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‘Signifyin(g)’ Womanhood: The Short Fiction of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker

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A Dissertation Presented

by

Michela Rosa Di Candia

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To my father and
my mother

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“We are a people. A people do not throw their geniuses away. If they do, it is our duty as witnesses for the future to collect them again for the sake of our children. If necessary, bone by bone”

Alice Walker

ABSTRACT

This doctoral research analyzes from a Brazilian perspective the constructions of black womanhood in Zora Neale Hurston's unpublished short-story "Under the Bridge" and published short stories "Sweat", "Spunk", and "The Gilded Six-Bits". The Hurston stories are compared to "Roselily", "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", "Coming Apart" and "Porn", written by the contemporary author Alice Walker. Taking as a starting point that Alice Walker's narratives 'signify' on the work of Hurston, who wrote during The Harlem Renaissance (1920), this thesis aims to investigate the threads that connect both writers by focusing on the ways in which their female protagonists question or accept the parameters of "the cult of true womanhood". The conclusion shows that the portrayal of black women characters symbolically questions representations of sexuality and racism in an attempt to make visible the process of liberation from the constraints of American society at the time of each author's literary production. Thus the authors contribute to the development of black literary criticism as well as to the tradition of black women writers.

Key-words: short-fiction, black womanhood, Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, black literary criticism.

RESUMO EXPANDIDO

O presente trabalho de doutorado focaliza as construções de feminilidade negra no conto não publicado "Under The Bridge", de Zora Neale Hurston assim como os já publicados "Sweat", "Spunk" e "The Gilded Six-Bits" em comparação com "Roselily", "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", "Coming Apart" e "Porn", da autora contemporânea Alice Walker.

Ao supor que Alice Walker 'significa' ou 'relê' o trabalho de Hurston, que escreveu durante a época da Renascença no Harlem, a tese tem como objetivo investigar os elos de ligação entre as duas escritoras, focalizando a maneira pela qual suas protagonistas femininas contestam ou aceitam os parâmetros determinantes do "verdadeiro culto de feminilidade". Conclui-se que a apresentação das personagens femininas pelas escritoras negras simbolicamente questiona a representação da sexualidade e racismo como uma tentativa de tornar visível o processo de libertação das amarras da sociedade americana no momento de cada produção literária, contribuindo desse modo para o desenvolvimento da crítica literária negra.

Na **introdução** desse trabalho, um panorama sobre o desenvolvimento da escrita por mulheres negras é apresentado, considerando-se leitores não pertencentes ao contexto cultural norte-americano, especialmente pelo fato da tese ser desenvolvida no Brasil. Portanto, essa seção focaliza alguns aspectos sobre a vida de Zora Neale Hurston e Alice Walker, assim como os fatores históricos, sociais e ideológicos que influenciaram a formação dessas autoras.

No **primeiro capítulo**, dedicado à análise dos contos de Hurston, é essencial entender como a violência psicológica cometida contra as personagens femininas por seus parceiros é denunciada no gênero do conto, já que a tradicional dicotomia dominação masculina e subordinação feminina é perpetuada. Embora Hurston não desenvolva protagonistas autônomas e independentes, a escritora outorga o poder a essas personagens por meio da ligação com as raízes culturais. O capítulo divide-se em três momentos: o espaço do lar nas relações matrimoniais, o espaço cósmico/

simbólico na constituição das personagens e o espaço da linguagem no uso do inglês negro vernacular como meio de afirmação.

O **segundo capítulo** traz a análise dos contos de Alice Walker como "Roselily" e "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay? , inseridos na coletânea *In Love & Trouble-Stories of Black Women* e "Coming Apart" e "Porn", da coletânea *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*. O capítulo demonstra a agência das protagonistas e a maneira pela qual as opressões sofridas por instituições como a família, o casamento, os meios de comunicação por meio das imagens de revistas pornográficas e os estereótipos criados pela tradição branca limitam as possibilidades da agência feminina. Dessa forma, a questão da agência mostra-se relacionada às identidades negociadas a partir do momento em que as normas de feminilidade são (des) construídas. Diferentemente do primeiro capítulo em que as vozes de Vangie, Delia Jones, Lena e Missie May se inter-cruzam na análise, optou-se aqui por uma divisão temática. Logo, "Papéis de Gênero no Espaço das Relações Matrimoniais" e "Questionando Identidades" referem-se aos contos "Roselily" e "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" Os contos que abordam a questão da pornografia, "Coming Apart" e "Porn", são trabalhados nos itens: "Reificação das Mulheres", "O Espaço Pornográfico" e "Tornando-se Sujeitos"

No **terceiro capítulo** verificam-se as diferenças de agência feminina em resposta aos parâmetros de feminilidade negra assim como analisam-se as estratégias narrativas usadas por ambas escritoras. De início, os fundamentos teóricos de Harold Bloom sobre a 'angústia da influência' e os escritos feministas sobre a tradição literária das mulheres a partir do século XIX abrem caminhos para o trabalho crítico de "significação" proposto por Henry Louis Gates. No contexto negro, significar sugere a repetição do passado, mas com a inserção de novos elementos. Com base nessa teoria, o capítulo estabelece Hurston como a pioneira no desenvolvimento da tradição da escrita negra feminina ao relacioná-la com sua contemporânea Alice Walker. Ao utilizar teorias do multiculturalismo crítico propostas por Gates e Homi Bhabha e do dialogismo de Mikhail Bakhtin, o capítulo considera a desconstrução do signo negro, a transformação dos sujeitos da cultura no processo de (não) desestabilização dos papéis de feminilidade negra e propõe uma classificação acerca dos tipos de agência segundo os postulados de lingüistas-antropólogos. No início

desse capítulo, assim como nos anteriores, um breve resumo dos principais tópicos a serem abordados é apresentado bem como uma conclusão parcial.

Em **considerações finais**, as principais questões suscitadas no decorrer do trabalho são retomadas. O processo de significação em que Walker revisita a obra de Hurston aponta para as distintas caracterizações de suas respectivas personagens no gênero de contos. Nesse sentido, é possível pensar na multiplicidade de representações da mulher negra e suas especificidade no processo de libertação das amarras opressoras da sociedade excludente.

Palavras-chaves: ficção-curta, feminilidade negra, Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, crítica literária negra.

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INTRODUCTION

Afro-American writers in the dominant cultures of the United States inherited a double, often contradictory consciousness throughout the centuries. In his concept of "double consciousness", William Edward Burghart Du Bois (1903: 2-3) defined the condition of 'being black' and 'being American' as "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body." Away from the center of power, minorities such as black people and women writers represent their experiences through literature. Their work, though, was not considered worthy of value because the canon was extremely racist and sexist.

Forms of domination and discrimination inside America were completely ignored by the white, male Eurocentric discourse which dictated its interests and produced its discourses of exclusion. American nineteenth century society and consequently most white writers had erased slavery and racism from the history of America. Although some exceptions could be found in the narratives by Herman Melville, Mark Twain, and George Cable Washington, most of them did not recognize the oppressive conditions in which slaves lived. Forms of inequality and racialization have been structured by institutions and used as an instrument of ideology to establish a cultural hierarchy. American society did not make room for what was different even though slavery has made a permanent difference constituting the American identity for blacks and whites.

As the Afro-American literary cultural critic Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1984: 7) maintains, there is "an attempt to deprive the black human being to create art, to imagine a world and to figure it." The system denies the possibility of black culture. Blackness and femaleness are signs of exclusion from Eurocentric culture. Black women carried a double burden as they were devalued by being black and women. They were the most peripheral of the marginalized as they felt excluded not only from the white American mainstream but also from the Black mainstream. In *Playing in The Dark* (1990: 65), Toni Morrison asserts that transformations of biological, ideological and metaphysical concepts of racial difference were very much present in

the literature and history of the United States. She also sees that literature has an additional concern when it takes into account the private imagination interacting with the external world it inhabits. In this context, when the margins start looking for their own definition, oppositional hierarchies are destabilized. Literature as social practice reveals the claims for internal acquisition of voices and subjectivities which characterize black women's fiction and minor literatures in general.

When reading short fiction and criticism written by black women authors, for instance Zora Neale Hurston (1901-1960), Alice Walker (1944-), and Toni Morrison (1931-), one realizes that female writers of the Harlem Renaissance and contemporary writers depict in very different ways similar issues such as female subordination/ male dominance and black sexuality in relation to their political and socio-historical contexts. Black women experience various kinds of oppression or discrimination inside white America according to the stereotypes that have been imposed on them through history. Therefore black contemporary writers look back at the past and to what has been produced by their predecessors in order to keep the black tradition alive and modify it. As Gates (1988) asserts in *The Signifying Monkey,* black writers read and criticize each other's texts as an act of self-definition. They are 'signifying upon' the previous texts. Following Gates' assumption, if Alice Walker has amplified Hurston's issues, then the dynamics of black womanhood, the effect of black women's marginality, and the subordination of the actions of black female characters are essential concerns of this study. The female literary chain suggested by the feminist critic Barbara Smith (1985: 174), helps black women to define their literary tradition. The fact of being black and women, marginalized by race and gender, helps us to understand the similarities generally found in black female literary texts produced in parallel with the male black tradition and the female white tradition.

Assuming that black women writers contribute to the construction of a literary corpus of reassertion of black womanhood, this work aims to investigate the tools black criticism has created for the analysis of black short-fiction, and also the portrayal of women characters within the short-story genre. It investigates the recognition of the characters' acceptance or rejection of the conventional norms of womanhood, their claims for new societal roles, and the sources of their physical and

psychological exploitation as both writers deal with the system of oppression perpetuated by social institutions.

