life, Nanny knows well what sexuality means for women and black women in particular. The horrors of her rape as well as Janie's mother cannot allow Nanny to see her granddaughter in the same situation as them. In other words, she views sexuality as threatening to Janie's future, Janie "half believe[s]" that her grandmother has not seen her, and her grandmother starts approaching the subject. Finally, she confronts her and "slap[s]" her "face violently" (Hurston 13).

Nanny starts thinking about marrying Janie as soon as possible. She thinks that marriage is the sole shelter where a woman can find security. Moreover, she knows well

that erotic love for women is infused with shame and pain, “because Nanny's experiences with institutionalized racism and pervasive misogyny teach her that for black women, erotic love is infused with shame, physical pain, and unsatisfying labor” (Bealer aar.slu.edu/). Love and sex are constructed by society and when one tries to disobey the social rules, pain is inevitable. Bealer argues that Nanny's life story exposes “the sociohistorical factors that render black women particularly vulnerable to racist and sexist abuse, and casts that abuse as an inevitable consequence of falling in love” (ibid). He adds that Nanny believes that her granddaughter can escape both her mother and grandmother fate through money and love (ibid).

Furthermore, Nanny believes that sexual desire in a racist and sexist society is harmful to Janie, “de thought uh you bein’ kicked around from pillar tuh post is a hurtin’ thing” (15). She adds, “Ah can’t die easy thinkin’ maybe de menfolks white or black is makin’ a spit cup outa you” (19). From her words, we notice that she fears both white and Black men, because sexuality leads women to be sexually abused. Contrary to Janie, she considers love as “de very prong all us black women gits hung on. Dis love! Dat's just whut's got us uh pullin' and uh haulin' and sweatin' and doin' from can't see in de mornin' till can't see at night” (22). For this reason, she forces Janie to marry an old man, Logan Killicks. She tries to convince her that Logan is the best man in the community, “Tain't Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have, baby, it's protection” (14). His particularity is because he “often-mentioned sixty acres” (20). She adds, he is “de onliest organ in town, amongst colored folks” (22). Her aim is to offer her a “high ground” (16).

At the beginning, Janie disapproves, but later on accepts unwillingly. Though Janie expects to find a “bee for her blossom” in her life, the social norms of her society prevent her from sexual satisfaction, “Janie's optimism about heterosexual love's power to provide

pleasure will be disappointed by the intrusion of social hierarchies” (ibid). Janie’s entering her marital life puts an end to her childhood and starts her journey towards maturity.

A house is where a couple lives under one roof and where happiness is spread in every corner. However, Janie’s house is “absent of flavor” (21). Her marital life with Logan is characterized by disgust. Logan does not represent the love for her blossom because he fails to provoke sensory pleasure or physical desire in Janie. Instead, he “desecrat[es] the pear tree” (Hurston 13). Consequently, Janie is now able to answer the question, “did marriage compel love like the sun the day?” (20). She discovers that money cannot make love and marriage without love does not bring happiness.

Despite her bitter experience with Logan, Janie’s optimism to find love leads her to another journey with Joe Starcks. However, she is faced again with a man, whose main concern is his business, “get mo' business in 'em and not spend so much time on foolishness” (47). Again, she realizes that he is not the love of her blossom, “he did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon. He spoke for change and chance” (28). From this passage, we notice that her dream does not come true, but it remains a dream, “but looking at [the ruins of her image of Joe] she saw that it never was the flesh and blood figure of her dreams” (68).

Bealer notes that Janie has experienced the dissatisfaction that a loveless marriage brings. He adds that despite this, she still ignores what Nanny tries to impart to her: “sexual pleasure can be poisoned by racism and sexism”. He also claims that Janie’s marriage to Joe makes her able to recognize that marriage, sexual desire, and erotic satisfaction are inseparable (Bealer aar.slu.edu/).

Joe also values his social position and monetary gain more than romance. All that he desires is to provide Janie with a position of respect within the community, as the mayor’s

wife. As a result, this inhibits the couple's sexuality, "Joe's behavior makes her life seem empty and mechanical" (Tasharofi 4).

Adding to social position, Joe's unceasing demand for her submission stifles the couple's sexuality, "So gradually, she pressed her teeth together and learned to hush. The spirit of the marriage left the bedroom and took to living in the parlor. . . . The bed was no longer a daisy-field for her and Joe to play in. It was a place where she went and laid down when she was sleepy and tired" (Hurston 51).

. **Conclusion:**

Throughout this chapter, I have endeavored to depict both the Creole and the Folk societies' expectations of women in order to understand the social constraints of each society. Furthermore, I have exposed women's plight and oppression in *The Awakening*. I have explored the protagonist's oppression in marriage under patriarchy. Then, I have dealt with one of the societies restrictions of women's role as mothers. Furthermore, I have disclosed women as possessions in the hands of men.

Likewise, I have attempted to study other forms of oppression in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* so that I can reveal a wide range of married women's suffering. I highlighted three forms of oppression. To start with, marriage and domestic violence is one of the most important themes in the novel, which deals with physical and verbal violence against the protagonist. Then, I have attempted to voice Janie who suffers in silence. My aim was to delve deep into her tormented soul in order to show that how submissive women suffer in silence. To end with, sexuality, which is one of the most important issues in each marital life. Throughout this section, it is worth pointing out that Janie suffers from lack of sexual fulfillment with her first two husbands. Hence, it becomes clear that women

are not only made to please and satisfy their husbands, but women have also the right to be satisfied as men.

In the next chapter, I will tackle the protagonists' attempt to break free from patriarchy in order to achieve personal growth. Hence, I will trace their development through an examination of their decision to abandon their families, sexual independence, search for identity, and quest for love.

Introduction:

Having dealt in the previous chapter with the societies' expectations in each novel, my focus will shift into the protagonists' awakening. At the beginning, they submit to the role of wife under patriarchy. However, later on, they decide to create their own world different from the outside. I shall show how these characters, coming from different cultures and experiencing different forms of patriarchy, take the same paths to establish their own identity. As I have discussed earlier, both of the female protagonists feel disappointed in their marital life. In this respect, this shift from obedient wives into powerful females is the result of their awakening, after they discover the hollowness of their marriage. Therefore, I will discuss how the female characters discover their identities. Then, I will show their different paths towards their female gender identity.

In the first section, I will tackle the protagonists' stages of awakening that pave the way to their liberation. Then, I will move to their decision to break free from oppression by abandoning their roles and all that oppresses them. They take refuge following the voice of their tormented spirit. The third section for its part will be devoted to the study of sexual autonomy in the novels. Then, I will disclose their quest for their identity. To end with their attempt to redefine the concept of love, in marriage versus material security. Special attention will be given to this concept in terms of nature versus culture. Adding to this, I will show how Robert and Tea Cake represent the Romantic heroes in the novels.

