

Janie's Self-Discovery Through Her Three Marriages in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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Their Eyes Were Watching God was written by Zora Neale Hurston in 1937. It is the story of the main character, Janie, and her process of self-discovery as a black woman through her relationships with her three husbands. According to Jennifer Jordan, "The novel is seen as a vehicle of feminist protest through its condemnation of the restrictiveness of bourgeois marriage and through its exploration of interracial sexism and male violence" (108). Indeed, Janie survives marriages in which she is expected to obey her husbands even while the men dominate her with violence. Hurston entrusts Janie with the role of a feminist, and through Janie, she protests the unfair treatment of women.

In analyzing Janie, the three husbands are essential. Jordan defines Janie before marriage as someone who "never defines herself outside the scope of her marital or romantic involvements and, despite her sincere relationship with her friend Pheoby, fails to achieve a communal identification with the black women around her or with the black community as a whole" (108). Marriage is an essential part of Janie's process of self-discovery, and her three husbands are undoubtedly a major influence. Therefore, I will analyze what Janie learned, what she gained, and how she grew based on her relationships with her three husbands. Janie learns about the value of life and the importance of raising her voice and fighting through life in her marriages to Logan, Joe, and Tea Cake and grows as a woman. For Janie, her three marriages are often painful, including being treated as a servant, restricted, oppressed, beaten, as well as experiencing the death of a loved one. However, she also gains many things, including confidence, power, status, and property so that she can live on her own.

Before marriage, Janie was immature and naive. Janie grew up in a white-owned home near where her grandmother, Nanny, worked. She did not attend school and grew

up in a small world comprised of only white children and Nanny and she did not even realize she was not white until she was six years old. Janie learned she was black when she saw pictures of herself with the white children she lived with. Not knowing which one in the picture was her, Janie asked “Where is me? Ah don’t see me” (9), which made everyone laugh. Janie had never seen her own face before.

The first time Janie begins to think about marriage is when she is just sixteen years old, spending a spring afternoon under a blossoming pear tree in her backyard. She sees a single bee carrying pollen into a flower and feels that this makes her think about marriage: “She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of 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. So this was marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation” (11). In other words, she thinks that the relationship between a bee and a flower was the same as that between a man and a woman. This is how Janie begins to become interested in the idea of marriage in her imagination. Janie develops the expectation that marriage is something sweet, that love exists, and that it is a happy thing that takes her to a world she does not know.

Nanny’s values about her own marriage conflict with Janie’s imagined values. Nanny’s values about marriage are influenced by Nanny’s own experience of slavery and the tragedy that happened to her daughter. Nanny was born a slave and was treated badly by her white masters. She was forcibly raped by her white slave master, became pregnant, and gave birth to Janie’s mother. She was then beaten by the white master’s wife and almost lost her child, so she ran away in the night alone. Nanny did not want Janie’s mother to go through the same thing, so she made sure she got a good education to become a teacher. But Janie’s mother was raped by a schoolteacher when she was seventeen. As a result, Janie was born. Later, Janie’s mother became a drunk and ran away from home, never to return. Because of this history of suffering due to the selfish actions of white men, Nanny does not want Janie to be demeaned by men, so she tells Janie about her own and Janie’s mother’s experiences with men who treated them badly.

Not only white men, but also black men victimize Nanny. Nanny’s feelings about how both white men and black men abuse black women can be seen in the following passage:

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

This passage shows Nanny's wish for Janie to marry someone who will protect Janie and not let Janie's life be taken advantage of by black men. SallyAnn Ferguson describes Nanny's feelings about Janie's marriage: "Nanny sincerely believes that he will protect the sexually and intellectually awakening teenager from a heritage of adultery and illegitimacy and from a future of economic exploitation and harsh physical abuse" (186). Nanny, although against her will, wants Janie to be happy more than anyone else, and she is convinced that the only way for Janie to be happy is to marry Logan, which is why she went back to her painful past to persuade Janie to do so. Wanting a loving marriage, Janie refuses to marry the man her grandmother has decided that she has to marry, but after listening to Nanny's stories about her life and her mother's life, Janie decides to marry Logan.