In the panorama of Afro-American fiction, Roland Walter (2000) believes that black women compose to keep alive their roots as an act of reconstructing the memories, myths, legends and the events of the past. This is a way to fight against racism, reification, and acculturation. According to Walter, in order to demystify the stereotypes invented by White America and to break with the notions of the hegemonic center, the act of writing has to do with personal and collective history. When realizing that the subject is both individual and also collective, it is possible to suggest solutions to social conflicts. In this way, these black female writers are considered revolutionary in the treatment of their themes and also in providing the act of literature. He concludes that the use of the counter-discourse makes possible the creation of a black and female consciousness in literature. The act of writing is a political act, a social practice based on a humanizing perspective of the subject.

Although the market for female short stories collections was very limited, Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker felt comfortable in developing their themes through the short-story genre. This literary genre, which has been neglected by the mainstream for a long time, was the suitable one to the development of their literary skills both in the 1920s and 1960s respectively. The short-story, as Clare Hanson (1995: 3) affirms, has been from its inception a particularly appropriate vehicle for the expression of the ex-centric. In her categorization the author includes the writings of loners, exiles, women, black writers who for some reason did not take part in the ruling narrative. Furthermore, another reason for the growth of short fiction was that it did not require the financial risks of a novel production.

In an overview of the origins of Afro-American literature, Robert Bone (1975: XIX) in *Down Home*[1] presented the development of the short-story by black writers. If black people were not constituted as human beings with rights, their fiction would

[1] Bone's book *Down Home* is an attempt to reconstruct the forerunners and the generation of Afro-American writers. But, his outline of the history of the short story has not been finished yet and has to be completed. In his ouline, he mainly focuses on the short-fiction of black male writers such as Charles Chesnutt, Paul Laurence Dunbar, the representative of the Abolitionist Model; Claude Mckay, Eric Walrond; Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, representative of The Migrant Model. Zora Neale Hurston was the only woman to be included in his panorama of the Harlem Renaissance.

be a vehicle for subverting these notions. Therefore, it may be considered that Afro-American literature and women's literature emerged as a reaction against the established canons. Bone (1975: XIX) reiterated the idea that black storytellers have created and given voice to the sufferings of oppressed minorities.[2] The oral culture shaped the stories in black fiction. The short-story, in this sense, is the art which has been crafted from the stories and experiences of a communal living and because of that it constructs a space for change. In the words of the black feminist bell hooks (1990: 145) the margin is a potential space for change and it is "where transformation is possible."

Bone gives voice to ethnicity by asserting the vitality of the folk tradition such as jokes, proverbs, anecdotes, and legends. He emphasized the influence of black folk in black fiction since it is seen as a public and communal form of art. However, he believed that the Afro-American short-story mixes two cultural heritages: the cosmopolitan Euro-American literature and the African tradition rooted in folk community; the Afro-American oral tradition and its animal fables, trickster tales, conjure stories, preacher tales, jokes, proverbs and anecdotes passed from one generation to the other. This critic also suggests that the black narrative is based on the changes and improvisation used by blues musicians as the experience of black people is ritualized through the oriented rhythm and dance improvisations in a written text. When connecting the spheres of music and literature, Bone makes room for the poetic confrontation with reality. The solutions to the problems have never been offered in the blues idiom, and in facing an unpleasant situation the blues hero tries to make the best of it by developing a constructive action through which he or she is able to rise above difficulties.

Although Black Aesthetics seemed to have made little impact on the development of the short-story genre, a new group of black male writers was responsible for articulating the high literary traditions with the vernacular ones, the Afro-American folklore. Bone recognized the importance of the black tradition and suggested that the first short-story authors wrote good stories by relying upon what

[2] Bone makes use of the concept of 'submerged population' from the Irish writer Frank O'Connor. However, in Bone's view, O'Connor places a negative value on ethnicity and assumes the importance of the books written by previous authors and mainly white writers. According to the reality of his place and time, a folk tradition could enrich, but it could not take the place of the written world.

white people had written before them. To him, Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872 - 1906) and Charles Chesnutt (1858 - 1932) were the forebears of the short-story genre, although most of their stories did not break with the common stereotypes of the Negro. Dunbar's stories were considered inauthentic and sentimental, as they did not "represent" the experience of black people. Sometimes he challenged the literary world and sometimes he did not resist it in order to get published. Dunbar wanted to sell his work in the market place. Nonetheless, Dunbar was not able to fight against the limitations of his time. He did, however, play an important role in the evolution of the Afro-American short-story in establishing the pastoral tradition. Many have called him the nation's first successful Afro-American writer. He was the first black man to publish a collection of short stories, *Folks from Dixie* (1898) and he also published several stories from 1895 to 1897 in *the New York Journal*, *The Independent*, and *Cosmopolitan.*

Charles Chesnutt, a very accomplished black writer, through his fiction, broke with the stereotypes of the Plantation School by depicting the foibles of the Negro middle class, the inhumanity of slavery, its cruelties and injustices. Slavery was not developed in a sentimental way as it was with Dunbar's romantic approach. Although he was afraid of writing for not having much experience, he felt challenged to this task. In *The Conjure Woman*[3], a devastating parody of southern pastoral, Chesnutt developed the technique of writing a plot within a plot when most black writers were still learning to tell a simple story. The inside plot was narrated with the Negro dialect while the framing plot in standard English, referring to the world of common place.

Although writing after the end of the Civil War in a period of industrialization and urbanization, Dunbar and Chesnutt reinforced the provincial life in their fiction developing Southern themes. However, their literary mode was very stylized. As Bone (1975) suggests, the authors of the Plantation School, re-established the white supremacy celebrating the plantation life. The Negro in fiction was deprived of dignity, maturity and followed the rules fixed by the Big House. This critic realizes that after Dunbar's death, Chesnutt's silence, and the exclusion of black women

[3] It was assumed that the beginning of the Afro-American short-story was marked by the tales in this book, published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1899.

authors as short-story writers, the Afro-American short-story entered a period of stagnation and decline.

From 1839 to 1890, black writers tried to develop their skills in writing short-stories, but they did not succeed. Their short-fiction was sporadic and not professional. Many of these stories did not reach publication and, if they did, they had very minimal circulation. Through essays, speeches, poetry, autobiographies, and drama black authors wrote in favor of the anti-slavery cause. Black men in the nineteenth century were not recognized by the white patriarchy. Therefore, they gradually started the process of subverting the values of the hegemony in order to construct their own images. Male characters in the Afro-American literature did not repeat the violent acts committed by the white man to the black man. One of the most important autobiography of this time was *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, written by himself* (1845). In this narrative of an ex-slave, the cruelties of the slavery system were denounced. Douglass pointed out the separation of the slaves from their families and also the difficulties in living in a segregated and racist society after the end of slavery. The process of learning how to read and write made him a man while the continuous acts of violence against him, reinforced his slave condition. In analyzing slave narratives, the literary critic, Barbara E. Johnson (1990: 218) concluded that the individuality of the hero is always highlighted in such texts. The hero is able to overcome the difficulties by making use of his talents or with some providential help.

When considering slave narratives by women and about women, Hazel Carby (1987: 38-39) argues that these forms of adventure and heroism which were normally attributed to men and male sexuality, characterized the female heroines of these narratives. Nevertheless, the "strong, non-submissive black female head of a household" contradicted the conventional interpretations of black female sexuality. Consequently, the independent black woman was labeled as a black matriarch. The literary critic Angela Davis (1981: 1) argues that these women resisted the daily humiliations of slavery and that their female voice privileges the reality of confinement and both the private and public spheres. Assuming that the autobiography was the most developed genre in the nineteenth century, I point out the female autobiography of Harriet Wilson (1859), *Our Nig or Sketches from The Life of*

a Free Black and Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, published with the pseudonym Linda Brent in 1861. As Carby (1987: 45) asserts each of these narratives was the embodiment of a unique perception and re-creation of their black experience. Wilson, as a free black woman addressed her experience to a black audience to condemn racism in the North and to criticize abolitionists. By constrast, the authenticity of Jacobs's slave narrative was questioned as its authority was attached to the patronage of the white community. However, Carby (1987: 47) emphasizes, Jacobs criticized "the conventional standards of female behavior" by questioning "their relevance and applicability" to black women's experience. She knew that to be bound to these conventions was to be bound to a racist and ideological system. In this context, Harriet Jacobs preferred to use the pseudonym Linda Brent, as a mechanism of "self-protection", to reconstruct "the meaning of her own life as a woman and a mother". Other ex-slaves such as Elizabeth Keckley, Susie King Taylor, and Amada Berry Smith also wrote autobiographies during this time.

Although one does not find a wide production of short stories by black women authors in the nineteenth century, these writers produced some texts, autobiographies and had their own literary views. Nineteenth century society equated freedom with manhood and because of it social, literary, and ideological restrictions have been imposed on women writers. Female fiction was deemed unimportant. However, in writing autobiographies these women represented their lives, focusing on the experience of the community. The texts of Alice Dunbar Nelson, Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper were of great importance to the development of black fiction and non-fiction, although their production has been completely relegated to the margins of American writing society. Although briefly married to Paul Laurence Dunbar, Alice Dunbar Nelson took part neither in the black intellectual's meetings nor in the National Association for Advancement of Colored People.[4] Later on her diary *Give Us Each Day, The Diary of Alice Dunbar-Nelson* was published by Gloria T. Hull in 1984.