I. The Stages of Awakening:**I.1. The stages of Awakening in Chopin's *The Awakening*:**

Throughout this section, I find it necessary to expose the main factors behind Edna's awakening. I aim to explain the reasons behind Edna's behavior that pushes her to react

according to her will and interest, including the sea and art. Before this, I will show how both the novel's title and the protagonist's name are informative.

I.1.1. The Sea:

One of the reasons behind Edna's rebirth and awakening is her attraction by the sea. The latter offers her release from all her duties and obligations. At the beginning, she is unable to swim, but her strong will to learn and her strong insistence to exceed all the obstacles such as fear makes her able to do so perfectly. It might be understood, from the writer's comments in the following passage:

That night she was like a little tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its power and walks for the first time alone...she could have shouted for joy. She did shout, of joy, as... 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. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before (Chopin 27).

This absolute power does not come at random. It establishes a sense of her ability, power, freedom, and most of all her feeling of her ownership. Here, she tastes the power of authority to control both her body and soul, which before did not belong to her. Clearly, this suggests the enjoyment of her new found self. Moreover, she becomes eager to achieve more than what she is possibly able to do and what no one has done before through her strong will.

Edna's midnight swim is much more than a victory for her body and soul. Furthermore, it is through the sea that she discovers her body, including its softness, "the voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, and 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” (35). In other words, she experiences a feeling of excitement. From this, she recognizes that she can transcend all the possibilities and obstacles she faces.

Another significance of the sea in the novel is its representation of solitude. Edna finds herself at ease at the beach because she is alone and far from all earth, people, and noise. It is through the sea that she finds refuge from all her roles. So, the sea represents power, solitude, and freedom without limits and control.

I.1.2. Art

The events of Edna’s awakening take place on Grand Isle. She is greatly influenced by the people she meets there. Mademoiselle Reisz is among them; she is a single and successful woman, who is a talented pianist. Although, the patriarchal society prioritizes a married and a mother woman, she prefers to remain single. Mademoiselle Reisz favors art for marriage because music is the sole interest in her life. Indeed, her music contributes in Edna’s awakening. Moreover, Mademoiselle Reisz encourages Edna to be strong by warning her that an artist’s talent is not enough, but he or she should possess a “the courageous soul”: “the soul that dares and defies” (84).

Furthermore, she encourages her to break with the masculine conventions and establish instead her feminine world. She represents a model of the Creole woman who disregards all the social constraints that are related to her femininity imposed on her through her rude behavior with the others.

Edna’s longing for her being a successful artist causes her a conflict between her maternity and work as well as between her gender; feminine versus masculine. Indeed, her husband complains about her abandoning of her household and children due to her practice of art. For her, painting is a form of expression and part of her imagination. Besides, it becomes a source

of her income through which she becomes financially independent and adopts masculine behavior.

Contrary to Edna, Adèle plays music for the sake of her children. In addition, she and her husband agree that music brightens their house, “she was keeping up her music on account of the children, she said; because she and her husband both considered it means of brightening the home and making it attractive” (27).

I.2. The stages of Awakening in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

I.2. 1. The Photograph:

Janie’s first awakening to her identity starts when she is six years. Janie’s innocence and ignorance of the racist world she lives in, leads her to think that she is a white person. It is until she sees the photograph that Nanny shows her that she realizes her race and identity as a black girl. Janie expresses her self-discovery when “a man come long takin’ pictures and without askin’ anybody, Shelby, dat was de oldest boy, he told him to take us” (Hurston 21). When the pictures return, she looks at herself and does not recognize that she is the “real dark little girl with long hair.” From this experience, Janie exclaims “Aw, aw! Ah’m colored!” (21).

I.2.2. The Pear Tree:

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston explores Janie’s awakening to her sexuality in Nanny’s garden under the pear tree. There, Janie is fascinated by the bees pollinating flowers, “she saw a dust bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this is marriage! She has been summoned to behold a revelation” (15). From these statements, we might understand that she is discovering the relationship between the bees as well as between humans.

Interestingly, Janie thinks about heterosexual relationship, and immediately, she relates it to marriage. As Kimberly Rae Connor explains, “This spiritual-natural vision comes to represent the vision Janie searches for throughout her life as she reaches for the horizon. In a sense, this vision is her moment of awakening to the possibility of conversion, when she becomes aware of the kind of life she wants to lead” (qtd in Lawrence 92). It is important to note that Janie traces her life from her observation of the scene. She is convinced that love is attainable through marriage. From then on, she starts her journey in search for love and self-fulfillment.

Consequently, this leads to her personal growth from an innocent girl into a mature woman, aware of her needs and wants. Lawrence agrees that Janie’s life transforms from childhood into adulthood. He says, “once her internal transformation occurs, Janie can no longer think like a little girl; instead, she thinks of love and longs to reach the “horizon” (93).

God, by definition, knows when Adam and Eve have eaten of the forbidden fruit. Yet, like Janie’s grandmother, God temporarily feigns ignorance, first calling out to Adam as if unaware of his whereabouts, and then asking innocently how Adam came to know he was naked. And Adam, like Janie, apparently believes, or half believes, that God does not know he has eaten of the fruit. And finally, just as Janie’s grandmother punishes Janie by slapping her and forcing her to marry Logan Killicks, so God curses Adam and Eve (ucdavis.edu).

From this overview of the protagonists ‘stages of awakening, one can deduce that they are witnessing a self-discovery that drives them to adventures and challenges of the social constraints. As a matter of fact, humans are competitive animals who strive to reach happiness through various means. This is the case with Edna and Janie who become aware of their existence and their ability to lead a happy life instead of being objects in the hands of men.

II. Abandoning in *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

Women are a source of tenderness and love. Moreover, they are very sensitive and need someone who will acknowledge their importance and value. As far as patriarchy is concerned, for a long time women were subject of all kinds of oppression. Their souls are imprisoned in a male dominated world as birds are locked in a cage. Thus, they are haunted by the spirit of freedom looking for any opportunity to escape.

II.1. Abandoning in *The Awakening*:

Although marriage in general, and in the Creole society in particular focuses on women's roles as wives and mothers, Edna Pontellier submits to these roles, then decides to change the direction. She chooses her path towards self-fulfillment and happiness through abandoning.

As I have already mentioned, her spiritual journey starts on Grand Isle, a summer resort for wealthy New Orleans Creole families. There, she meets people on the beach, at parties and dining, like Mademoiselle Reisz, Adèle Ratignolle, and Robert Lebrun. All of them contribute in Edna's awakening in different ways.

When Edna returns home, she realizes that she is a human being and experiences a subtle subversion to the stifling expectations of society. Therefore, she transforms from an adult person into a child who is newly born to life. She experiences rebirth and starts a new life with a strong optimism. Indeed, Edna breaks all the shackles of patriarchy, ignores all her roles, and starts to think only about herself. Throughout the course of her abandoning of responsibilities, "every step which she took towards relieving herself from obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual. She began to look with her own eyes; to see and to apprehend the deeper undercurrents of life. No longer was she content to 'feed upon the opinion' when her own soul had invited her" (Chopin 124).