Janie's first husband, Logan is the marriage partner who is introduced to Janie by her grandmother, Nanny. Janie thinks that a marriage to Logan will become the ideal Janie wants and she just must follow Nanny's advice. Contrary to her expectations, Janie's first marriage was just filled with complaints about her husband. Janie experiences firsthand what a real marriage to Logan is like and she realizes it is not what she imagined. Janie's marriage to Logan is a chance for him to realize what she wants out of her marriage.

One of the things that Janie wants out of life in her marriage to Logan is love. Love is something that has been on Janie's mind since before she married Logan. Janie asks herself and others the questions, "Did marriage end the cosmic loneliness of the unmated?" (21) and "Did marriage compel love like the sun the day?" (21) in the three days before she married Logan. It shows that Janie values love but never had a chance to know about marriage and love. Based on what she hears from people and her own

speculations, she thinks the following about her future with Logan: “She would love Logan after they were married. She could see no way for it to come about, but Nanny and the old folks had said it, so it must be so. Husbands and wives always loved each other, and that was what marriage meant. It was just so” (21). Thus, Janie makes decisions based solely on what her grandmother and others around her tell her. Janie herself does not understand anything. She herself will learn firsthand how little she knows.

The second thing that Janie wants in her marriage to Logan is equality. Janie is not the target of violence from Logan, but she is made to work all day in the house and fields, and it is not a marriage of equality between the sexes. Logan instructs her to carry heavy firewood and he buys new mules so that she can work with these mules. He also makes disparaging remarks about Janie “If Ah kin haul de wood heah and chop it fuh yuh, look lak you oughta be able tuh tote it inside. Mah fust wife never bothered me ’bout choppin’ no wood nohow. She’d grab dat ax and sling chips lak uh man. You done been spoilt rotten” (26) when she does not do things his way. This condescending attitude of Logan’s frustrates Janie more and more each day.

The third thing Janie wants in her marriage to Logan is to create a future together as a couple. This can be read from Janie’s encounter with her second husband, Joe Starks. Logan, who is already a successful wealthy man, has neither dreams nor ideals, but the still young Joe Starks has the kind of dreams and ideals that Janie is looking for. Janie first meets Joe the day Logan goes to procure a mule for Janie to use. When they meet, Joe is a young man with big ambitions. Janie is attracted to Joe’s passionate talk of ambition, and she begins to superimpose the future that Joe talks about on her own, even to the point of wanting to follow him.

Logan cannot stop Janie from eloping because he cannot fulfill the three things Janie wants in her marriage. Although Janie feels that with Logan, she would never be able to achieve love, equality, or a future together as a couple, she is unable to act. In the end, she chooses to elope, in large part because of Joe’s presence, but also because of Logan’s words. On the evening of the day she meets Joe, Janie approaches Logan about what he would do if she were to leave him and run away. To Janie’s question, Logan replies, “Shucks! Tain’t no mo’ fools lak me. A whole lot of mens will grin in yo’ face, but dey ain’t gwine tuh work and feed 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" (30). Janie asks this question with the final wish that Logan would fight to keep her. However, Logan, who lacks self-confidence and can only talk tough, can only look down on Janie and make fun of her.

If Logan had been honest with Janie, she might not have eloped. The speech from Logan that ultimately prompted Janie to leave the house was:

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! 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. (31-32)

Logan throws away the last chance that Janie gives him. It is Logan's weakness that he cannot honestly say that he does not want to give up Janie because she makes him look big and strong.

Through her marriage to Logan, Janie realizes what she wants from her marriage. What Janie wants in her marriage is a lot of love and equality between husband and wife, to share the fun and create a future together. As a result, Janie chooses to elope with another man. This elopement means her liberation from Logan, but also from her late grandmother who made her marry him and who she could not disobey. It is the beginning of an adventure into a new world that Janie has chosen of her own volition, after having followed a path that someone else had set for her.

Janie learns the importance of speaking her mind and fighting thought life in her marriage with Joe. Janie runs away with Joe because she wants to get away from her first husband, Logan, who made her work as a housekeeper and did not treat her as his wife. Before they get married, Joe is a savior with a dream of success for Janie. However, after they get married, Joe rises to power and imposes his sense of values on Janie, controlling her mentally and by violence. As a result, Janie closes her heart to Joe and cannot and does not speak her mind. The balance of power between Janie and Joe changes as time

passes on. Janie hurts Joe's pride by her words in public because Joe has become old and weak. At the beginning of the marriage, Joe has more power than Janie, but as time goes on and Joe grows older, the situation is reversed. In other words, Janie can fight back against Joe, and Joe is getting weaker and weaker.