Pauline E. Hopkins, between 1877 and 1916, crafted several plays, editorials, numerous short-stories, essays and the novel *Contending Forces*, the first of her four

[4] The NAACP organization was founded in 1909 by Du Bois and it aimed at attacking the laws of segregation.

novels. She wished her writing could become an instrument to promote social, political and economic changes to the life of black people. Fiction could intervene in the political and social arena. She also founded *The Colored American League* in Boston and edited *The Colored American Magazine* between 1900 and 1904. This magazine as Carby argues (1987: 128, 166) was a "pioneer of the black magazine market". With pedagogical roles, including history, literature, political essays and social commentaries, the monthly magazine was devoted to a black reading public. There, Hopkins worked as a journalist, editor, fiction writer to "validate black figures in history." Hopkins and the staff of the magazine assumed a hegemonic position as representatives of black people. By the turn of the century, Hopkins was working to recover the African heritage, but she also dedicated her literary work to progress and racial pride. In other words, the desire for advancement and the need to report her version of the African past to American readers (white and black) constitute the main issues of her fiction. She hoped that fiction could intervene in the political and social action.

Frances E. W. Harper, most known for her only novel *Iola Leroy* (1892) in which she introduced the mulatta figure who could move in between the black and the white world. She was also a short-story writer, poet, an experienced feminist lecturer, teacher and essayist. She was concerned with the condition of newly freed black women in the Reconstruction South. In her literary work as well as in her public audiences, she claimed that the uplifting of the race did not mean the restriction of women to the domestic sphere. Women should take part in the public domain and should have the right to vote. But as Carby (1987: 84) asserts, Harper's ideas as well as female activity in general "remained invisible, subsumed under the wealth of research into the ideas and actions of male leaders, thinkers, and activists."

Another female voice, perhaps the precursor of black feminism, was Anna Julia Cooper (1892: 125) with her famous collection of essays *A Voice from the South*, in which she questioned the racial and gender divisions kept by the patriarchal society. She accuses white women of the elite for being responsible for keeping women's oppression alive when accepting the limitations imposed on them. Writing a decade before Du Bois, she identifies the race conflict as the main dilemma of the United States. Cooper tries to show that the women's needs could not be equated with

the sacrifice of the oppressed. She denounces the differences between the races contesting the inferiority of black women and their omission in challenging the parameters that imprison them. She asks for the liberation of oppressed people and not for the defense of the interests of a specific white group. The claims of this writer as well as what has been produced in the nineteenth century in the form of slave narratives and autobiographies was really a source of inspiration to the next generations of writers. Black women writers continued to challenge racist and sexist ideologies through the literary genres and conventions. Also in a marginal position, the influential black woman voice of Ida B. Wells, like Cooper, criticized the role of white women who contributed to the maintenance of a system of oppression. As a journalist, she wrote about the interrelation of rape and lynching. Despite the fact that these women could not be considered representative of all black women, they had an important role in shaping the movement of Afro-American women intellectuals and writers of fiction.

Taking into account the production of short-prose, Bone (1975: XIX) asserts the importance of following some characteristics in fiction such as the deep connection to the Protestant religion and the Bible, and affection for the rural South. He also shows the writers' anxieties about their future role in the American society. Reading black women's short-fiction, I realize that these generalizations were not applicable to their short prose fiction. However, in general, short-stories whether written by men or women were surprisingly limited. In the mid-nineteenth century, black women writers published in popular magazines, local newspapers, churches newsletters, and pamphlets rather than in specialized journals. Most of these stories did not survive and few of them remain, and they have been considered underdeveloped, melodramatic and sentimental. Because of that, the periodization of their contribution has not been an easy task. Black women's literary texts do not give way to a linear and temporal classification.

In the twentieth century, the number of stories published by men in the magazines of that time was greater than the number published by women. But some factors have to be considered before taking these numbers at face value. According to Judith Musser (1998: 43) if a story was signed only by the first letter, it was assumed that it was written by a male writer. Every first letter or pseudonym was not attributed

to a woman writer. However, in order to get visibility and to be accepted by the male center of power, these women usually wrote fiction anonymously with a first letter or under a male pseudonym. In Bone's overview of the history of the Afro-American short-story, Zora Neale Hurston is the only female example of short-story fiction. Writers such as Nella Larsen and Jessie Fauset[5], who also wrote fiction in the beginning of the twentieth century, received little if any attention as writers of the Southern Renaissance. They have been considered as minor figures by the traditional Afro-American literary and cultural criticism. Although their literary production was not recognized during their time, some of their stories were published in the most important journals of the Renaissance: *The Crisis*, edited by W. E. B. Du Bois and, *Opportunity*, edited by Charles S. Johnson. Both editors of these journals addressed the national black community, acclaimed the beauty of black culture, and promoted the circulation of short-stories which showed the mind of the Negro Renaissance middle class and the tensions within the community in Harlem.

In spite of Hurston's presence having been noted during the Renaissance, her short-stories did not have much visibility among the black male established canon. Her fiction was considered of no value because it followed the pastoral mode of the Harlem Renaissance Movement of the 1920's. As Bone argued this literary mode gave voice to the yearnings for racial harmony and the mediation between the values of the country and the town. Therefore, the essence of the pastoral tradition was the idealization of the rural past, simplicity and peace as well as the validation of the black identity. The country man was morally superior in part because of his poverty. Although celebrating the singularities of Eatonville, Florida, Hurston did not make room for the reconciliation of the rural/urban values and the mediation of conflicts. On the contrary, her early works presented a conflicting impulse which characterized the picaresque[6] mode. In Bone's study, this seemed to be the best way to represent the

[5] Both Larsen and Fauset, differently from Hurston priviledged the urban confrontation and presented in their fiction different responses to their class, racial, and sexual position as black intellectuals. Fauset published *Plum Bun* (1929), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931) and *Comedy: American Style* (1933) and Larsen *Quicksand* (1929) and *Passing* (1928). While working at Du Bois' *The Crisis* (NAACP's journal), Fauset had an important role of making black talents known at the literary circle of the Renaissance time, such as Gwendolyn Bennett, Arna Bontemps, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay and Dorothy West.

[6] Black people were compared to the pícaro hero from the Spanish bourgeoisie who struggled for emancipation from the static feudal norms. Both the pícaro and the trickster in Black literature tried to live as best as they can. They are great improvisers constantly confronting the unexpected. This survival depended on their personal capacities, so that some transgressions are allowed. The sense of

Black experience in America. According to this author, black people left a traditional society that did not give them opportunity to their development. In a new place, facing new experience, they had to use their skills to improvise in order to survive.

More importantly, Hurston showed how fundamental ethnic singularities were when mastering black speech in her stories. Her disillusionment with urban life also promoted a new emphasis on the celebration of the regional variations in American life. Her career was sustained by the value given to the rural black southern life of Eatonville, Florida. As Alice Walker (1979: 17-25) notes Hurston wrote about black life as it existed apart from racism, injustice, and Jim Crow[7]. In the literary work of Zora Neale Hurston, black people laughed, celebrated, loved, cried, struggled without concerns about white people and also were unaware of being a problem to white people. The consciousness of racial oppression was not very much present in Hurston's early writings. On the other hand, her attachment to her people and place provides the strength of her stories. She employed the black dialect, the language of the folk as a powerful expression of ethnicity. In celebrating the rural life of the south during the Harlem Renaissance, she became in Joanne V. Gabbin's words (1990: 246-263) "a pioneer in the use of folklore in her fiction". If folklore was an element of her aesthetics, her short-stories would incorporate folksongs, stories of illiterate and enslaved ancestors, daily conversations, ritualistic feasts and communal gatherings.

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adventure which constitutes the symbolic or geographical journey is what characterizes the action of the pícaro. This literary mode seems to be appropriate to the historical experience of black Americans, as they broke away from the confining racial customs of the feudal South and undertook their northern journey. Nevertheless, the figure of the trickster in Afro-American culture assumes the role of defying homogenization as he/she is free to dissolve boundaries and break taboos. More information about the trickster figure will be developed in chapter three.

[7] The Jim Crow era refers to the time in which the doctrine of separate but equal occurred (1876-1965). The state and local laws in the Southern and boarder states of the United States determined equal facilities for blacks and whites. However, black people were relegated to the margins of society. The American apartheid began with the black segregation at public schools, public places and public transportation like trains and buses. In 1955, Rosa Louise Mc Cauley Parks did not give up her seat to a white man on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Her action was and is still considered a defiance of a system of racial oppression. After that, several boycotts, sit-ins took place in the United States. Walker's statement refers only to Hurston's fiction, which means that the segregation issue was not a topic in her narratives. However, Hurston wrote three very brief essays on social questions. In: "How It Feels to Colored Me" (*World Tomorrow* 11. May, 1928, 215-216) Hurston writes about the experience of not feeling colored. In "Most Humiliating Jim Crow Experience" (Negro Digest 2. June, 1944, 25-26) she provides her experience of being segregated in a doctor's room in N.Y., and finally in "Crazy for This Democracy" (165-168), she mentions the illusion of an American democratic society which maintains Jim Crow laws that do not consider a black person an equal. In: Walker, Alice (ed.) *I Love Myself When I am Laughing And then Again When I am Looking Mean and Impressive*. *A Zora Neale Hurston* Reader. Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1979, pp 17-25.

