

## IN SEARCH OF THE ULTIMATUM- A REVELATION AND RETURN TO THE ROOTS SATIATED

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### ABSTRACT

Racism is a cultural force that individuals can either struggle against or even willed to rather than a mindset which is rooted in demonstrable facts. The Cruz of Hurston's search of self is where in the journey of coming of age through the swamps of Florida there arises an astute underpinning of an awakening. It may not have emancipated from the slave narrative nor an unavoidable burst into the post colonial. It might not even be a painful processing towards that of modernity and that of its inevitable literary endowment of that of the black women's Serval autonomy as that of an American woman. Whereby her protagonist's search of self, and that of the very entity being very passionate engulfed in her own quest for mere survival. Her works are not always associated with issues of race, though they are profusely significant motifs, but they are not central themes.

**KEYWORDS:** Racism, Ultimatum, Roots Satiated

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Exploration

The author uses the story of her protagonist is a means by which she explores thematically the kind of treatment that was meted out to woman and the role they played in uplifting themselves. Her protagonist Janie married again widowed and married yet again. Eighty percent of the book showcases the protagonist's life in marital state but still makes room to be alone and come to understand freedom and also to hang on to that freedom once she remarries. To portray the readers Janie's development of a woman are portrayed through the images of trees, leaves and branches along with buds and blossoms and bees which powerfully conveys womanhood. Mules and the masculine genders are used to highlight or indicate the treatment to women. Infact mules do literally appear with her husband's Joe and Logan. In her episode with her first husband she is made to work with the mules but fortunately in her experience with her second husband she is spared the ceremonies surrounding the mules, but that very aspect excludes her from her community as well.

One more vital aspect of the novel is signifying a form of oral word play as she is an anthropologist. An unsurprisingly unique and rightfully a Black literature as it deal with their culture which tells the story of the protagonist. Janie Crawford and her three husbands Logan kellicks, Jody sparks and Tea cake. The life of the beautiful, self-assured, middle aged Black woman Janie Crawford's life takes place in rural Florida the 1930's. The story opens with how she walks into the town after years have gone by and she is jointly recognizable by the people of the town, and hence her striding back home creates a flutter. The woman folk in the locality naturally look at her with contempt. But the men nonchalantly gawk and admire her immaculate beauty and gape at her gorgeous physique, and naturally she becomes the topic of gossip among the women folk. In the unfriendly home town she finds only an old compatriot a friend by name

phoebes that stands by her and provides her with food. Not only providing refreshment but makes her aware of mean speculations about her in the town which Janie finds humorous. It is only at this juncture that she takes up the role of a narrator and goes about narrating her story. That is the period that she is away from her hometown and her close friend Pheoby. Though she is not the sole narrator of the novel, she does narrate certain episodes of the story. Infact the narration ends at the end of the story and is infact recapitulated.

The story line goes thus how Janie was brought up by her grandmother who she called Nanny. Infact it was this nanny who takes up both the role of the father and mother as they are physically absent. During her adolescent period she was carried away by the then monsoon climate and as her age warrants is sexually drawn to a local boy normed Jonny Taylor, which naturally gets her into trouble with her nanny, who happens to witness her behavior. She hastily decides to marry her off to a much older man named Logan Kellicks who is an absolute strange to Janie. Hence she totally disagrees with her grandmother and refuses to marry him. But Nanny convinces her on how she is trying to make her life stable and safe before she dies and assures her that it is possible only by the affluent middle aged farmer. Nanny sensing the strong discontent in Janie tries to convince her by recounting her own difficulties in the past. Her life is one of the olden times when slavery was prevalent and she was born into slavery having nostalgia that is very painful of her upbringing stage but life did not spare her even in the later stages as she was raped by her master and as a result of the rape she produced a child named Leafy. Leafy the mother of Janie but whom Janie has never met. Having been bashed so much the course of her life's sorrow did not end with the physical abuse she had faced in the hands of the master. The irony was once leafy was born the master's wife on seeing the grey eyes and the straight hair, instantly knew that her husband had furthered the child. The woman did not take it lightly nor did she confront them. Instead she was angered and as a result she had planned to sell off Leafy and have Nanny whipped violently. But fortunately before the malicious act was carried out Nanny escaped into the swamps with her child. After she became a free woman she found a new job with the Washburn's. Once out of the clutches of slavery Nanny envisaged a glorious life for leafy one much better than her own. But to add up to the woes of the envisaged mother were shattered when her little girl leafy at the age of seventeen was raped by her school teacher. Yet again history had repeated itself as leafy was pregnant with Janie. It was not taken surely on in a composed manner but instead let loose and started straying all right and intoxicating herself with liquor. At nerve's end she left Janie with her mother and left forever. Again and again retelling her story Nanny becomes very successful in telling Janie. The security of being married. A sense of convincingsness does make Janie see eye to eye with the concept of marriage. Hence Janie falls a convincing victim and accepts to marry Logan. As her Nanny tells her that love will come after marriage, she too is convinced that old people's experiences are better and marries Logan. But she realizes that whatever said and done the secured married life does not make her fall in love with Logan as she finds him ugly. When she goes to her Nanny with the issue, the Nanny is more defensive and advises her to be more appreciative of the man's wealth and breathes her last.