It might be understood from the writer's comments that she is no more Edna the obedient wife, the tender mother, and mostly the Creole woman. She expresses her thought in the

narrator's words, "She thought of Leonce and the children. They were a part of her life. But they need not have thought that they could possess her, body and soul." (116). Therefore, Edna is no more a "mother-woman" (16).

Abandonment consists of physical and emotional detachment. As it stands, Chopin makes us realize throughout the novel that Edna abandons her husband. Accordingly, a wife cannot refuse her husband's commands. More specifically, Edna refuses her husband's demands, by withdrawing herself from him sexually and feels that her body is her own and can give it to anyone she wants, "I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose" (20). This statement proves that her insistent demand for her right to self-ownership reflects the neglect of her husband's demands for sexuality.

Another important point has to do with Leonce. He becomes angry and expresses his bewildering to Dr Mandelet in his words, "she's got some sort of notion in her head concerning the eternal rights of women; and you understand we meet in the morning at the breakfast table" (43). Evidently, her actions do not fit the society's expectations nor the husband's will.

Indeed, as will be discussed hereafter, one could argue that Edna, early in the novel, is not emotionally very close to her children. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that she does not enjoy her role as a mother because she wants to serve herself by showing her individuality and place in society. Bommarito notes that it is her strong desire to live freely that affects her role as a mother. The other reason behind her odd behavior towards her children is because she takes profit from the successive absences of her husband. In addition to this, she feels released from her children's staying with their paternal grandmother in Iberville, "feeling secure regarding their happiness and welfare, she did not miss them except with an occasional

intense longing. Their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself” (Chopin 33). .

Though she realizes her position as a mother, Edna tries to replace the motherly feelings by thoughts of independence. It is made clear through her conversation with Adele that “she had been all her life long been accustomed to harbor thoughts and emotions which never voiced themselves....Edna had once told Madame Ratignolle that she would never sacrifice herself for her children, or for any one” (24). She adds that she can give her money and life to her children, but she cannot give herself (24).

Chopin, in some respects, makes it clear that Edna decides to break free from motherhood by abandoning her role and ignoring the presence of her children. The narrator illustrates Edna’s lack of motherly affection towards her children in the following words, “feeling secure regarding their happiness and welfare, she did not miss them except with an occasional intense longing. Their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself” (33).

A striking scene is when Leonce is on business on New York, Edna undergoes physical abandoning by moving to another house of her own. The pigeon house, as she calls it, is a place far away from any reminders of her family life so that she can enjoy her freedom and isolation. Chopin describes the feelings that Edna feels towards her new house: “The pigeon-house pleased her...every step which she took toward relieving herself from obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual” (156).

From the Western society’s point of view, when a mother abandons her children, she is “invariably stigmatized as monstrous or emotionally stunted or inadequate. As for the society’s judgment, she is harshly judged, without allowing her “the right to an individuality and identity that emerges from within themselves rather than from their roles as mother/ wife-

woman” (Worton 110). Similarly, Edna is denied of her identity because she is displeased with this restriction of roles. Instead, she yearns to trace her life according to her will.

II.2. Abandoning in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

Likewise in Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie experiences a transition from submission into an awakening and self awareness of her individuality. As Edna, Janie is ill-treated by her first husband, Logan Killicks. Early in the novel, she obeys him and performs according to her grandmother’s instructions. However, she is awakened to search for love and break free from both Logan and Nanny.

Janie’s discomfort with Logan is a result of lack of infatuation with him. Despite his position in the community, material security does not bring love. Janie realizes that “marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman” (Hurston 25). According to Nanny and the community’s point of view, a married woman should serve her husband and obey his commands. In contrast to Janie, Nanny considers that love is not as important as financial security in a marital life. She expresses her idea in the following passage, “You com heah wid yo' mouf full of fullishness on uh busy day. Heah you got uh prop tuh lean on all yo bown days, and big protection, and everybody got tuh tip dey hat tuh you and call you Mis' Killicks, and you come worrying' me 'bout love” (23).

As an oppressed woman, Janie is looking for any opportunity to escape from the hollowness of her marriage. Her journey of abandoning starts when Joe appears down the road and attracts her attention. He is described as a “stylish dressed man with his hat set at an angle that didn't belong in these parts” (27). Bealer Tracy L. notes that it is the threat of “compulsive labor” that makes Joe's handsome appearance and a future of “reaping the benefits” of his ambition fascinating (aar.slu.edu/).

It may then be understood that a humiliated person is always in need of someone who will cure injuries. This is exactly the case with Janie whose inner crying is heard by Joe. Again, she travels in a spiritual voyage in search for true love. He promised her to make her a princess in his heart, “You ain't never knowed what it was to be treated lak a lady and Ah wants to be de one tuh show yuh” (29).

Owing to the emptiness of her first marriage and following her will to find love, Janie runs away with Joe and leaves Logan. Tasharofi argues that Janie's choice to run off with Joe, foreshadows her ability to triumph over patriarchal oppression throughout her life (8).

III. Quest for Sexual Autonomy:

Human beings are known to have a desire for sex. Men and women marry each other for the reason to enjoy their sexual relationships and give birth to children. However, this can only be done legally through marriage. Otherwise, society's rules are present to intervene.

In Chopin's *The Awakening*, the protagonist Edna experiences a sexual awakening not with her husband, but with other men. Similarly, Janie experiences the same at the age of seventeen with a young boy. However, the two are prevented from sexual satisfaction in their marital life. For this reason, they take another path in search for self-fulfillment with other men. The main problem they face is the constraints of their societies. They are not permitted to show any sign of feminine sexual desire except for their husband.

III.1. Quest for Sexual autonomy In *The Awakening*:

We all know that since we live in a community, our environment does not cease to influence us; this is very much the case of Edna. In fact, Edna's attempt to escape the constraints and obligations of the New Orleans society comes as a result of many outside

forces. High notes that when a person is influenced by outside forces, the area of choice and responsibility are shortened. Nietzsche also highlights the presence of other forces inside each person. The other force he refers to is “the will to power” (qtd in High 99). He adds, this “will or desire to control oneself, other people and the world around one is “beyond good and evil” and “it is a force of nature like hunger, or sex” (ibid).

As Edna is not satisfied with her husband sexually, she starts to look for her animalistic satisfaction. In the previous section, I have attempted to discuss Edna’s abandoning of her husband and children. Here, I shall focus on her journey for sexual autonomy. It is obvious that Chopin tackles the issue of sexuality explicitly. In this respect, many reviewers condemned the novel when it was published.

Before I explore Edna’s sexual autonomy, I should mention that Edna has already experienced sexual relationships before marriage and during her marriage with two other men, but differently. To start with, Edna has relations with some young men before she marries Leonce. In fact, like any girl, she has traced in her mind a picture of a tragedian. Basically, Edna’s relationships to other men she knew before her marriage to Leonce are based on imagination rather than reality. Here, the conflict lies in her obsessed belief in illusion.