In analyzing stories of black women writers, Judith Musser (1998: 30, 40) notes that the black female narrative was concerned with the dynamic of black people and how they interacted. Female characters were more involved with things that affected their everyday affairs: how to find a job and keep it, save money, feed, clothe, and educate children, deal with a spouse and maintain personal dignity in the face of routine oppression and prejudice. The private stories enacted by female characters were also sites for the demonstration of the public power dimensions. Few women writers developed their stories in rural settings. Most of them developed their stories in urban settings - Chicago, Detroit, Boston, Manhattan, Harlem, the Bronx, New Orleans. Women writers of the Harlem Renaissance were aware of the physical boundaries which imprison and oppress female characters. Although, the stories by Afro-American women were not usually associated with the Harlem Renaissance, they provided a link between nineteenth century and twentieth century Afro-American women writers.

Therefore, female characters in literary short fiction do not only merely survive, but also resist and transcend their racial, gender, sexual, class, moral, and/ or other circumscriptions. Consequently, the characterizations of black women sometimes may differ from the imposed stereotypes so that the constructions of womanhood in black literature are redefined through the multiplicity of representations of black characters. Considering that Alice Walker's narratives signify on the work of Zora Neale Hurston, the main concern of this work is to investigate the threads that connect both writers by focusing on the ways in which their female protagonists question or accept the parameters of "the cult of true womanhood" such as submissiveness, sexual fidelity and purity, subservience, fragility, weakness and the inhabitance of the private sphere of the house which were assigned to white women in the nineteenth century. It is assumed that Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker make use of the short-story genre as a way of questioning the conditions of black womanhood in an attempt to make visible the process of black women's liberation form the racist and sexist constraints of American society. If black female characters achieve liberation, it is essential to understand how the portrayal of black women's liberation and agency differ in Hurston and Walker's short-story production.

In a supplementary approach each writer provides an important role for the domestic space in the construction of their female characters' identities. Therefore, factors that influenced the authors' treatment of the woman's question and the development of women's issues of sexism and racism in the short-story collections, as well as the critical tools applicable to their work are some concerns of this thesis. The collection *Spunk- The Selected Short Stories of Zora Neale Hurston,* published after her death in 1985, Hurston's unpublished short-story "Under The Bridge", Alice Walker's *In Love & Trouble-Stories of Black Women* (1973), and Walker's *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (1981) are the focus of the comparative analysis proposed.

Drawing upon black feminist theoretical frameworks, it is meaningful to understand how forms of gender inequality and racialization have been structured by some institutions during the twenties, sixties and seventies, and used as an instrument of ideology to establish a cultural hierarchy. In this way, the stories of black women writers may deal with similar themes and also reflect or signify common concerns. As the Afro-American literary critic, Mary Helen Washington (1975: X) states the main preoccupation of the black woman writer has been the black woman herself - her aspirations, her conflicts, her relationship to her men and her children, her creativity. Therefore, the black woman writer has looked at the black woman from an insider's point of view.

However, the voice of each female black writer is rooted in her educational, cultural, familial circumstances as well as geographical location. Because of that Gates (1990: 4-5) asserts there is no way to construct a monolithic view about "the" black woman's experiences. Women writers focus on the multiplicity of perspectives. They speak from distinct positions based on their specific histories and experiences. The Anglo-Caribbean cultural critic Stuart Hall (1991: 9-20) in agreement with this assumption affirms that people are positioned by the practices and discourses that make them. In this sense, the place where these black women writers were born or raised and, even, their adopted home, their new values, attitudes and life-style are important defining elements in their fiction. In the same vein of Hall's concern, Carole Boyce Davies (1999) recognizes the importance of location and says:

> For it is location in which allows one to speak or not to speak, to be affirmed in one's speech or rejected, to be heard or censored. … The politics of location brings forward a whole host of identifications and associations around concepts of place, placement, displacement, location, dis-location, memberment, dis-memberment, citizenship, alienness, boundaries, barriers, transportations, peripheries, cores and centers. It is about positionality in society based on class, gender, sexuality, age, income. It is also about relationality and the ways in which one is able to access, mediate or reposition oneself, or pass into other spaces given certain other circumstances (153).

Consequently, the voice of the minorities is filtered by their experience. Therefore, black women writers' claims are present in the fragmented worlds in which their characters live. By speaking or telling stories, Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker help to transform female objects into subjects. Thus, the work of such black women writers has been an important inspiration for literary theorists who seek to understand the social role of literature. In this work several trends of theoretical assumptions are used to facilitate the analysis. First, the works of feminist critics such as bell hooks, Barbara Christian, Mary Helen Washington, Carole Boyce Davis seem to be very helpful in providing an important dialogue with race and class. The feminist project is effective when the matters of class and race are intertwined with the studies of gender by Judith Butler and sexuality/ power by Michel Foucault.

The approach of contemporary women writers has much to do with multicultural theory, as it challenges traditional modes of literary interpretation. The plurality of theories on multiculturalism is enhanced going back to the ideas of Frantz Fanon who analyzed the negative consequences of stereotypes produced by western discourses. Later on, Homi K. Bhabha attempted to deconstruct the dichotomies, the oppositions between colonizer/colonized posited by Fanon through theory and language.

In the following section, an overview of the influences on the literary work of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker as well as some characteristics of the time they lived in are presented to build up a background of the selected writers for readers who are from other cultural contexts. The focus of Hurston and Walker's narrative

development is determined by their ideological position. Consequently, ideological commitments are embedded either in the content and the form of the short-fiction they produce. Furthermore, their specific viewpoints are represented under different historical conditions.

Zora Neale Hurston and The Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance Movement, also named the Negro Renaissance represented the birth of a new era. The term has been used to represent the literary and artistic production of black people in New York in the years between the end of the World War I and the Great Depression (1929). The Garvey Movement, the Great Migration and the enlargement of a black community in Harlem influenced the development of the Movement.

The period of the first mass movement of Afro-Americans, the "Back to Africa Movement" (1917-1922) prepared the way for the Harlem Renaissance. "Without Garveyism", as Robert Phillipson (2006: 155) states: "the Harlem Renaissance would have developed along considerably different lines." If Negro were considered the minority and continued to be suppressed from social recognition in White America, the only way to achieve equality was coming back to the native continent Africa as the newspaper article "He Speaks for 6.000,000 – Black Urges It" maintains (see appendix 1). There, the race would be gathered into a nation and would be able to shape their own destiny. The ideas of the Jamaican Marcus Mosiah Garvey had filtered down the younger generation of Afro-American writers who incorporated the black pride and militancy as their main concerns. With the foundation of The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Garvey mobilized Afro-Americans to resist racial oppression as well as to fight for political and economy autonomy.

Zora Neale Hurston in Howard, Lillie. *Zora Neale Hurston*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980.

Coming from different parts of The United States, black writers such as Claude Mckay, Eric Walrond, Rudolph Fisher, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps and Zora Neale Hurston searched for their own paths in the black metropolis in the North. Black writers gave voice not only to the hopes and aspirations, but also to the defeats of Black America. Black writers in Carby's (1987: 166) sense sought "artistic autonomy for their cultural practices and products". In this context, Harlem writers produced editorials, articles, short-stories, dramas and poems showing various aspects of black culture. Some collections of short-stories were produced such as *Gingertown* in 1932 by Claude Mckay; *Tropic Death* in 1926 by Eric Walrond; *Cane* in 1932 by Jean Toomer and *The Ways Of White Folk* in 1934 by Langston Hughes. In these narratives the tensions of being black in white America were dealt with. However, other writers such as Rudolph Fisher who grew up in Providence, Rhode Island and Zora Neale Hurston in rural Florida, never had the chance to publish even one collection of stories at that time. The struggle for manhood enhanced by the black's role in World War I, as Robert Bone (1958: 57) states, "passed on to the Renaissance generation as part of its spiritual heritage."

The Afro-American literary critic and theorist Hazel Carby (1987, 1990) has also demonstrated a contradiction within the movement. She believes that the Renaissance has been constructed as a "masculine affair", a "unique intellectually cohesive and homogeneous historical moment", so that the aspirations of black women were completely relegated to the margins. The 'Talented Tenth'[8], a group of intellectuals of the North faced a great problem with the migration of poor and agrarian Southerner on the streets of their cities at the end of World War I. How would the intellectuals of the race and pride of their black heritage represent this fragmented group of black people?

In 1920, Allain Locke, Charles Johnson and James Weldon Johnson argued for the acceptance and recognition of the black writer in the U.S.A. Locke's anthology *The New Negro* (1925) announced the arrival of the Harlem Renaissance on the literary scene by promoting a debate on the function of Negro art and the role of the Negro artist. The movement's chief spokeman believed that writers attempted "to

[8] This term was first used in 1895 to describe a group of Negroes who were instrumental in effecting a civil rights law in New York. Booker T. Washington had also used the term to describe the self-reliant blacks of his era. This term is used interchangeably with 'Negro middle class'.

repair a damaged group psychology and reshape a warped social perspective." The artist should be free to make his/her choices in the portrayal of characters and situations. Beauty rather than propaganda should be the object of the Negro artist. Locke's approach draws from the folk culture for art's sake. He condemned the idea that art is a vehicle for achieving social, political and economic change, in opposition to Du Bois's notion of art as group-oriented and for the uplift of the race, thus a facilitator to social mobility in society.