In the beginning, the Joe who she had just met before they were married was a gentleman who would give her what she wanted and would liberate her from her first husband, Logan. Janie says about Joe: "He did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon" (28). Janie is impressed with Joe because Joe says the following romantic words to make Janie want him: "De day you puts yo hand in mine, Ah wouldn't let de sun go down on us single. Ah'm uh man wid principles. You ain't never knowed what it was to be treated lak a lady and Ah wants to be de one tuh show yuh" (28). Janie is charmed by his sweet talk to make her his wife, and his promises to treat Janie as a lady and let her experience happiness that she never knew existed.

In addition, Joe has ambitions to be successful which fascinates Janie. Joe had heard stories of people who had made it in Florida, so he thinks the people who can make it should be the ones in power. This idea of Joe's is connected to his view of class. Joe believes that with power comes rank, and that being high in rank is very valuable. However, Janie is not attracted to Joe's desire to become upper class, but to his ambition to be great. This difference in values would later have a major impact on their relationship.

But when she and Joe get married and later, he becomes mayor, he changes. He tries to make everything go his way both with the townspeople and with Janie. The change in Joe's attitude has to do with his view that he should copy white people to maintain power. Tracy L. Bealer describes Joe's character:

Joe enacts an interracial sensitive version of the way class hierarchies infect marriage with unappealing labor and sexual dissatisfaction. Joe's unceasing aspiration to replicate white upper-class authority figures damages his connection to 'the folk' and ultimately to his wife as well. Joe's role models for success come from the white world. (317)

Joe's desire to be middle class or above comes from his past of working for whites and from hearing many stories about how black established their own towns. For most of his life, he has been looking for an opportunity to succeed in a black town, like the whites who held power everywhere.

In the beginning of their marriage, Joe would not listen to Janie's opinions, tying her down materially and emotionally. As the mayor, Joe begins to impose restrictions on his wife Janie's behavior, forbidding her to attend town gatherings and even criticizing interfering with her appearance and dictating how she dressed. When she does not like something, Joe would beat her. These actions give Joe a sense of security that he has a higher status than the people around him and that he is in a better position than Janie. The reason Joe becomes violent and restrictive is because Joe, as a powerful mayor, becomes obsessed with his work, and Janie begins to feel uncomfortable and insecure about the authority that was constantly following her. Joe becomes an antagonist not only to Janie, but also to the townspeople. Still, Joe feels safe because he knows he has more power than her. So, at first, he just orders her not to talk to the townspeople or to tie her hair up and cover it, but is not violent.

But then something happens that puts Joe's position in jeopardy. When there is a disturbance with the mules in town, Joe suggests that the mules be given a rest, and Janie speaks for everyone when she praises her husband:

Jody, dat wuz uh mighty fine thing fuh you tuh do. Tain't everybody would have thought of it, cause it ain't no everybody would have thought. Freein dat mule makes uh mighty big man outa you. Something like George Washington and Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln, he had de whole United States tuh rule so he freed de Negroes. You got uh town so you feed uh mule. You have tuh have power tuh free things and dat makes you lak uh king uh something. (55)

The townspeople praise Janie for her eloquence, but Joe does not seem to like it. For Joe, who believes that men are superior to women in relationships, it is unacceptable for Janie to be praised more than him. After this Joe begins to refuse Janie's requests to go out with him more often. He also starts to beat her when she looks unhappy, even though she is

providing her with a good environment as the mayor's wife. Their relationship chills. In this way, Joe is gradually tying Janie down.

Although in their married life, Janie gets many things and learns a lot, she is never happy because it is different from the marriage image she had in mind. Unlike her first husband, Logan, Joe is a man that Janie chooses for herself, and she first thinks that Joe's vision of the future was appealing and that they could work together to achieve it. Indeed, Joe takes her as his wife and treats her as the mayor's wife, a lady, as he promises Janie, but that is not what Janie wants. Her ideal marriage is not to be constrained or treated like a tool by a man, but to have more fun, and to have an equal relationship. However, Joe is so preoccupied with his job as mayor of the town that he does not have time for Janie. Not only that, he believes that his values are right and imposes them on Janie, keeping her within his reach. Their relationship grows cold, and while they pretend to be a good couple in public, they do not talk much when they were alone.