As a married woman, Edna does neither find happiness nor self-fulfillment. Simons describes her disappointment in these words, “Edna comes to realize that this scheme offers no fulfillment of spiritual longing because there is no part of herself or her world that is not governed by natural forces”. Leonce disgusts her because he gives no time for her. He is always busy with his business. On the whole, then, Edna needs importance and communication, because her animalistic instinct is always in need of him. Dr Mandelet describes her as "palpitant with the forces of life.... She reminded him of some beautiful, sleek animal waking up in the sun" (70). Moreover, Léonce is unable to understand his wife’s need.

Heilmann Ann, in *The Awakening and New Woman*, stresses that her sexual impulses urge her towards adultery because her husband “appears blissfully unaware that she might have such desires” (91).

Another important point has to do with Robert who plays a major role in Edna’s awakening. Though she is married and a mother of two children, she and Robert develop a powerful connection. The two spend long hours walking and talking together. Most importantly, they even flirt together as he used to do with all women each summer. However, Edna is exceptional. Both of them experience true love and excitement that Edna misses in her marital life with Leonce. Now, her awakening is sexual.

In addition, Edna experiences sex with Alcée Arobin, who is known to be a cad and an experienced seducer of women. It is when she moves to the Pigeon house, which is hers that she flirts with him. However, there is a difference between Robert and Arobin. Basically, with the first, her infatuation is confused with love for mysterious reasons. However, with the second, Edna is just entertaining him and answering her sexual desires that Leonce could not. Simons notes too that Edna’s relation with him is not based on love, but on stimulation, “He sometimes talked in a way that astonished her at first and brought the crimson into her face; in a way that pleased her at last, appealing to the animalism that stirred impatiently within her” (78). Indeed, even with Arobin, she does not cease thinking about Robert:

The thought of him was like an obsession, ever pressing itself upon her. It was not that she dwelt upon details of their acquaintance, or recalled in any special or peculiar way his personality; it was his being, his existence, which dominated her thought, fading sometimes as if it would melt into the mist of the forgotten, reviving again with an intensity which filled her with an incomprehensible longing (54).

All in all, Edna attempts to acquire the unfettered life of a man which comes in the form of her affair with Alcee Arobin. In this relationship, Edna exemplifies masculine sexual

freedom. However, something in Edna's nature makes it impossible for her to be fully satisfied with the masculine lifestyle. In other words, it is the nature of her sex; being a female differentiates her from male's autonomy. In this regard, Butler argues that, in addition to nature, femininity is socially constructed, so Edna is tied by her society too.

Like men, Edna attempts to find self-definition by creating a third lifestyle option and acting as a man. She sees that men are allowed to sexual fulfillment, while society does not expect from them to bear or care for their children, but to develop a personality and individual self through participation in the business world (ibid). Edna, for the first time, feels a sense of masculine freedom when Leonce goes to New York and Raoul and Etienne go to Iberville to stay with their grandmother. "A radiant peace settled upon her when she at last found herself alone. Even the children were gone" (Chopin 80).

III.2. Quest for Sexual Autonomy in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

As it is mentioned before, Janie at the age of seventeen experiences a sexual awakening under the pear tree. However, her natural desire for sex is suppressed by her grandmother's fence. As a result, Janie is forced to marry an old man in order to find material security and shelter from the white and Black male gaze.

To start with, Nanny expresses her anxiety towards Janie's sexuality as "lacerating her Janie". She tells Janie, "guidin' yo' feet from harm and danger" so that "de menfolks white or black. . . [won't be] makin' a spit cup outa you" (26, 27, 37). Nanny manages to convince her by narrating her story as well as Janie's mother story, "So you don't want to marry off decent like, do yuh? You just wants to hug and kiss and feel around with first one man and then another, huh? You wants to make me suck de same sorrow yo' mama did, eh? Mah ole head ain't gray enough. Mah back ain't bowed enough to suit yuh!" (28).

With her first marriage, Janie hopes to meet the love of her blossom. Unfortunately, her marriage turns to be a great disaster. All her needs and wants are suppressed by an old man who only seeks to use her as a mule. Indeed, he forces her to work alongside with him in farms. In addition, Janie is prevented from sexual satisfaction. It is clearly depicted when Janie asks her grandmother for advice, “Ah wants to want him sometimes. Ah don't want him to do all the wantin” (41). Janie describes Logan and expresses her disgust with him, “Some folks never was meant to be loved and he's one of 'em.... Ah hates de way his head is so long one way and so flat on de sides and dat pone uh fat back uh his neck.... His belly is too big too, now, and his toe-nails look lak mule foots” (42).

Now, being with Joe, the man of her dreams, Janie enjoys her marriage. After six months, her marital life deteriorates. She realizes that her marriage is mistaken. Joe like Logan does not represent her blossom. In addition to the domestic violence, silence, and possession, Janie lacks sexual satisfaction. Janie, in the following passage criticizes him and reminds him about a woman's need:

"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-belliesround 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' briches, you look lak de change uh life" (122-23).

Janie's sexual behavior, despite its modern attitude towards female sexual needs, is rooted in traditional conventions such as marriage and true love. He adds that Hurston makes it clear through, Pheoby, Janie's friend who reinforces these conventions when she encourages Janie to right these rumors even while condemning the town's people's gossipy habits, telling her to

“make haste and tell ‘em ‘bout you and Tea Cake gittin’ married, and if he taken all yo’ money and went off wid some young gal” (17).

IV. Quest for Female Gender Identity:

Identity is what differentiates one person from another. It refers to some personal bases which reflect who the person is and give him or her dignity. However, it can turn to be a conflict when it is suppressed by a society’s constraints. Thus, the person struggles to establish his identity, though he may breach the social mores.

Women strive to regain their identity in a male-dominated world where their rights are violated. They emerge from deep darkness into a world of their own where equality between men and women is spread. However, this is not an easy task. These brave women face obstacles and sometimes find themselves in a big dilemma between their own desires and society’s rules.

Both Edna and Janie in *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, respectively aim at creating their own world. They become rebellious against their environment and start to hope for the better.

IV.1. Quest for Female Gender Identity in *The Awakening*:

Throughout the novel, Chopin portrays a woman searching for her own identity in her own way. She creates a world different from a male-dominated world. It is constructed according to her own will and perception of life. This quest comes from an oppressed soul and body in search for freedom and recognition of existence as a human being.

Edna ‘s longing for identity is related to her will and wants, not according to the society’s construction of femininity. The narrator says, “Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her

position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her” (Chopin 6).

When a society limits individuals’ role, choice becomes very limited. Edna finds herself in a crossroad, unwilling to suppress her personal identity as an individual. This feeling of individualism is almost apparent in the works produced in the turn of the nineteenth century. Those writers were mainly interested in the portrayal of the individual’s will, which embodies the choice between the good and evil, as this quote shows, ”writers at the turn of the century were beginning to think about traditional social morality in a new way. Traditional values had been based on the idea of individual responsibility: the individual can and must choose between good and evil. But, now writers were asking whether the individual could really make such a choice” (High 98).