By the time Zora Neale Hurston arrived in New York City in 1925 to try her career as a writer, she had been a student at Howard University. There, she published her first short-story "John Redding Goes to Sea", in the magazine of the campus literary group (*The Stylus*) guided by Alain Locke. In N.Y., she sought out Charles S. Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity* Magazine, who at that time encouraged young Negro writers to publish their work. He had published one of her stories, "Drenched in Light", and encouraged her to submit material to the literary contest of the magazine. The short-story "Spunk", which is analyzed in this work and the play of Florida folklife, *Color Struck,* won the 1925 contest. Her participation at the *Opportunity* contest award dinner helped her to make contacts among the black writers in Harlem and broaden her social circle. During the summer of 1926, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Wallace Thurman, the "Niggerati" group, as they called themselves, created a magazine in reaction to Locke's *New Negro* anthology. *FIRE!!* was to be a pure literary magazine and in Robert E. Hemenway's words (1977: 45) a "non-commercial product interested only in arts" within the black community. However, the magazine published only one issue before its failure. Most of the copies were destroyed when the basement where they were kept caught fire.

In the beginning of Hurston's career, she used many strategies to survive in social groups. Although being black and female in the first half of the twentieth century were causes of constraints in America, Hurston showed no signs of having internalized her oppression as a black woman. She never felt deeply hard the burden of white oppression. As her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942: 17) reveals, having lived in her childhood in a "pure negro town" where "the only white folks she met were those who passed through" protected her. Later, in New York, she was not worried about establishing connections with people who might help her. Langston

Hughes (1940) in *The Big Sea* states that she "was certainly the most amusing" of all the Harlem Renaissance artists:

> In her youth she was always getting scholarships and things from wealthy White people, some of whom simply paid her just to sit around and represent the Negro race for them, she did it in such a racy fashion. She was full of side-splitting anecdotes humurous tales and tragicomic stories remembered out of her life in the South … To many of her White friends, no doubt, she was a perfect 'darkie', in the nice meaning they gave the term – that is a naive, childlike, sweet, humorous and highly colored Negro (380).

Along with the black male poets of Harlem, Hurston's biographer Hemenway (1977: 22) adds, that she could gather people's attention immediately by displaying the wide range of storytelling learned from the masters of Joe Clarke's store porch. In these social gatherings, Hurston tried to make herself known. The ideal of accommodation and the conciliatory tone of the pastoral literary mode influenced Zora Neale Hurston's behavior. In many ways she was like the black intellectual leader, Booker T. Washington[9] who believed black people should conform to agrarian traditions of white people to live peacefully. The black man, in his view, is positioned at the bottom of the American society.

At one of these social events, the young female black writer was in touch with Annie Nathan Meyer, a famous novelist, who arranged for her a Barnard scholarship. Later on, she met Mrs. Charlotte Osgood Mason, a well to do white New Yorker who became her patron from 1927 to 1931. At Barnard College of Columbia University she was the only black student at that time. There, under the influence of distinguished anthropologists, such as Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, she improved her skills as a writer and became a social scientist. Boas[10] in his investigation of the intelligence of Negroes challenged the popular notions of folk culture as inferior. The

[9] In opposition the ideals of Booker T. Washington, Du Bois believed that the Negro would achieve better positions in America through higher Education.

[10] Appendix 2- See the letter from Franz Boas to Du Bois on February 14, 1929 on his research of the Negro intelligence. In: W. E. B. Du Bois Library at Special Collections & Archives of University of Massachusetts- Amherst.

differences among races were found in culture and not heredity. As Hurston's biographer Hemenway (1977: 21-22) notes "anthropology gave her the analytical tools she needed to understand her cultural roots." Social science validated her efforts as a writer. By moving between fiction and anthropology, she could reveal the stories of the rural black community in Eatonville. Her work as an anthropologist and her unconventional behavior were not in accordance with the norms people might have expected from a woman of the twenties. As a reminiscence of the Victorian Age, a woman must be a wife and a mother according to the standards of womanhood.

Another fact that contributed to the development of her career was a patronage contract with Mrs. Mason, who was fascinated by everything associated with black life, such as folktales, spirituals, jazz and ragtime. Whites were interested in portraying the Negro as a primitive or a contented slave. At the heart of primitivism there was a quest for simpler, purer, and more elemental modes of life which reinforces the pastoral tendency in the Harlem Renaissance. As the critic Nathan Huggins (1971: 128) notes, black writers "needed supporters and advocates, defense and encouragement from those who were supposed to know." Carl Van Vechten was one of the most influential critics of that time. As a white novelist, music critic and photographer he introduced the Negro writers to prominent publishers. He was known for his inter-racial parties and his tours around Harlem with people who wanted to know the "authentic places". Zora Neale Hurston was a constant presence at those parties. After the end of the period of the Harlem Renaissance, in a letter written to Van Vechten on 23 October 1937, she expressed her admiration and her desire to write a book about him. However, the market place did not provide choices to black writers, as an excerpt of her letter shows:

> Perhaps you do not know it, but you are the person I love best of everybody. But you know my background. Lots of times when I want to make over you, I am so afraid you will think I want something from you. But from the bottom of my heart, I have several of the finest emotions in the ***worl*** wrapped around your image. Nothing in the world would give me greater pleasure than to write about you. But they asked me to write about Fannie HUsrt because her new book was just out, I reckon. I hope they ask me again and let choose my subject. A

> person could really say something if they write about you… Most lovingly, Zora.[11]

Given the political, social, and educational predicaments of black people, Hurston's inability to fight against the limitations of her time cannot be criticized too severely. When looking for a market for fiction, the task of destabilizing stereotypes about black people would be in the background. It was necessary to maintain the idea that the black writer needed the help of the benevolent white person. Thus, to achieve visibility in society, black writers followed the impositions of their white editors and writers. What Hurston produced as fiction or non-fiction, for instance, had to be approved by her patron, as she depended on the financial help of Mrs. Mason. This support of white people has been considered one reason for the failure of the Harlem Renaissance as a black movement. If black writers were constrained by the pressures of their patrons when defining what could be represented, how would they have autonomy to produce art in their own terms? The lack of an established black literary tradition to be followed also contributed to this scenario of decay. Every piece of information about music, poetry, folklore, hoodoo[12] collected by Hurston in her field work should be first shown to her 'godmother'. Nevertheless, Hurston's engagement with the folkways of the Black coincided with the time in which the Negro was in vogue. Her approach to black vernacular tradition during the Harlem Renaissance was very significant and innovative for the culture of the U.S.A. Hurston, in John Lowe's (1994: 7) words, was a twentieth century descendant of an African griot as she retranslated the stories she grew up listening to on the front porch of Joe Clark's

[11] In James Weldon Johnson Collection- Van Vetchen Correspondence, box HUH-I, 1925-41. In: *Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Yale Collection of American Literature.*

[12] Zora Neale Hurston as a graduate student in antrophology at Columbia University did field research on voodoo in New Orleans from 1929 to 1930. African in colonial Lousiana brought skills in medical care and knowledge of public dances of spirit possession, songs, and musical instruments like drums, banjos and tambourines. Southern blacks develop "conjure" (magical means to transform reality) to help people about matters of unfaithful husbands, disloyal friends, gambling reverses, ungrateful children. Voodoo practioners in New Orleans were first identified as "nursing women", and later were called "queens", "doctors" or "workers". They also had a reputation for "fixing" or putting a curse on those who "crossed" them. Enemies can be said ill or even killed if necessary. The "voodoo dolls" pay testimony to these abilities. However, in voodoo, the curse rebounds on the curser. In literature, these powerful traditions which grew from the spiritual and survival practices of enslaved Africans brought to the rural South are generally called "hoodoo". In *Journal of American Folklore* (1931: 317-417), she wrote "Hoodoo in America", the first scholarly text on the subject by a black American folklorist. Later, she wrote *Mules and Men* (1935). In both works, Zora Neale Hurston provides an account of her fieldwork in New Orleans (WARD, Martha. "Voodoo". In: HINE, Darlene Clark. *Black Women in America*. Volume 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp.294-297).

general store at her Eatonville community. When using the richness of black dialect of central Florida and repeating the practices that have ancient spiritual roots, she looked for recognition.

Although not providing racial confrontation, her literary works suggest the existence of female sexual oppression within the community as a consequence of the racial dominance. In her narratives, she is mainly concerned with the experience of black folk, the power relations between men and women within or outside the patriarchal community. While black intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance wanted to improve the social position of all blacks by writing about subjects that promoted the racial uplift and black manhood, Hurston focused on women's oppression. In her autobiography, (1942: 171) she confesses that she "was and am thoroughly sick" of "the race problem". Her interest was in what a man or a woman makes, regardless of his or her color. The racial oppression debate is peripheral in her literary writing. The confrontation between black and white would compromise her art. As she states, she was interested in writing fiction and "not a treatise on sociology." Her literary aesthetics was not engaged in propagandistic motives, but in 'pure art' created by black rural masses. She wrote short-stories, essays, a collection of Eatonville folklore *Mules and Men* (1935) and Caribbean folklore, *Tell My Horse* (1938), two plays: *Color Struck* (1926) and *Mule Bone* (written with Hughes's collaboration in 1931) and four novels. Her most famous novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was published in 1937, but she also published *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939) and *Seraph on the Swanee* (1948). In her last work, her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942: VII-XII), she has been very much criticized for writing what a white audience reading wanted to see. In the foreword of this book, the black contemporary writer Maya Angelou says that Hurston "does not mention even one unpleasant racial incident." Although she considers language true and dialogue authentic, Angelou finds it impossible to recognize the real Zora Neale Hurston by suggesting that she lacks a picture of her own feelings. Hurston's biographer, Hemenway (1977: 272-278) explains that *Dust Tracks* "is an autobiography at war with itself." And the same idea is mentioned by Alice Walker's foreword to Hemenway's biography, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*. According to Walker, Hurston's autobiography was "the most unfortunate thing she ever wrote. After the first several chapters, it rings false."