However, Janie does not run away from Joe the way she ran away from Logan. The first reason is financial, as Janie cannot earn enough money on her own so she cannot live without him and his business. Secondly, there is no one to run away with because she has not met any eligible men. When she met Joe, a man who could provide for her, she had the choice to run away. The third factor has to do with the avenues open to black women at the time. Janie wants to escape but is unable to do and has no choice but to accept the reality that her marriage is far from what she wanted. As time goes by, their relationship changes.

After a few years of marriage, Joe and Janie's relationship begins to change. Joe is getting older and weaker and has less energy to talk back. When Janie turns thirty-five and Joe turns forty, Joe is older, weaker, and less able to sit in a chair without making a scene, and Joe is aware of this, but is too proud to admit it for if he does, it will not only destroy his ideal of masculinity, but will also lead to the loss of the power and honor he had built up over the years. More than anything, he does not want Janie or the rest of the town to realize he is so weak. Joe does not like the fact that Janie is younger than he is in terms of age and appearance, so he starts talking about her age all the time, mocking Janie's appearance as old to keep his pride alive.

After more than ten years of marriage, Janie who has been silent about Joe's

restrictions and violence toward her, finally starts to speak up. By this time, Janie has lost all her energy and is getting used to not saying anything to Joe no matter what he does to her. There are two reasons why Janie has remained so silent. One is the value of Joe to Janie. She comes to think of Joe as “Maybe he ain’t nothin’, But he is something un my mouth. He’s got tuh be else Ah ain’t got nothin’ tuh live for. Ah’ll lie and say he is. If Ah don’t, life won’t be nothin’ but uh store and uh house” (76). For Janie, the days of silence and endurance were unacceptable because Joe was necessary for her survival. The second has much to do with the history of racial discrimination against African American women. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham quotes Darlene Clark Hine’s description of black women’s attitudes toward attacks on black sexuality, such as violence and rape: “In order to ‘protect the sanctity of inner aspects of their lives,’ black women, especially those of the middle class, reconstructed and represented their sexuality through its absence – though silence, secrecy, and invisibility” (266). In other words, black women like Janie fight discrimination in various ways to create the image of what a black woman should be. In this process, the act of silence was also essential. That is why Janie endures Joe’s restraint and violence, and because she tries to not respond by keeping quiet and ignoring him, she never speaks back.

Joe would routinely make snide remarks about Janie’s appearance in public, saying, “You oughta throw somethin’ over yo’ shoulders befo’ you go outside. You ain’t no young pullet no mo’. You’ se uh ole hen now. Dat’s somethin’ for de young folks, Janie, you out dere jumpin’ round and won’t be able tuh git out de bed tuh morrer” (77), telling her that she is old and others will find her unattractive. He also says, “I got mighty! A woman stay round uh store till she get old as Methusalem and till can’t cut a little thing like a plug of tobacco! Don’t stand dere rollin’ yo’ pop eyes at me wid yo’ rump hangin’ nearly to yo’ knees!” (78) Not only does Joe attack Janie for not being able to cut a plug of tobacco because he says she is old and weak, but he also makes misogynistic remarks about her being useless and attacks her appearance, which is completely unrelated, to a plug of tobacco.

The reason why Janie argues back just as strongly is because she cannot stand the bad words about her appearance. When Janie is humiliated by Joe in public, she finally tells him:

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

With that one speech, Janie robs Joe of the fantasy of being an ideal man, a fantasy that all men had. Dianne F. Sadoff notes that Janie's "words about [Joe's] lack of sexual charisma send him into decline and disease; her verbal assault on his "big voice"—sign of his sexual prowess and political status—does him in" (17). In fact, the power relationship between Joe and Janie changes dramatically, but so does the power relationship between Joe and the people of the town. The people who admired and envied Joe for what he possessed begin to look at him with pity, not respect, but cruel pity. Joe, unable to find the words to express his feelings, begins to shut himself up in his house, and then becomes ill and dies.