Edna’s quest for her individuality requires a lot of challenge. To claim for her identity as an individual means to cease serving the others, to abandon roles, and to think selfishly. Moreover, Edna’s identity as an artist is another quest. She discovers her talent in painting through Madame Ratignolle, who nurtures her and even inspires her to paint. Adèle’s beauty attracts Edna when she is seated on the beach. Though Edna is not a professional artist, Chopin portrays her as a gifted one.

Mademoiselle Reisz, a pianist, sows the seeds of Edna’s awakening as an artist. She makes out of her a rebellious woman who defies, challenges, and adventures. This is clearly apparent when Reisz tells her that to be a true artist means to have a soul that dares and defies. She says, “The artist must possess the courageous soul,” it is “the soul that dares and defies” (Chopin 71). Indeed, Edna takes her advice for granted and starts her battle for the sake of her artistic expression. She devotes all her time for painting which hampers her thought to think

about something else except of her inner imaginative world which she expresses not through words, but through images.

Another important figure in the novel that plays a great role in Edna's identity formation is her lover Robert. In this regard, he appreciates her paintings and he encourages her for self-expression which her husband does not. He encourages her self-expression with his easy way of talking about himself.

To start with, it is through the sea that she discovers the beauty of her body. The narrator says, "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 13).

Furthermore, she also discovers her feminine sexual identity not with her husband, but in the arms of other men. Her sexual desire awakens first with Robert. The latter gives her time for company and communication. Moreover, he invokes the dormant passions that are waiting for awakening. Her second sexual affair is with Alcée Arobin, who succeeds in seducing her. The latter is known to be an experienced seducer of women. Edna enjoys sex with him in her Pigeon house where she feels free to answer her animalistic instinct.

Sexuality plays an important role in marriage. Both males and females have their own sexual desires. But, men are known for being active while women are seen as passive. For this reason, little attention is given for women's sexuality. Moreover, women view themselves as objects used for reproduction. My intent is to unveil women's sexuality as a natural instinct as well as a right to be satisfied.

IV.2. Quest for Female Gender Identity in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

Janie's quest for self-identity starts from the early stages of her childhood and continues in adolescent years, to be found in her maturity. Like Edna in *The Awakening*, Janie undergoes a journey of self-awareness through different steps. But, one should bear in mind that she reaches her full identity as a woman and a black person after tasting the bitterness of each experience she witnesses.

Janie grows up with her grandmother Nanny. She is prevented from the motherly affection due to the disastrous experience of raping her mother by a black teacher. At the age of six, she becomes conscious that she is different in terms of her race. She discovers this through a picture which reflects reality that black is black and can never turn to be white. Adding to her black skin, Janie is called in school by her teacher and white children "alphabet". The latter suggests that she is denied of her own identity since one's name takes part in his or her identity.

At the age of seventeen, she discovers her feminine sexual identity under the pear tree. She experiences love with the first kiss of Johnny Taylor. As a result, this natural emotion does not cease to awaken her eroticism and from then on she starts searching for her dream. The most important event that helps in the succession of her life is when Nanny, as a conservative woman, represents the social norms by preventing Janie from her desire at the expense of nature versus culture.

Afterwards, Janie enters her marital life with hopes of love. However, her first husband Logan does not know what love really means. She submits to the roles he imposes to her. As I have already mentioned, she feels disgusted by her husband's lack of importance to her sexual needs. As a result, she searches in the horizon for her lover to come. In other words, Janie claims for her rights to autonomy and self-respect and rejects victimization.

In this respect, she runs off with Joe Starcks. Janie becomes convinced that “two things everybody’s got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin’ fuh theyselves” (Hurston 183). It is significant to note that Janie is disappointed again. Her femininity is suppressed by Joe who believes that a woman’s place is home, and that a woman has neither voice nor role in a society. Consequently, his harsh treatment affects her sexuality as a woman in need of sexual fulfillment.

At the end, her feminine sexual identity is reached through Tea Cake. The latter offers her all that a woman needs and wants. He answers her call for love and the meaning of life that are lacking in her previous marriages. Contrary to Logan and Joe, he appreciates her femininity and her physical appearance when “she wears the new blue dress” (111). Tea Cake brings back joy to Janie’s face and creates a young woman physically and emotionally. He states “ole age first wid somebody else, and saved up you ‘young girl day to spend wid me” (172). It might be then argued that Janie does not regret her quest for her identity which she achieves after a long struggle with life.

After Tea Cake’s death, Janie returns to Eatonville. At this stage, she experiences another quest for identity in a black community where gossip is the people’s main concern. Eventually, all the inhabitants start to gossip about what happens to her during her journey. She manages to re-establish her identity in the community through story telling. She narrates the whole of her story to Pheoby, her friend who will then transmits the story to the people. It is important, however, to notice that her choice to reveal her story is a sign of her success and not defeat. Further, the aim behind this tale is to spread a message for all the black women in the community that they should live for themselves (Tasharofi 8).

Identity is what differentiates one person from another. It refers to some personal bases which reflect who the person is and give him or her dignity. However, it can turn to be a

conflict when it is suppressed by a society's constraints. Thus, the person struggles to establish a powerful one by various means, though it may breach the social mores.

Women strive to regain their identity in a male-dominated world where their rights are violated. They emerge from deep darkness into a world of their own where equality between men and women is spread. However, this is not an easy task. These brave women face obstacles and sometimes find themselves in a big dilemma between their own desires and society's rules.

Both Edna and Janie in *The Awakening* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, respectively aim at creating their own world as respected women, who love and be loved in return. They become rebellious against their environment and start to hope for the better.

V. Quest for Romantic Love versus Material Security:

Individuals may marry for several reasons including, social, emotional, financial, spiritual, and religious purposes. Marriage is always influenced by rules, parental choice and individual's desire. However, love is the basis of each marital life. They are interrelated and once love is absent, the thread that ties a couple cuts. Romantic love is defined as a passionate love which ties between lovers with an intimate bond. The lovers devote themselves to one another and ignore everything for the sake of their love to reach fulfillment.

My aim in this section is to emphasize the importance of love in a marital life. Moreover, I will attempt to show how material security can never bring happiness. Both protagonists in the novels disregard wealth for love. It is until they experience loveless marriages that they discover what true love means.

V.1. Quest for Romantic Love in *The Awakening*:

The reason why Edna defies her father to marry Léonce remains unknown. It is just referred to it as “purely an accident”. However, regarding Léonce’ status in society, one can assume that Edna marries him for his wealth. Bomarito remarks that “her marriage was a match based on position and wealth rather than on attraction or love, and, from the passing mention of Edna’s having married Léonce six years prior to the novel’s opening, we know that she was only twenty-two when she married him” (248).