Hurston died in 1960 at the beginning of the decade which was to see a 'Second Renaissance' in black literature. In trying to rescue the past tradition of black women writers, Alice Walker (1979: 307) realizes that the majority of black women who tried to make a living by writing, "died in obscurity and poverty usually before their time". Hurston, for instance, was buried in a segregated cemetery[13] and her grave in Fort Pierce, remained unmarked until Walker's discovery of it, and later on her initiative to provide a grave marker that says:

> "Zora Neale Hurston
> 'A Genius of the South'
> Novelist Folklorist Anthropologist
> 1901-1960".

Walker's encountering of Hurston's grave coincided with the interest in celebrating Afro-American literature and history in the seventies. When bringing Hurston's name into the public fore and consequently her work into the academic sphere, Alice Walker not only acclaimed the importance of her predecessor writer, but she mainly established her own way of 'being/becoming' a writer as is demonstrated in the next part of this introduction.

Alice Walker and The Second Harlem Renaissance

Afro-American contemporary writers have been influenced by earlier texts, themes, plots and devices previously mentioned. As critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979: 49), reinforce "the woman writer …. searches for a female model not because she wants dutifully to comply with male definitions of her 'femininity' but

[13] It is interesting to notice that Hurston in a letter to Du Bois asked for the construction of a cemetery to black artists. By doing that she reproduced the division among black and white people. See letter at appendix 3.

In: WALKER, Alice, PARMAR, Pratibha. *Warrior Marks- Female Genital Mutilation and The Sexual Bliding of Women.* San Diego: A Harvest Book, 1993, p. 120.

because she must legitimize her own rebellious endeavors." Therefore, the inter-textual relationship among female texts of Afro-American is based on a harmonious system in which a female writer is 'actively seeking a female predecessor'. Consequently, without predecessors, a writer cannot write since texts enable other texts. This is described by Alice Walker (1983: 3-14) in her article "Saving the Life that is Your Own: The Importance of Models in the Artist's Life" of the *In Search Collection*. She assumes her search for an exemplary female 'voice' of the black South and by doing that she proclaims Zora Neale Hurston her precursor and literary model. In 1970, when looking for material on voodoo practices in rural southern communities, Alice Walker discovered *Mules and Men,* the first book she encountered about the unknown writer Zora Neale Hurston. From this moment on, Hurston became Walker's source of nurturance. The presence of models as it is perceived by Alice Walker (1979: 12) enriches and enlarges one's view of existence. Zora, in Walker's words, "had already done a thorough job of preparing the ground over which she [I] was moving (…)". In this sense, the artist needs to have a model to be followed, not only in literature, but also in life. The black movements[14] and especially black feminism of the 1960s and 1970s provided a socio-cultural context in which women made their voices heard. The second Black Renaissance in art, writing and music coincided with the Civil Rights Movements which demanded the end of social segregation and marginalization of Afro-Americans at public means of transportation and places. Contemporary black women writers such as: Audre Lorde, Gloria Naylor, June Jordan, Nikki Giovani, Rita Dove, Sonia Sanchez, Toni Cade Bambara and Toni Morrison were conscious of racial oppression in white America. But race was not the only paradigm to be considered in the social system. Gender and class were also essential elements in the rethinking and rewriting of the majority/ minority relations. By questioning not only the canon, but also the sexist contemporary Afro-American fiction, these writers re-politicize their fiction and define the roles which govern 'womanhood' and 'manhood'. Gender seems to be the most powerful category in the

[14] Black leaders such as Martin Luther and Malcom X guided different manifestations in the United States. If King defended the Negro pacific resistance towards the social injustices, Malcom X, as the leader of the Black Muslim Movement declared the rage against white people. Another radical group of the black Movement, the Black Panthers created an armed organization. The members of this group believed that the condition of equality and social mobility would be only provided by the work within the ethnic community.

debate of double or even triple repression during this time as the Afro-American critic Barbara Christian (1979) highlights:

> The effect of the multiple oppression of race, class, and gender is not merely arithmetic. That is, one cannot say only that in addition to racism, black women have had to confront the problem of sexism. Rather, we must recognize that issues of class and race alter one's experience of gender, just as gender alters one's experience of class and race (123).

In this sense, the differences of race, culture, class and gender have to be considered in black women's writing so that these boundary crossings may promote the deconstruction of essentialist categories. Therefore, these new parameters in black women's literature provide the reshaping of the literary canon. As Gates (1990: 4) realizes the forgotten, neglected or suppressed literary texts are rediscovered in the same way that critical works by and about black women's writing have been produced. Afro-American women's writing in the second Harlem Renaissance is committed to literary criticism as a vehicle for social change.

In this panorama of growth of women writers, Alice Walker has become most known for her novel *The Color Purple* (1982), which has been produced by Steven Spielberg as a movie in 1985. She has consolidated her career among black contemporary women writers. She was born in Eatonton, Georgia, the south of the United States and in her literary work, as she asserts in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983: 250), she portrays the oppressions, insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women in white America. She explores the lives of poor, rural and Southern blacks in her fiction. She also employs folklore as Hurston did to convey the values of blacks' ancestors. Women do not have many perspectives in an oppressive society, but they carry the traditions of their families that are (sometimes) not recognized by whites. They sing at the churches, cultivate beautiful gardens and also make handmade quilts.

Racial and sexual relations within the patriarchal community are the main topics of her narratives.[15] Walker (1983: XI-XII) considers herself a *womanist* and by creating the womanist aesthetic, she aims to destroy the negative connotations of a black woman as a sexual object, an exotic symbol, and a childish woman. Reading between the lines of her definition, Walker emphasizes the superiority of a black woman in relation to a white woman as highlighted in the following excerpt:

> You acting womanish, i.e., like woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or will*ful* behavior.(…) Acting grown up (…) Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown" Responsible. In charge. Serious (XI).

A black woman needs no one to control her life as a child does. She is able to make her own decisions as she takes responsibility for her own choices. By presenting positive characteristics for every black woman, she classifies the whole group of black women based on specific and individual characteristics. However, this polemic classification reproduces a binary opposition in which each part of the polarity has a monolithic view. Differences among people within a single group cannot be ignored. Later, she amplifies her definition by saying that a *womanist* is "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people – male and female." At this moment, she promotes the integration among black men and women in American society. This definition

[15]Alice Walker wrote books of poetry: *Once* (1968), *Revolutionary Petunia & Other Poems* (1972), Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll see You in the Morning (1979), Horses Make a Landscape Beautiful (1984), Her Blue Body Everything We Know, Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth: New Poems (2003), A Poem Traveled Down My Arms: Poems and Drawings (2003), two collections of short-stories: *In Love & Trouble- Stories of Black Women* (1973) and *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (1981), critical essays: *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1983), *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult* (1996), *Living by the Word* (1988) and *Anything We Love Can Be Saved- A Writer's Activism* (1997), *Sent by Earth: A Message from the Grandmother Spirit* and novels: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) , *Meridian* (1976)*, The Color Purple* (1982)*, The Temple of My Familiar* (1989)*, Possessing The Secret of Joy* (1992)*, By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1998), *The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart* (2000*), Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart* (2004), and also a critical book of female genital mutilation with Pratibha Parmar, *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women* (1993), a collection of the writings of Zora Neale Hurston and a biography of Langston Hughes, and two multi-genre collections: *Banned* (1996) and *Sent By Earth: A Message from the Grandmother Spirit after the Bombing of World Trade Center* (2001).

provides an answer to the debate on the focus of black women's writing concerning issues of racism and/or sexism.

In an interview with the Afro-American literary critic, Mary Helen Washington (1973: 2), Walker identifies three survival strategies employed by her female characters in her narratives. There are three cycles which refer to different experiences black women have in America. In the first cycle, women in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, are not aware of their richness and are *suspended* by the pressures in society. They are victims of racial and sexual oppression. The content of their lives is pain, suffering, violence, poverty and oppression. Walker appropriates the term "mules of the world' created by Zora Neale Hurston to classify women who belong to this first cycle. In Walker's (1973) words women:

> were suspended in a time in history where the options for Black women were severely limited … And they either kill themselves or they are used up by the man, or by the children, or by … whatever the pressures against them. And they cannot go anywhere. I mean, you can not, you just can not move, until there is room for you to move into. And that's the way I see many of the women I have created in fiction. They are closer to my mother's generation than to mine. They had few choices (6).

Women of the second cycle, belong to the period in which black people wanted to take part of the American mainstream (1940-1950). They suffer from psychological violence as they give up their roots. However, they are able to shape their lives in a different way from their communities. They are *assimilated* by the values of white America.