It was not the only time Janie raises her voice against Joe. She had accumulated a lot of dissatisfaction with Joe during their twenty-year marriage. Since the day Janie accuses Joe in front of the customers at the store, Joe is confined to his room and has become weak to the point that he could die at any time. He is so hard-headed and unwilling to see reality that he refuses to believe that his death is imminent. Determined to have a proper talk with Joe, Janie goes to the hospital where he is staying and tries to politely persuade him to listen to her so that he can get to know the real her, but he does not listen to her at all. She is no longer able to stand Joe's attitude, and she expresses her feelings for the past twenty years in the following way:

You done lived wid me for twenty years and you don't half know me atall. And you could have but you was so busy worshipping' de works of yo' own hands, and cuffin' folks around in their minds till you didn't see uh whole heap uh things yuh could have. . . . Ah knowed you wasn't gointuh lissen tuh me. You changes everything but nothin' don't change you--not even death. But Ah ain't

goin' outa here and Ah ain't gointuh hush. Naw, you gointuh listen tuh me one time befo' you die. Have yo way all yo' life, trample and mash down and then die rather than tuh let yo'self heah 'bout it. You ain't tried tuh pacify nobody but yo'self. Too busy listening tuh yo' own big voice. (87)

In the end, Joe throws Janie out of the hospital and does not listen to her to the end. Janie's last retort can be seen as cowardly. Jordan argues that Hurston's meaning implies "[t]hrough its delineation of Janie's marriage to Jody Starks, the devaluation and aloneness of the middle-class woman whose sole purpose is to serve as an ornament and symbol of her husband's social status" (108). In fact, Janie jumped at the happiness Joe offered her when they met. Despite her feelings, she has no choice but to remain silent for twenty years of her marriage. But on the other hand, unlike Logan, Joe leaves her a lot. Janie inherits enough to live on her own and gains the honor and confidence to be a strong woman. The good and bad aspects of Joe's legacy will continue to play a large part in her life. In a way, Joe is an essential part of Janie's life.

After Joe's death, Janie becomes friends with Tea Cake, who comes to the store as a customer. Tea Cake is much younger than Janie and has no regular job, unlike Logan and Joe. Tea Cake comes to the store unexpectedly to buy cigarettes one day when there is a baseball game going on and the store is not busy all day. Janie says she felt "[s]he was in favor of the story that was making him laugh before she even heard it" (94) when she heard his greeting. Tea Cake invites Janie to play checkers, which Janie did not know how to play because Joe did not let her learn. Janie likes Tea Cake, but she cannot open herself to him because of their age difference and the opposition from others. In the end, Tea Cake persuades her, and Janie decides to leave town with him. Tea Cake is the one who gives Janie equality and freedom. However, just like Logan and Joe, Tea Cake also has a side of self-doubt and a strong desire not to let Janie escape from him.

Janie does not have the same submissive relationship with Tea Cake as she does with Logan and Joe. The reason why there is no hierarchy in their relationship is because Janie is older and financially wealthier than Tea Cake. In the black society of the time, men with status and economic power like Logan and Joe were dominant, while women were in a lower position. However, in the case of Tea Cake and Janie, Tea Cake, who is young and

has no regular job, knows and respects that Janie has a lot more. The lack of a hierarchical relationship between Janie and Tea Cake is clearly evident in their conversations: in her conversations with Tea Cake, Janie says, “Yeah, but No fair!,” “No suh!,” “You crazy! thing!,” “Aw naw!” Such lines, used when complaining about the other person or making fun of the other person, were never used by Janie in her conversations with Logan or Joe. It is clear that they have a relationship where they can talk without worrying about Janie being oppressed by him. It also shows that Janie, who is older than Tea Cake, is bossy towards Tea Cake.

That is why Janie can practice what she learned in her marriage to Joe, which is to speak her mind clearly to men. In fact, when Janie suspects Tea Cake of cheating on her, she questions him instead of keeping quiet. When Janie sees a girl named Nancy alone with Tea Cake, she experiences jealousy for the first time. She strongly accuses Tea Cake as follows: “Ah b’lieve you been messin’ round her. . . . Don’t keer how big uh lie get told, somebody kin b’lieve it” (137). She hurls words at Tea Cake that she would never have thought of using toward Logan and Joe. Not only that, but Janie threatens Tea Cake also when he tries to explain the details of his affair with Nancy. She also expresses her feelings to Tea Cake, who tries to explain his affair, not only verbally but also by punching him in the face. Janie has grown up. This is also the secret of their successful marriage.