Despite the fact that Edna marries Léonce with her own will, their marriage is not based on love. In her marital life, she enjoys all the opportunities that a woman longs for. She has two children and lives in a luxurious house. He represents the financial love and materiel security in Edna Pontellier`s life, who “liked money as well as most women, and accepted it with no little satisfaction” (Chopin 7). He usually sends her luxurious presents to Grand Isle which is mistaken by the other women as romantic gesture. “[...] all declared that Mr. Pontellier was the best husband in the world. Mrs. Pontellier was forced to admit that she knew of none better” (ibid). However, Edna feels particularly ill-at-ease in her husband's home for the several reasons mentioned in the previous chapter.

It might be claimed, therefore, that Chopin is criticizing marriages that are based on financial advantage between higher classes at the end of the nineteenth century. The point is that a partner may encounter stronger feelings with someone else (Bomarito 31). Therefore, the relationship between the couple becomes threatened by betrayal and may lead to adultery as well. However, as will be discussed hereafter, one could argue that for this reason Edna falls in love with Robert.

Robert is the Romantic hero in the novel with whom Edna falls in love. In fact, she abandons all her husband’s wealth for the sake of love. It becomes obvious that for many years, Edna is thirsty for romantic love because Léonce is always absent, and even his

presence, there is no communication between them. Edna tells Adèle, “what should I do if he stayed at home? We wouldn’t have anything to say to each other” (Chopin 121-2).

Léonce is not an abusive man, but he just as many Victorians, “expects total surrender to the traditional role of a wife and mother” (Hytönen 60). Edna expresses that she is fond of him, but she does not love him. She realizes that “no trace of passion or excessive and fictitious warmth colored her affection, thereby threatening its dissolution” (Chopin 63).

When Edna meets Robert on Grand Isle, they enjoy their time together. However, their love and passion are restricted by their society, since Edna is a married woman. It would, therefore, be quite inappropriate to love her as Adele warns him. For this reason, Robert goes away to Mexico. During his absence, Edna thinks about him and realizes that she is in love with him, “for the first time she recognized anew the symptoms of infatuation which she had felt incipiently as a child, as a girl in her earliest teens, and later as a young woman” (94).

Accordingly, her feelings towards Robert are unequal to those towards Léonce. They “no way resembled that which she felt for her husband, or had ever felt, or ever expected to feel” (96). Edna’s love for Robert is described as “an obsession, ever pressing itself upon her” (104). What attracts her to him is “his being, his existence, which dominated her thought...which filled her with an incomprehensible longing” (104-5).

At this stage, Edna violates the Victorian rules due to her position in society as a wife and mother. But, Edna ignores them and thinks only about herself and her happiness. Hytönen claims that Edna “builds her new identity on the Romantic idea of unification and the maintaining of that identity depends on the support of love” (69). This statement proves that Robert’s love plays a major role in Edna’s awakening as a woman.

V.2. Quest for Romantic Love in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

In Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the protagonist character Janie dreams for love and self-fulfillment since her childhood. As a matter of fact, love has different interpretations, but the love she is longing for consists of both emotional and physical love to reach the "horizon". During her life, she undergoes several relationships which originate from her grandmother Nanny's insistence to provide her security. She experiences three types of marriage. Each is different from the other and all of them contributed in Janie's development of her identity in a racist and sexist society. As time goes on, she discovers that her first two marriages do not offer her the love she expects. Janie expresses her disappointment in her words, "mah mamma didn't tell me Ah wuz born in no hurry. So whut business Ah got rushin' now? Anyhow dat ain't whut youse mad about. 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. And if dat's whut you call yo'self doin', Ah don't thank yuh for it" (Hurston 30).

Nanny, Janie's grandmother, is a former slave who has experienced the bitterness of slavery as well as the violence of rape. In addition, her sorrow is engraved in her heart and mind when her daughter Leafy is faced with physical violence and rape by the schoolteacher. In addition, Nanny is the sole guardian of Leafy's daughter, Janie, and responsible of her well being. According to all these events, Nanny views that a black woman's security is accessible only through marriage with a man who can provide her with material security, whereas love in marriage takes second place to protection. For this reason, she plans Janie's marriage at the age of seventeen.

Hence, Nanny's arrangement for Janie's marriage to an older man, Logan Killicks, is not based on Janie's agreement. But it is due to Nanny's yearning to provide her granddaughter security from being a "spit cup" for white folks and for men of whatever color. She tries to convince Janie when she says, "he "Got a house bought and paid for and sixty acres uh land right on de big road [. . .]! Dat's de very prong all us black women gits hung on" (22).

Duck highlights that the novel “explicitly links this reification and discipline of individual desire to capitalist values and practice: Nanny's efforts commodify Janie herself, as she is set in the market-place to sell” (17). Indeed, Logan possesses a huge amount of land that is considered in the time of Jim Crow as the cornerstone of freedom (Patterson 118). Despite this, he looks to Janie “like some ole skull-head in de grave yard” (Hurston 28). Moreover, because Logan takes her into an isolated place, where there is no human relationship, Janie lives a lonely and a loveless life shaped by work and worry. In addition to this, he treats her as a mere investment to him (Patterson *ibid*). His intention is to make Janie a “fieldhand or work animal, and when Janie does not obey his demands and commands Logan presents himself in behavior and word like a slave master with insults and threats of violence” (Lester 2).

Few months later, he stops “talking rhymes to her”, stops marveling at her long, luxurious hair, and starts complaining that she is spoiled (Patterson *ibid*). From this account, it becomes very clear that the protection Nanny seeks for her granddaughter cannot be attained through material security. Janie’s search for love and fulfillment is not found in her first marriage to Logan. Instead, she becomes a slave in the hands of not a white but a black man.

Her strong feelings that blossom her, before she marries Logan, are still present. A year later after the marriage, she meets with Joe Starcks or as she calls him Jody. He is described as a tall and handsome with a big voice and fine cloths. All these mannish features attract Janie and drive her to elope with him unreluctantly. The narrator states:

Every day after that they managed to meet in the scrub oaks across the road and talk about when he would be a big ruler of things with her reaping the benefits. Janie pulled back a long time because he did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon (Hurston 29).

The couple runs off to a town called Eatonville. In this town, Jody becomes the mayor. For a time, Janie starts to taste the love she is seeking for, from her young age, thinking that this is the first and last man in her life. However, this love turns to be a far-wretched dream.

Interestingly, Joe promises Janie for a position, but not for love. He tells her, “you behind a plow! You ain't got no mo' business wid uh plow than uh hog is got wid uh holiday! You ain't got no business cuttin' up no seed p'taters neither. A pretty doll-baby lak you is made to sit on de front porch and rock and fan yo'self and eat p'taters dat other folks plant just special for you” (29).

Throughout the novel, romantic love is the protagonist's ultimate goal. The protagonist struggles against the view that love is unimportant as compared to respectability and material security. The protagonist's vision of true love is associated with innocence. Janie is convinced that love is an essential part of life.