With no option or soul for support left she learns to cope with the situation and start living amicably, but the tragedy slowly builds momentum. Not only looking crude he expects her to slog her life out as he wants her not only to stick to the kitchen but to partake in all the day to day activities of the burdening chores. But accepting and succumbing to her fate and following instructions did not keep them happy as they were fighting at the drop of a hat. Once when Logan embarks on a trip to by a mule for Janie to aid in her form activities, Janie happens to meet a well dressed and attractive stranger strolling down the road and decides to meet him. The stranger's name is Joe Sparks; she flirts with Joe and comes to know that he is from Georgia. Joe also has grand plans to build and run a new town in Florida. Unlike Logan the stranger's eloquence and objectives drew her towards him as, not only because he was more interesting but because he was

more ambitious and not a manual worker like Logan.

According to Janie her husband Logan represents the authoritarian class, who simply formulates rules she has to comply with. He expects her to be with him at every back and call. But as the time goes by the comfort level between Joe sparks and Janie grows, she stops tagging the line of her husband. When Logan asks her to come and help move a pile of manure, instead of fooling around in the kitchen. Janie gets infuriated & retaliates by saying

“You don’t need mah help out dere,

Logan Youse in Yo’ place and

I’m in mine”.

But without a moment to spare he reverts at her immediately by saying.

“You can’t got no particular place

It’s whenever Ah need Youh” pg: 31

But as Joe Sparks settles comfortably in the place and as the acquaintance builds up Janie’s dream for real love blossoms as they convey secretly more often and he is so overwhelming that he takes her breath away and impresses her with his grandiose. Janie as time goes by is not able to cope with the attitude of Logan who belittles and slurs her for not helping him with the farm work and Janie retorts by threatening him that she will run away if the harassment continues. And when Jody, Joe sparks as addressed by Janie asks her to become his wife, she immediately accepts the proposed and sets off to Eatonville Florida. A small new town which occupies a few shacks and a town that did not have a mayor. Jody buys two acres of land and plans to build two structures, a store and a post office. He goes on to beautify the town hence asks the opinion of the people of the town on how to go about it. One of the townsmen Jony Taylor becomes the chairman of the assembly even though Jody plays the pivotal role. Two important personalities of the town Coker and Taylor made the plans of Jody to become a reality by building the store and post office. Jody with his kind of power and money immediately became the mayor of Eatonville. But the people of the town are more bothered about his bossy and descending motif. It is not Jody that captures the attention of the town mates, but also Janie. They start looking at her with contempt and jealousy, since she had absolutely everything like a powerful man who lived in a two-storied new house with elaborate things. They felt that the man by showing off his wealth was punning on their lower class status. Jody is cruel and his punishments are out of bounds that it irks the people of the town beyond limits. The gossip by the town’s people about Jody and his wife begin to float into introspection of how she could stay with such an overbearing and condescending man.