Tea Cake has a complex about Janie and lacks confidence as a man, so, like Joe, he tries to subdue Janie by showing off his power through violence. Tea Cake and Janie live happily, farming in the Everglades, but their happiness does not last long. The reason for Tea Cake’s lack of confidence is largely due to his dark skin, lack of a regular job and lack of wealth. Janie, on the other hand, has lighter skin and is more powerful than he is.

It is Mrs. Turner who threatens Tea Cake’s position as Janie’s husband and brings about a big change in his relationship to his wife. Mrs. Turner is a neighbor of Janie and Tea Cake. She is a mixed-race woman who thinks that the lighter the skin, the better. She likes Janie, who is also mixed-race, and light skinned, but dislikes the dark-skinned Tea Cake. She says of Janie that “Ah don’t see how uh lady like Mis’ Woods can stand all of them common niggers round her place all do time” (140), regarding being with black men such as Tea Cake. In response, Janie expresses her strong feelings about Tea Cake as follows: “Ah couldn’t stand it if he wuz tuh quit me. Don’t know whut Ah’ d do. He

kin take most any lil thing and make summertime out of it when times is dull. Then we live offa dat happiness he made till some mo' happiness come along" (141). Mrs. Turner, upon hearing this, refutes Janie's opinion as unthinkable, as follows: "You'se different from me. Ah can't stand black niggers. Ah don't blame de white folks from hatin'em' cause Ah can't stand' em myself. Nother thing. Ah hates tuh see folks lak me and you mixed up wid 'em. Us oughta class off" (141). In this scene, Mrs. Turner's discriminatory values are well conveyed. Not only that, but she tries to introduce her brother to Janie, saying that someone with lighter skin would be a better match for her.

Mrs. Turner's behavior arouses Tea Cake's jealousy. Not only that, but Mrs. Turner triggers Tea Cake's complex. This act of Mrs. Turner makes Tea Cake fear that Janie will disappear, and Tea Cake subjugates Janie with violence, showing not only to Janie but also to those around them that he is stronger than she is.

The first time Tea Cake slaps Janie is when Mrs. Turner brings her brother and introduces him to Janie:

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

In other words, for Tea Cake, the violence allays his fears and assures him that Janie is his. This approach is the same as that of her second husband Joe. Janie seems to have chosen a man very different from her previous husbands but is attracted to similar men. Tea Cake's weakness, which allows him only to hide his complex in this manner, also plays a significant role in his actions just before his death.

The hurricane that makes landfall in the town where Janie and Tea Cake live solidifies their love but robs them of their happy marriage. Janie and Tea Cake decide to stay and believe that no hurricane is coming because the animals and the natives are not always right about the weather. If they had made the decision to evacuate, at least Tea Cake's death would have been averted. The hurricane arrives and they are forced to

evacuate.

Tea Cake, who is forced to move in the hurricane because his blaming Janie delays them, feels sorry for causing Janie to suffer from her naive viewpoint, and he fears that Janie will be disgusted and dislike him. Tea Cake is overwhelmed with guilt and anxiety, and asks Janie, “reckon you never ’spected tuh come tuh dis when you took up wid me, didja?” (167). In response, Janie strongly expresses her love for him, which she had never said to Tea Cake before, saying, “Once upon uh time, Ah never ’spected nothin’, Tea Cake, but bein’ dead from the standin’ still and tryin’ tuh laugh. But you come ’long and made somethin’ outa me. So Ah’m thankful fuh anything we come through together” (167). In this way, the two confirm their feelings for each other and strengthened their bond while making accusations under terrible circumstances.

But this shelter did not end happily because of the presence of a mad dog. Tea Cake tries to protect Janie, but the long-distance travel had taken its toll on his strength, and he was unable to stop the mad dog. As a result, Tea Cake is bitten in the face. This leads to Tea Cake being infected with rabies which makes Tea Cake paranoid that Janie will disappear or go to another man while he is sick in bed. Tea Cake pulls a gun on Janie and tries to kill her. Janie takes a gun out from under her pillow and shoots, killing Tea Cake to protect herself.

After shooting Tea Cake, Janie is put on trial. The jury is all white, and there are blacks in the courtroom, but it is the blacks in the audience who strongly advocate for Janie’s being sentenced. The African Americans, in unison, strongly urge that Janie should be given a heavy sentence, saying, “Tea Cake was a good boy. He had been good to that woman. No nigger woman ain’t never been treated no better. Naw suh! He worked like a dog for her and nearly killed himself saving her in the storm, then soon as he got a little fever from the water, she had took up with another man. Sent for him to come there from way off. Hanging was too good” (186).