Janie expresses her disappointment when she tells Joe, “and now you got tuh die tuh find out dat you got tuh pacify somebody besides yo' self if you wants any love and any sympathy in dis world. You ain't tried to pacify nobody but yo' self. Too busy listening tuh yo' own big voice. . . . All this bowin' down, all dis obedience under yo' voice – dat ain't whut Ah rushed off down de road tuh find out about you” (60). Tasharofi stresses that both Joe and Logan think that all that a woman needs is provided to Janie in terms of money. However, they ignore what really a woman needs to lead a happy life (8).

After the death of Joe, Tea Cake appears to achieve her dreams. Her last marriage is with Tea Cake. He is fifteen years younger than Janie. He is known as a romantic hero. He gives her a chance to express herself freely, “he allows her freedom to experience life as she sees fit without feeling intimidated” (Lester). They form a couple based on true love and comprehension, “as Janie and Tea Cake live as partners and soul mates participating in life

harmoniously, their relationship is the envy and curiosity of gossipers and onlookers. They fish, go to baseball games, play checkers, cook meals together. He even teaches her how to shoot a gun” (ibid).

He is a working man without power or position. When he meets Janie, they decide to move to Jacksonville. He represents an ideal lover, who takes care of Janie. The narrator describes their relationship as based on equality, love, and respect. His kindness is apparent when he teaches her how to play checkers, hunt, and fish, and all the activities that excludes her. In contrast, Tea Cake inspires Janie's personal growth by encouraging her. In addition, he creates a loving relationship that satisfies Janie's spiritual needs, rather than focusing on the material wants that had defined her two previous marriages.

Tough he beats her and steals her money one day, she remains faithful to him. The reason is because he has “de keys tuh de kingdom” and “the depth of Janie’s love for Tea Cake sustains her through these moments of emotional duress, for Tea Cake has made her feel the vulnerabilities of love and passion, something she never experienced meaningfully with her two previous husbands” (ibid).

Conclusion:

Throughout this last chapter, I have covered the different paths that the protagonists take towards personal growth. Their emergence from submission to defiance occurs at many levels. I have first, exposed the stages of their awakening. Then, I have attempted to follow their paths starting from abandoning of their position and role as wives. Moreover, I have examined their quest for sexual autonomy. Besides, I have traced their quest for female gender identity which they aim to create according to their will and wants. In the last section, I focused on the matter of love in marriage in which I have argued that love is the basis of happiness.

Throughout my dissertation, I have attempted to make a comparison between Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. I tried to show how and why the protagonists of the two novels experience a personal growth after a long experience of oppression in their marital lives. Therefore, I attempted to disclose the circumstances that lead them to transform from submission to defiance of the societies' expectations. Adding to this, I have put a stress on female expectations and disillusionment that lead them to long struggles.

Even though the novels under study are separated by time and space, my objective has been to demonstrate how they negotiate women's issues in patriarchal societies. The female authors put light on the body and soul of oppressed women in their marital lives. Actually, the projection of patriarchy in the two novels takes different forms, but has some points in common which all revolve around the fact of being a woman in the midst of a male-dominated world. My strategy for analyzing women's personal growth is achieved through tracing the different paths that oppressed women lead to emerge as independent women. The two authors unveiled women's plights, needs, and wants and have excellently shown how society's rules affect women's lives.

Throughout this study, I have argued that women's plight in marriage is rooted from the early ages. Their suffering is silenced in their body and souls. Women become disappointed as a result of their husbands's mistreatment that is characterized by power over the passivity of women. The latter are weakened by their sex and gender. In fact, the female protagonists in both the novels are considered as possessions at the mercy of men, but each is ill-treated in different ways. In addition, their freedom is tied by the shackles of marriage in a patriarchal environment.

General Conclusion

Through analyzing patriarchy in the two novels, I have revealed that patriarchy differs from one society to another. In addition, social class plays a role in defining the type of patriarchy that each woman experiences. Moreover, I have arrived to the conclusion that each man is different from the other one in terms of showing his masculinity over women's femininity. This study demonstrates how social rules restrict women's roles by expecting them to be dutiful, obedient, and silent wives. Moreover, this analysis shows that the protagonists' aim behind undergoing journeys of self-consciousness is to quest for their rights, identity, and love that misses in their marriage. The most important point that I tried to cover is to unmask women's expectations, needs, and desires in marriage, which are suppressed by society and ignored by men. In other words, their choice is very limited: whether to accept the burden or fight with a courageous soul against the social norms to win this decisive battle.

To start with, Kate Chopin in *The Awakening*, represented the plight of women in Louisiana at the turn of the century. These women are restricted by the Creole society's expectations, which limited their role of wife and mother. For instance, they are restricted to take care of their children and worship their husband. Adding to this, they have no right for disobedience or neglect of duties. All that they have to do is to bury their desire and whisper in silence in order to be seen as an angel in the house. Besides, they do not have the right to think about themselves, their inner thoughts cannot be expressed, and their desire is dormant.

As I have demonstrated throughout this study, my focus lies in analyzing the protagonist character in the novel. The latter is valued as her husband's possessions and not as a human being. Her identity is suppressed in a luxurious house where her soul and body are tied to serve the others without return. She is married to a middle class man who does not cease reminding her about her roles. He also tries to shower her with material satisfaction while her body is objectified.

General Conclusion

On the other hand, Hurston portrays a black woman who undergoes three marriages. Each is different from the other, but all of them are characterized by a patriarchal stand. The protagonist marries in search for love and fulfillment with each husband. However, in a patriarchal environment, love is not given importance. Her marital life is characterized by hollowness and suffering. As I have demonstrated, her scars are engraved on her body and soul, which reflect her experience with domestic violence, both physical and verbal. Domestic violence is the result of many reasons. The most important ones include jealousy as she is a very beautiful woman with a black hair that attracts every eye. Another factor refers to the males' attempt to show a kind of masculinity and power over the weak Janie. Clearly, when a man takes care of his wife, his masculinity is threatened.

Furthermore, I found it necessary to explore feminine sexuality in the novel. I have situated my study in this tabooed site of sexuality. As I have revealed, women's sexual desire is suppressed by male oppression. Janie looks for sexual satisfaction from her early stages of her sexual awakening. However, after two marriages, her expectations that marriage brings love and self-fulfillment turn to be a disillusionment. She is not given importance as a woman in need for recognition and value.

Another important issue in the novel is men's attempt to silence women and prevent them from self-expression for the reason that a woman is unintelligent. As I have demonstrated, Joe, throughout the novel, breaks Janie's wings and prevents her voice to fly above the community's people. He often insults her in front of people and claims that he marries her to be his wife and that she does not know anything like all women.

Though, I have analyzed the literary texts differently in terms of women's oppression in marriage, my study aims to show that patriarchy is universal, but it differs in its forms from one society to another and from one man to another. What is common is that women's

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oppression is due to men's superiority. For this reason, women emerge to ask for equality and their rights as women and wives.