In reality there is a lot of truth in the gossip that goes around in town and it is definitely not empty gossip as Jody is an embodiment of tyranny. He is a highly domineering man and it is Janie who takes full brunt of it, mentally, verbally and physically, as he treats his wife like thrash. He expects her to be very responsible about taking care of the store. To add up to her woes as she gains some pleasure listening to the gathered audience outside the shop she is badly rebuked for it. As Jody is infuriated by her actions he strictly warns her that she should not interact with trashy people. As expected or portrayed by the town’s people their marriage is clearly in trouble. Jody even goes on to make it clear that she should not leave her hair loose as it will make her look all the more attractive to the men folk. It turned out that Jody is in fact the times worse than her first husband Logan.

The irony of it all is that the Joe sparks or Jody who was first introduced in the novel was a very decent and

respectable man by woman with his enticing goals, his smooth tongue and his overall presence. The chairman of Janie is however nonexistent after marriage. He is now right the opposite where he embarrasses her in public view, belittles her, batters her flesh into submission and speaking to her as though she is a child are very few of the most rotten characters that he had developed or had surfaced from his inner self enough reasons for him to be despised. Janie instantly goes through the pain of disrespect when he abuses her and makes derogatory comments, when by chance she misplaces a bill. She is able to feel the vibes that he does not like her to be an equal, but only as a subordinate who takes his orders and an animal who reports at his bid and call, and his comments is more than just powerful.

“Somebody got to think for women  
and chillum and chickens and cows.” Pg: 69

followed by an even more disrespectful comment highlighting her lack of intelligence.

“When Ah see one thing Ah understands  
Ten. You see ten things and don’t  
Understand one.” Pg: 69

Though the love Janie had for Jody since their marriage had been diminishing slowly, and tremendously, the treatment meted out to Janie goes a step further and shatters every piece of love she has for him. The incident that broke her even further through her depressed state was Jody beating her up after seven years of their marriage.

“He slapped Janie until she had ringing  
sound in her about her brains before  
he stalked back to the store.”

All these were the repercussions of nothing blasphemous or non-committal but for not having prepared dinner that was apprenticing to the man. As years went by the highly deplorable marriage affected her mental state which resulted in making her believe that she was unattractive. Jody himself is unattractive because he looks old, as his body droops and lumps, more apparent that he has problems moving around. Conversion of inferiority into superiority complex, in order to mask his own appearance, he takes pleasure in portraying Janie as unattractive and attacks her age. But she is not stupid and understands this is a play to make her believe that she too is in a similar position of ugliness and old age, in reality that is not the case. But as the health of Jody continues to deteriorate, he attacks her more viciously and more frequently. On one such occasion when he attacks her verbally she too loosed her cool and being highly infuriated lashes out at him by being caustic about his sagging body.

Deeply wounded and ego hurt badly Jody hurts Janie badly and chases her away from the store. But by then the damage is done thanks to the sharp words of Janie, his reputation deteriorates badly. They are mentally separated and live in different rooms. But by then the health of Jody deteriorates and his state becomes dire. Pheoby brings her the grapevine of how the townspeople suspect her to be slowly poisoning her husband, the cause of his illness. But the doubt is dispelled when Janie calls in a doctor to diagnosis and that her husband. On checking the doctor diagnosis and ascertains that Jody’s kidney has failed and it will subsequently lead to his demise. Jody becomes very sad and depressed when he is told about ominous fate and position. Though Janie feels sad for his position she does not feel sorry and takes time in telling him

about the way he had ill-treated her and how he was domineering and violent. The helpless Jody asks her to stop abusing him and have pity on him as he was in his death bed. But she did not mend her ways. And his end came shortly thereafter. It is now with a sense of freedom that she stands before. The mirror and assess herself, frees her hair from its rag – bondage and realizes that she is still beautiful and then she goes to the window and yells out with a guise of grief that Jody is dead. She sends off her husband with an elaborated funeral. She then carries a mourning face for the outside world but in fact feels relieved and happy inside. In fact the towns' people see only one change in her and that is her wearing her long hair out. In reality with her beauty and wealth, several men approach her, but she pays absolutely no heed to them. In fact Janie is as happy with her freedom as no suitor comes close to her expectations in the next six months and in fact she is blissfully enjoying her freedom and peace.