In the third cycle, women are influenced by the movement of the sixties (Black Power, the Muslims, the Panthers). The political events and the freedom movement have created new options for black people in general and of Black women in particular. As Walker (1973: 211) asserts in the second part of her interview with Mary Helen Washington, the political changes affect the choices and life-styles of people in her narratives. And because of that, women characters have varied, living models of how it is possible to live within a new social space. Through suffering they

create new routes for them. A new type of woman emerges when she rediscovers value, creativity and is reintegrated into society. To sum up, the critic Washington (1993: 46) states in "An Essay on Alice Walker", that these women are "more fully conscious of their political and psychological oppression and more capable of creating new options for themselves". Once more, after a "harsh imitation", they are "ready to occupy and claim any new territory", as happens with the protagonist of Walker's most famous novel *The Color Purple.*

Although, Walker shows much influence from the movement of the 1920s, she searches for more experimental modes of literature, mainly in short-story writing. She seems to be concerned with what Toni Cade Bambara talks about in an interview to Beverley Guy-Sherftall ,"Commitment Toni Cade Bambara Speaks". According to this contemporary writer, the reader learns lessons and reflects upon themes when reading short-stories. In justifying her use of the genre of short-fiction Bambara (1979) asserts:

> … the short-story genre (…) can creep up on your blind side. The reader comes to the short-story with a mind-set different than that with which he approaches the big book, and a different set of controls operating which is why I think short-story is far more effective in terms of teaching lessons (241).

And it is embedded in this atmosphere that readers face Walker's first collection of short-stories *In Love & Trouble-Stories of Black Women* (1973)[16]*,* in which she presents several women who are involved in a conflicted relationship with the oppressor such as husbands, lovers, fathers, daughters, God and tradition. As Washington (1973) states some of these women are "cruelly exploited, spirits and bodies mutilated, relegated to the most narrowed and confining lives, sometimes driven to madness." On the other hand, the stories of her second collection, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (1981)*,* deals with some issues such as abortion, rape, inter-racial relationship, black pride, sexual liberation, which preoccupied blacks and women during the sixties and during the political tensions within the Black Power/Black Arts Movements. Nevertheless, the stories of both collections were

[16] This collection was nominated for the National Book Award and received a Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Award from the National Institute of Arts and letters. In: "Alice Walker". *Black Women in America.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 304-306 (volume 3)

written in different political and historical contexts. As the critic Wolfgang Karrer (1993) states these contemporary writers have established a dialogue between Afro-American criticism and feminism rather than focusing on the Black Aesthetics.

Therefore, in order to investigate the threads that connect the contemporary, writer Alice Walker to her predecessor Zora Neale Hurston, this **Introduction** has started with a brief overview of the development of black writing focusing on black women's literary production, mainly some aspects of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker's life, work and the historical influences they suffered throughout their careers. This background will help to understand the analysis of the differences and similarities of the portrayal of black women characters in some short-stories in their attempt to liberate themselves from the parameters of the "true womanhood".

Chapters One and Two deal with the analysis of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker's short stories respectively. Based on the hypothesis that Hurston and Walker question the conditions of black womanhood through their stories within home space, the investigation looks at the ways in which a black woman character, bound to the racist and narrow parameters of society, liberates herself from the oppressive system, by (de) constructing a counter-position to the established patriarchal power from an anti-essentialist perspective. It is assumed that Southern cultural practices, particularly the cult of Southern womanhood and its ideals of passivity and voicelessness are questioned and critiqued within the marital relationships portrayed in the short fiction of both writers. How do black women challenge the notions of the homogenized center or accept or reinforce their "roles" as subjects or objects of subordination? In which ways does marriage uphold the ideology of manhood and the female inferiority?

In **Chapter One,** Hurston's unpublished short-story "Under the Bridge"[17], as well as the stories "Sweat"[18], "Spunk"[19] and "The Gilded Six-Bits[20], later published in

[17] Professor Joseph T. Skerrett brought this short-story in one of our meetings at University of Massachusetts - Amherst in May 2006. Later on, in December of the same year, I found a copy of the story in the correspondences, cards and manuscripts of Zora Neale Hurston in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, N.Y. The story is present in appendix 4.
A W.E. B. Du Bois letter asking Hurston's permission to enter the story in the prize contest of *The Crisis* in 1926 is found at the W.E. B. Du Bois Special Collection and Archives at UMASS- Amherst. A response to this request is not found there. (See appendix 5)

Spunk – The Selected Stories of Zora Neale Hurston (1985) are analyzed. Though oppression does not come from the external white world, Hurston denounces the violence committed against black women within their fictional black community. The traditional notion of male dominance and female subordination foregrounds the characters' relationship. Although not focusing on autonomous and independent characters, Hurston asserts the power of black women by reclaiming their black cultural roots. The chapter draws attention to the elements, such as the home space in the marital relationship, the cosmic/symbolic space, and the use of the black vernacular English in the section entitled The Language Space.

Chapter two, deals with Alice Walker's short stories "Roselily" and "Really Doesn't Crime Pay?" in the collection *In Love & Trouble – Stories of Black Women* and the stories "Coming Apart- By Way of Introduction to Lorde, Teish and Gardner" and "Porn" in *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down.* This chapter demonstrates black female characters' agency towards the oppression inflicted upon them by institutions such as family and marriage, means of communication through media images in pornographic magazines, and the stereotypes which have been created by the traditions of White America which limit their possibilities for becoming full independent beings. Agency is inter-related to the identities negotiated by them when accepting or rejecting the established parameters of black womanhood.

In **Chapter Three** it is essential to verify the differences of female agency towards the parameters of black womanhood as well as the narrative strategies used by both writers. In the beginning, I stretch back into Harold Bloom's 'anxiety of influence' theory and the work of feminists concerning the literary tradition of women writers in the nineteenth century. These theories give way to the critical work of "Signifyin(g)" of Henry Louis Gates. In the black context, Signifyin(g) means repetition with revision of the past. Therefore, this chapter establishes Hurston as a pioneer in the development of women's writing tradition, connecting her with the contemporary writer Alice Walker. When making use of theoreticians of multiculturalism critique such as Henry Louis Gates and Homi Bhabha and the

[18] "Sweat" was originally published in *Fire!!* 1926.
[19] Published originally at *Opportunity 3.* June, 1925, 171-73.
[20] This story first appeared in Story, 3. August 1933, 60-70 and has been published in a number of anthologies. This is her last short-story published before she wrote the novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine.*

dialogism of Mikhail Bakhtin, the chapter considers the deconstruction of the black sign, the (non)/ transformation of the subject of the culture in the process of destabilization of the roles of womanhood as well as a classification of types of agency according to anthropologist-linguists. At the beginning of this chapter as well as in the previous ones, I write in italics an overview of what is to be developed and, in the end, a partial conclusion of the main topics dealt with.

Final Thoughts presents the main concerns of this investigation in the realm of the (de) construction of black womanhood in the selected short-prose fiction of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker. Therefore, the process of 'Signifyin(g)' in which Walker is engaged reveals the differences between her characters' portrayal and Hurston's portrayals.

CHAPTER ONE

ZORA NEALE HURSTON: FEMALE CHARACTERS THROUGH MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

This chapter deals with Hurston's unpublished short-story "Under the Bridge", as well as "Sweat", "Spunk" and "The Gilded Six-Bits", published in Spunk – The Selected Stories of Zora Neale Hurston. The chapter does not aim to analyze each short-story separately. Instead it examines how the dialogue in these stories provides examples which converge to the portrayal of black female characters by focusing on their 'inner struggle' as well as their acceptance or rejection of the notions of womanhood. The cult of true womanhood in Carby's terms (1987) is significantly an attempt to bring order and coherence to women's live. Yet, as she asserts, "the figurations of black women" exist in "a stark contrast with the values embodied in the cult of true womanhood". It is precisely the multiplicity of black women's individual and shared experiences in their fictional black communities, their "roles" as subjects or objects of subordination and the enlargement of the narrow constructions of black womanhood that constitute the main concerns of this chapter. In order to expose these assumptions this chapter is divided into three sections: The Home Space in Marital Relationships, The Cosmic/Symbolic Space and The Language Space.

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The majority of Hurston's black female characters in the selected short-stories of this chapter are married: Vangie in "Under the Bridge", Delia Jones in "Sweat", Lena in "Spunk", and Missie May in "The Gilded Six-Bits". Although confined to domesticity, some of them are able to exhibit possibilities of agency in the community

in which they live: Vangie, a pretty young wife less than 20, “black eyes and brown skin”, a character “who irradiates ectasy” (198) is married with Luke Mims, the father-husband who is 58; Delia Jones, a washwoman does the laundry for white people, is married with the unemployed character Sykes; Lena, a “small pretty woman” with the “cuckolded, nervous and cowardly” husband Joe; and finally the young couple, Missie May with “her dark skin and stiff young breasts” and Joe Banks who works for the Fertilizer Company in town.

The realm of male/female power relationships manifests itself differently in each of these stories. Most of the time, the coercive structure of marriage demonstrates power in the hands of men. In this sense, the parameters within which women are considered, valued, measured are filtered by the females’ husbands or lovers. As Carby explains (1987: 6) black women had to confront domestic ideologies and conventions of true womanhood which excluded black women from the definition of ‘woman’. Black women were excluded from dominant codes of morality and attributes such as delicacy, shame, blessing, purity, submissiveness, piety, and even though absent from the definition of woman, black womanhood was linked to overt sexuality and taboo sexual practices. Black women characters in Hurston’s selected stories however do not embody the negative sexual values assigned to them. Although submitted to the domestic sphere and inheriting at times a ‘passive’ positioning, their sexuality does not have a negative connotation. Female sexuality, for instance, is almost always linked to beauty and is the way through which agency is enacted. Hurston’s women characters at times seem to adopt the dominant model of womanhood in which the woman is in need of protection so that their power works in the private sphere. In this sense, the domain of home is what defines womanhood. Therefore, motherhood in the stories “Under the Bridge”, “Sweat”, “Spunk” and “The Gilded Six-Bits” is not a requirement to black womanhood.