This study proposes a critical strategy for analyzing a unique form of desire for personal growth. I have provided with the most important paths that the protagonists take as a refuge from oppression. My research traces women's personal growth through different stages, including abandoning, quest for sexual autonomy, quest for female gender identity, and quest for romantic love.

To start with, the females' journey starts by abandoning their roles and position in society as wives. The protagonists decide to break free from the oppressive husbands to look for themselves and their inner thoughts. Their reaction and decision come from a tormented soul that can no more resist the burden. Besides, it offers them relief from oppression as a bird liberated after a long waiting for its wings to fly again and enjoy liberty.

Edna, in Chopin's novel, is compared to the caged parrot that is portrayed at the beginning of the novel. It is portrayed as no one understands its language. Similarly, Edna experiences the same experience. No one can understand her actions and behavior. For this reason, she decides to isolate herself from all those who oppress her soul. She abandons the luxurious house, her husband, and most importantly, the children of her own womb.

Janie in Hurston's novel too decides to break the shackles that her first husband, Logan ties her with. She abandons the farms where her body is objectified as a mule. Moreover, she leaves her empty bed where no life exists. Most importantly, she leaves the old man who does not fit her vivid body and spirit.

Adding to this, their bodies are calling for answers that their husbands refuse to take into consideration. For this reason, they strive to impose their sexual autonomy with other men, looking for sexual satisfaction. As a matter of fact, adultery is immoral. However, when

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relating it to nature, it becomes more acceptable to understand the adulteress's actions. Moreover, drawing on the circumstances that push them to commit adultery, one understands that it is out of their will. The main problem lies in their husbands' misunderstanding of women as human beings with naturalistic desires.

Moreover, quest for identity is another aim that pushes the protagonists to undergo some challenges towards their societies. Both the protagonists are struggling against their societies to impose their identities as women. Their struggle takes different shapes. Edna starts to quest for her identity as an artist who has talent to express herself not through words, but through images. Moreover, her feminine sexual identity takes part of her quest as a woman and a human being not as an object without emotions.

Janie, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is also defying the social norms to establish her identity in a white dominated community. She is denied of her identity because she is black. Afterwards, her feminine sexual identity is suppressed too by her grandmother who represents the ideals of the Folk community. Most importantly, she is prevented from her identity with her first two husbands. The latter treats her as a mule not as a human being. She is forced to work and suffer in silence. Her voice remains unheard and her body remains hidden from the male gaze.

The last section of my work is devoted to the study of romantic love that is found at last after a tiring search. Edna experiences romantic love not with her husband, but with her lover Robert. The latter offers her companionship, communication, love, and all that a woman needs in a relationship to a man.

On the other hand, Janie finds too true love with her last husband Tea Cake. He represents the romantic hero who offers her everything that the previous husbands do not. He teaches her to fish, allows her to express herself, and most importantly values her.

General Conclusion

According to my findings and using Butler's theory of sex and identity, I disclosed that women's oppression comes from the society's constraints, which affects their identity as women. She argues that gender is constructed by society which is not stable but changes through time. Furthermore, she notes that only those who conform to the social rules are given full identity by showing a kind of submission and acceptance. In contrast, when one tries to defy and reject them, he or she is denied from identity.

Both the novelists presented us with different characters. Some of them conform to the social rules as something related to their destiny, whereas, the others try to break free. The latter after they are awakened, can no more resist patriarchy. As a result, they start to look for light to go out from darkness, using their own porches to trace their way and make a bridge between oppression to happiness and self-fulfillment.

I want to conclude my study, by illustrating the conflict between reality and desire which makes the novels' ending problematic. As they have challenged their societies, many critics are confused whether the end of the novels reflects the female protagonists' success or failure. What becomes absolutely clear is that to emerge from submission to defiance of the codes requires a courageous soul that dares and defies.

Chopin's novel ends with Edna's suicide. The sound of the sea calls for her body and soul to celebrate her freedom and personal growth. Clearly, she refuses to look back at her miserable situation because she is convinced that to submit after a long struggle means surrender.

Likewise, Hurston's novel ends with Janie's killing her husband, Tea Cake. This occurs when a hurricane takes place in Eatonville and a dog bits Tea Cake. The latter becomes ill and tries to kill Janie. Instead, it is Janie who kills him by a pistol. What is striking is Janie's

General Conclusion

ability to survive by putting an end to her oppression. At the end of the novel, it becomes clear that Janie narrates her story as a kind of celebration of her heroic struggle.

My final findings revolve around women's attempt to be no more dependent on men. Instead, the protagonists have shown that they are human beings equal to men. Obviously, my aim is to show as clear as possible that both men and women have rights and duties in marriage. When duties dominate, a rebellion is necessary to quest for rights. In addition, I hope to make it clear that marriage is fruitful when it is only based on mutual love, respect, esteem, comprehension, and communication both verbally and physically.

The morality that I attempt to convey through my dissertation is addressed to both men and women. Families are destroyed due to all the circumstances that I have explored in chapter two. Women live in silence under the mercy of men. Consequently, as women are the core of each family and family itself is the core of each society, it is very important to look at the basis. So, one should ask the questions, how can we build a strong family and society if women themselves are oppressed? How about educating children as builders of the future by oppressed women? What will be the result of their abandoning?. Is suicide a good solution?. It's high time to think about all these causes and effects and put an end to patriarchy.

As far as men are concerned, I hope that I have managed to delve deep into women's consciousness in order to reveal their inner suffering which men do not know and understand. Therefore, they will be able to understand that even women have their own desires and need satisfaction too. Moreover, this will lead them to take into consideration that women are human beings who need recognition of their roles. Giving women more importance, opportunity to express themselves, and making them feel the beloved ones, will create powerful women with full identity. The latter will ultimately avoid adultery and will try to offer the most they can for the sake of their family, including the husband and children.

General Conclusion

As for women, I want to contribute in raising their awareness that material security is not the core of marriage. However, what is more important is the right choice of a partner with whom she will continue her life forever based on the criteria I cited before. It is very important also to note that it is up to women to end oppression because men can neither feel them nor hear their crying because they are not in their place.

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Resumé

Ma thèse traite les attentes de sociétés patriarcales, les conditions des femmes dans leurs vies conjugales , ainsi les différentes stratégies de leurs identités du genre féminin dans le roman " The Awakening", écrit par Kate Chopin et celui de Zora Neale Hurston nommé "Their Eyes Were Watching God". Ma visée est de représenter la détresse des protagonistes et leurs défis des lois de la société. Les deux se développent physiquement et émotionnellement en cherchant l'amour, l'accomplissement et l'identité. A travers cette recherche, je vais entamer le développement personnel féminin des protagonistes acquis après une longue oppression; souffrance physique et émotionnelle.

Mots-Clés : attentes, patriarcales, identité féminine, détresse, défi, l'amour, l'accomplissement, développement personnel.