But destiny takes its own course when she happens to meet a stranger who came to her store to buy cigarettes. He begins to flirt and joke with her, which precipitates laughter from Janie. Later she finds out that his name is Versible Woods, but he says everyone calls him Tea Cake. They enjoy each other's company and he helps her close up the company at night. Something her prior husbands failed to accomplish was executed by Tea Cake. The relationship between that of Tea Cake and Janie is accompanied with equality, laughter and honesty. Janie goes on to elevate her love with him over her two marriages where she raises it to a spiritual level of calling Tea Cake a "glance from God". The people of the town get annoyed by Tea Cake usurping her time and attention. That turns out to be the first instance in the life Janie where she makes her own decision and not going by the commands of her Nanny, the second marriage was only flight from slavery of a kind. She confides all these to her close friend Pheoby and is happy and relaxed over the new control over her life. They get married, but he leaves Janie in a boarding house and spends her two hundred dollars and parties. On his return, confronting him of stealing her money, they finally vow to each other level of trust and commitment. Tea Cake vows to make a living on his own and returned the money he stole. They move towards the muck, where he plans to work in the Everglades.

The new couple becomes the center of attraction in the muck as Janie willingly takes up working along with him. She is beside him and not behind him. Nunkieare another attractive woman who draws the attention of Tea Cake. They argue it out, but in the end she fully well realizes that he loves only her. As things roll by Mrs. Turner becomes a close friend of Janie, which is not a favorable gesture for Tea Cake. He warns Janie against the friendship, but successfully plots, acts friendly and is victorious in cheering Mrs. Turner out of the town. When a hurricane was on its way, too late, they make their way out of the muck. A rabid dog tries to attack Janie, Tea Cake kills the dog by plunging his knife into the dog, unfortunately not before being bitten on the face. In the aftermath of the storm plans to visit a doctor is delayed, but by then huge damage is done. The poison had got into his brain and it was too late for the like saving serum to work. Frustrated that saving her life was the cause of his unfortunate end, he aims a gun at her. In order to save her own life she kills him. She is immediately failed but is released by an amazing speed as a jury comprising of white men declare her innocent after a five minute deliberation. Again she organizes an expensive, lavish and huge funeral, for two different reasons, one was that she did not want misunderstanding about the death of Tea Cake and she herself wanted the good will of his friends which she wanted to carry. More importantly she conducted it for herself as he was the bee to the blossom. Not only they loved each other, but that she still loved him. The loss was multifold that she could not sustain longer in the muck. Nurturing good will from friends she returns to the place where she started, Eatonville she has come a whole big round. Having found true love. She will blissfully live with his memories as long as she could cherish it. The truth is that she has been to the horizon and discovered what life and love is.

The journey of discovery that the protagonist undertakes begins at the gatepost of the house of her grandmother and runs through the course administering finally the bedroom of the house which was her inherited property from a twenty year marriage. The various plots in the novel begins with the protagonist walking out of the house in search of green pastures, here Janie only craves of true love. But she does not take any hasty decision she always chosen a man when the going gets tough and only craves and harps for the love and affection and not any materialistic gains. Unlike how her Nanny set a life for her thinking it will be secure only of the man is wealthy and propertied. Each and every man that she takes up not only gives her a loved life but also enriches her knowledge of the outside world. And this intelligence that she gathers through the course of her life brings her to the former house, where she had experienced so many hardships in life. This novel is a prototype the hardship and searches of the African American women who were seeking their self and their voice.