In contrast, Dr. Simmons who is white, tells the court “[a]bout Tea Cake’s sickness and how dangerous it was to Janie and the whole town, and how he was scared for her and thought to have Tea Cake locked up in the jail, but seeing Janie’s care he neglected to do it. And how he found Janie all bit in the arm, sitting on the floor and petting Tea Cake’s head when he got there. And the pistol right by his hand on the floor” (186).

Dr. Simmons testifies to how diligently Janie had nursed Tea Cake. As a result, Janie is acquitted.

It was Janie's own vocal appeal that ultimately saves her. The result was due to the arguments made by Janie. Janie desperately tries to convince those in the courtroom that she and her husband loved each other dearly and that shooting Tea Cake was inevitable. Janie, who had never been able to speak out against her husband alone, becomes a woman capable of convincing a crowd of people in a courtroom, taking a lot of flak for herself.

The story ends with Janie returning to the house where she and Joe had lived and reminiscing about Tea Cake. Although her marriage with Tea Cake ended in a sad way, Janie's heart is fully satisfied. In the last scene, Janie remembers Tea Cake: "Of course he wasn't dead. He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. Here was peace" (193). Tea Cake was the one who could fill Janie's heart with so much happiness in her married life. If there is one thing that Janie has gained in her marriage to Tea Cake, it is the feeling of love for someone else, and because she has learned to love someone else, she is the strongest that she has ever been.

Through her three marriages to Logan, Joe, and Tea Cake, Janie learns what married life is like and the importance of speaking up. But most of all, she learns firsthand that the only person who can protect you is yourself. This was true not only with Logan and Joe, but also with Tea Cake, who loved Janie dearly. Ferguson explains: "black females should stand ready to love yet defend themselves even against their own men, who occasionally place their fragile manhood above the woman's personal safety" (194). In other words, Janie was in love with Tea Cake, but when Tea Cake became rabid and put his own manhood before Janie's, well, Janie had to take matters into her own hands. Logan had ensured her a stable life, but he had treated Janie like housekeeper and had not been able to stop her from eloping. Joe gave her the position of the mayor's wife but treated her as he wished. Tea Cake, who loved Janie and shared good times with her, became sick and demented and eventually tried to shoot her. She defended herself from Logan by eloping and confronted Joe with the weapon of her words to break free from his bondage. With Tea Cake, Janie herself escaped death by confronting him with a gun. Thus, unlike her grandmother Nanny, who thought it best to be protected by a black man

with money, Janie survives by defending herself, albeit in a different way.

Finally, let me consider whether Janie's search for herself was successful. The answer to this question varies from critic to critic. For example, Molly Hite argues that "[t]he action of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* begins with a homecoming, but against the evidence that the Eatonville residents eagerly collect—the 'overalls' that Janie wears and her manifestly mateless state—this is a triumphal return" (268). while Jordan argues that "Janie returns to Eatonville because she cannot continue her quest for excitement without Tea Cake and has demonstrated no ability to survive alone" (113).

Though the ambiguous ending of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is the reason for the lack of a critical consensus, I consider Janie's journey to self-discovery a success. This can be seen from the conversation with Pheoby at the beginning of the book and in the last chapter. One is that Janie can talk to Pheoby about her life to date. The second is in the last chapter, when she finishes telling Pheoby everything, Janie says:

Now, Pheoby, don't feel too mean wid de rest of 'em 'cause dey's parched up from not knowin' things. Dem meatskins is got tuh rattle tuh make out they's alive. Let 'em consolate theyselves wid talk. 'Course, talkin' don't amount tuh uh hill uh beans when yuh can't do nothin' else. And listenin' tuh dat kind uh talk is jus' lak openin' yo' mouth and lettin' de moon shine down yo' throat. It's uh known fact, Pheoby, you got tuh go there tuh know there. Yo' papa and yo' mama and nobody else can't tell yuh and show yuh. Two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves (192).

She says this because acted on her own and succeeds in self-discovery. Being a woman who can live robustly on her own, rather than being a wife who relies on a man to survive, is the way Janie has found for herself.

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