As there were two reformist movements during that time that is women's liberation and civil rights movements, most of the female writers did not try to highlight racism and stayed docile, whereas male writers stuck to their sexist ideas of women's role. All these during the time when the race actually need a upheaval or strong voices to express their views. As the African American women were finding themselves to be degenerating into voice loss existence and was intimidating aware of the need to regain their voice. It was during this time that a character like Janie Crawford were created who were as embodiments of an articulate, powerful, self – reliant and radically different from any women characters they have ever encountered in literature. It is not their eyes as the title suggests it is the only strong protagonist Janie Crawford who as a young girl is confronted with the desire of her grandmother who often reassures her that she has everything unlike her own childhood which was quiet strange and unfathomable for Janie to digest. As in the norm of bildungsroman she does not have any love from her parents but is brought up only under the umbrella of her Nanny, who is not only her guardian but also the god mother who advises her and channelizes her tells her about the safe situations in life and continuously harping that marriage is the only guarantee to a secluded and safe future. Just being blindly guided by the Nanny she marries the ancient Logan Kellicks, though she does not see any positivity or does it look glossy. And she could not see eye to eye with the Nanny who thinks that the state of getting married and settling down is a privilege what only the white people gets to enjoy in life. A kind of status clubbed with financial security which is never ever enjoyed by a black woman even in her life.

She tells Janie, "Honey de white man is  
de ruler of everything as for as Ah been  
able to find out". Pg: 29

Their eyes were watching god Nanny strongly believed that the white man treated his wife nicely, unlike the black men who beats up the wife. She pictures a life of what the plantation wife had when Nanny was a slave ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of what a woman oughta be and do" pg :31

Their Eyes are watching God

The wondrous arcadia that Nanny visualized and prayed and wished for Janie comes true only after her death when Jody sharks comes into her life and makes it blissful and glossy. It is he who secures Nanny's basic materialism into bourgeois aspirations. Infact Jody is a classic example of "Black Bourgeoisie" who strongly believed that acquisitions of wealth and status will certainly in some, way make them closer to the white culture which taught them they were inferior.

But luck favours Janie as in all the communities of the blacks of Eatonville. Though they go to me place as simple and less privileged they rise to success very fast and become one of the French Sociologist termed as “Colored Rabbit”. She did not leave him Jon his money but only embarks on her journey in search of love and a sense of adventure infact she was sure that.

“The change was bound to do her good” Pg: 54.

It is from this point she starts marching forward alone making her decisions alone and choosing what is right for her alone. She did not jump to a wrong place, she was for sure wise in making her decision as Jody was a ambitions, hardworking and basically good natured but he has sees the world as a bourgeois and conventional. The finesse of it all is that he has collected or earned a lot of possessions and the finest or the crowning glory of it all is his wife Janie, whom he proudly shows off like a trophy and cherishes her adorning his elegant and beautiful house to match his status in society. But it was more of Jody who though is the lines of Nanny to place Janie on a high pedestal, which she always worded as “class off” Janie rather than being perched on a pedestal like a trophy after thwarts his attempts and confuses him. He as such believes that Janie as the wife of the mayor should act more like a white way woman Jody, like that of the Black bourgeoisie. A stream of people.

“Who strove to make themselves over in the

Image of the white man”

The aim was to change his own community into one that could be comparable to the white folks who live on the other side of the road. Searching for her identity Janie is the richest element of the novel. As the novel progresses she becomes self-reliant and very powerful as she traverses across her journey of life from being controlled by men to being independent and self – assertive. Ultimately she establishes her stance as she learns to separate her private self from her public life till the point she finally gets the opportunity moment to combine the two. At the same time she does not seem or ever portrayed in the negative she is only seen as a positive image of the black woman who was able to reject conformity and security and at the same time she is a woman who is able to control her life in her own terms.

## CONCLUSIONS

Janie in her journey with three relationships with men, is on quest of identifying herself. Infact she fights the influences of her grandmother, who harps on security and encourages her to sacrifice self – fulfillment. It is Logan and tea cake who goes all out to stifle her development. Her second husband does take good care of her and gives her the kind of life her grandmother visualized for her. The owner and the most important person of the town her second husband who rose to the position holding hands with Janie, has infact a negative impact on her growth as his bourgeois aspirations turn her into a symbol of his stature in the town. Her freedom is curtailed and she is not allowed to act according to her own fancy and be herself. She is infact made to conform to his notions of propriety. She is supposed to tag only his line and that she cannot enjoy the small little conversation with the towns folk on the porch, let alone participate in it. She gets her first blow right after he is elected as major. She was asked to address the gathering and say a few words of encouragement, but the major was not happy with the idea and immediately interrupts the applause and tells the towns people.

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