In the Hurston’s narratives dealt with in this chapter the marital relationships portrayed are destabilized by the presence of another man or woman. Vangie suffers silently from her gradual attachment to Artie, the 22 years old son with his ‘brownish black skin’. The reader may infer that the difference in ages might be the central conflict in “Under the Bridge”, however, the problem seems to be the way the relationship between father and son has been affected by Vangie’s arrival. As it is

stated by the son: " …we been getting' long all dese years, den w'en Pop gets 'round 60 he got to jump up and get married" (190). At the beginning of the story, the reader is introduced to a situation in which the female character carries the element of instability. When emphasizing the idea that there is peace again with Artie and his beloved father, the reader is reminded that in a recent past, problems have destabilized their relationship. Father and son have lived together since he was nine years old. As the third element, she has come to the house modifying the parameters that guided their lives. She is the destabilizing force which has changed their everyday routines. This assumption is reinforced by Artie's statement: "Ah'm all he's got – Ah mean till you came" (190). But later in the story, the son is able to accept his stepmother, as "she is not that ogre person he had pictured before he looked at. She was pretty. She was obliging and after all she was only a kid, grateful for any little kindness shown her." Artie says that if his father is happy he will be too, and because of that "[he'll] do all [he] kin to make it nice for her" (190).

In "Sweat", Delia Jones, the hard-working and religious woman, is working around the house while her husband Sykes is away. She seems not to be worried about him, but about her horse and buckboard that are with him. She assumes the role of the economic provider of the house and this represents a threat to her husband's manhood. However, Sykes' need to exercise power and authority over others reveals his inadequacy to society. In order to get rid of his wife so that he can stay with his lover Bertha, the black male character chooses to play with the emotions of his wife, first by throwing next to her shoulder his "long, round, limp and black whip" (38) which looks like a snake, and later by bringing a snake itself into the house. He knows that Delia is terrified of snakes and he takes advantage of her fear.

Delia continues her work and decides to ignore him, but he does not stop teasing her and seems to be looking for something to argue with her. He criticizes her work for white people and by doing so reveals his frustration in not being included in the white system: "Ah done tole you time and again to keep them white folks clothes outa dis house" (39). In this sense, he wants to oppress his wife in the same way he feels oppressed by white people. White oppression influences the power relations of this black couple. If he cannot belong to the white center, he will repeat the attitudes of white people in order to (maybe) be recognized by them. As Frantz Fanon (1986:

10) observes in *Black Skin, White Masks*, black people make use of the repetition strategy, which means imitation of what is done by white people. However, this does not guarantee their acceptance and most of the time they remain marginalized. Racism reinforces the black man's need to imitate the oppressor's conventions. On the other hand, the male character in "Sweat" with his lover, Bertha, has authority to make decisions when assuming the role of the economic provider and paying her room rent at "the only house in town that would have taken her in" (45). Nevertheless, his masculinity is enhanced by his power and status over her.

Lena in "Spunk" is directly involved in an extra-marital relationship with the most powerful and brave man in town, Spunk Banks. He is not scared of anything. He walks with her without shame or fear as demonstrated by the couple's arrival at the village: "a giant of a brown- skinned man sauntered up the one street of the village and out into the palmetto thickets with a small pretty woman clinging lovingly to his arm" (1). Lena has been guided by Spunk who dictates the order to be followed. This narrative, unlike the other narratives presented, is male centered. The black woman seems to be an appendage of black male characters. In this story, the reader is aware that hegemonic manhood is defined in terms of virility, physical strength and braveness. In this example and throughout the story, the power relations are established by female subordination in opposition to the hero of the town, Spunk. The woman, Lena, whether in a marital relationship or an extra-marital affair, is an object of both male characters' desire – her lover Spunk, and her husband Joe.

In "The Gilded Six-Bits", the destabilization of the marriage of Missie May and Joe is promoted by the arrival of a new character in town. Slemmons, the newcomer has been to "spots and places – Memphis, Chicago, Jacksonville, Philadelphia and so on" (58). The place where he is from does not matter. However, he has been to many places and had many opportunities in his life. Whatever has been established since the beginning of their marriage may suffer from influences of new people and events in town. Joe is impressed by Slemmons' dress, manners, his round belly, which to Joe's mind is a sign of his richness. He believes his belly makes him look like a well to do white man, and because of that Joe wishes he had a belly like that. He is not happy with his social condition and his frustration emerges only by the comparison to the life of another man who comes from outside. The newcomer

destabilizes the notions that have been constructed by Joe. Confronted by a man who has travelled to many places and has had all he wanted, makes Joe inferior. But when Missie May sees Slemmons for the first time, she immediately notes his mouth full of gold teeth. His figure impresses her in a way that she also wants some gold for her husband. It is the first time in the narrative that she is interested in wealth. Her wish to find gold surprises Joe and also the reader. Aware of the power implied by having money and Joe's inability to have gold, she daydreams:

> You don't know whut been lost' round heah. Maybe somebody way back in memorial times lost they gold money and went on off and it ain't never been found. And then if we wuz to find it, you could wear some 'thout havin'no gang of womens lak dat Slemmons say he got (60).

Herein lies the danger. Missie May's sudden change of mind is meaningful to the development of the next events in the narrative. Until now she has been a very comprehensible woman, a lovely wife who could afford her husband's weakness. Now her parameters have changed as she has been confronted with a new value concerning the material life. Missie May is willing to do what is necessary to bring to fruition her latest wish of giving some gold to her husband. She wishes her husband could have a better position in the community. However, she fears Joe's obtaining gold as Slemmons did, through involvement with other women. Now, the initial behavior of fascination and delight of the male protagonist characterizes the female character.

The appeal for an element of destabilization surrounding these stories questions the position of marginality assigned to black women's experience and voice in marriage, as the next section attempts to demonstrate.

The Home Space in Marital Relationships

Marriage and marital problems constitute the major theme in Hurston's selected stories. However, in her autobiography *Dust Tracks* (1942), Zora Neale

Hurston states that she is no expert on that subject. She was unhappy with her first marriage which lasted only some months, and in her second marital relationship she was not able to give up her career as her husband wanted. In this view, her personal experience might have influenced her unromantic portrayal of marriage. As the literary critic, Lillie Howard (1977: 171) observes, instead of presenting the romantic marital relationship, Hurston depicts marriage with infidelity, jealousy, violence and hatred. Marriage, however, can be successful if the couple is committed to love, trust, and respect, and is able to negotiate differences. The marital relationship played out in the opposite way would be short-lived or a failure.

In "Under the Bridge", the female character Vangie is loved by Luke and she is also responsible for the household chores. She assumes a subordinate role of housewife when following the narrow constructions of womanhood. If Vangie takes care of Luke and everything linked to him, Artie will be the one who starts helping her with the household activities. The triangle has been formed and the oppositions between father (old/ physically weak) and son (young/strong) are established. Each character is attached to each other in different ways, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

> She was the mistress of his comfortable household and her big stepson had said he was glad she was there. For three weeks he had sulked in sullen silence. But now- since morning- he had nothing only permitted her to make up to him, he spent his leisure doing errands for her, or displaying his huge strength for her entertainment (190).

As characters start interacting, they set the stage in which human instincts complicate the story. Artie has truly changed his mind towards Vangie and has started helping her with household jobs. Consequently, they became more attached to each other. However, the characterization of father and son tends to increase the bridge between them. By observing Artie through Luke's "wrinkled eyelids" (191), the narrator portrays the son as a "big brown boy" with "gnarled hands" comparing them to roots and his "brownish black skin" to the soil. The metaphorical language highlights the differences between father and son, providing a great deal of Artie's

youth and strength in opposition to the aging and not strong Luke. Also, his wrinkles, through the narrator's view are not associated with the character's knowledge and wisdom. In the next passage, the third person narrator, who is not neutral in any moment of the narrative, describes Artie in a very powerful way and comments on Luke's possible thoughts.

> But like the moist black earth he worked, he held within everything of good and evil. He watched Artie from the corner of his wrinkled eyelids. How he hated that big form that threw its shadow between Vangie and him! How he loved his dear boy, is baby now grown to such splendid manhood! (192)

Although not all young people are strong, the narrator wants to depict Artie as strong. He is described as a character of two dimensions, the one who carries in himself the good and the evil as the passage above clearly illustrates. But the reader may suspect this characterization of the grown up Artie. Luke's awareness of Artie's manhood makes him uncomfortable. Luke has an internal conflict in his feelings towards Artie. He cannot deny his love for his own son but, on the other hand, Luke is not able to suppress his rage against Artie.

The device of portraying male characters in opposite ways is also found in "The Gilded Six-Bits". Joe's fascination with Slemmons determines the fixed oppositions between them. The narrator chooses to present the dichotomy, Joe (inferior) and Slemmons (superior). Joe focuses on what he could not have been or done. In fact, the only valuable thing he has is his wife's love and because of that he wants to show off Missie May. His wife, in being portrayed as an object helps to rescue her husband's pride. Slemmons, on the other hand, has accumulated money given to him by women. He has been successful with white women everywhere and this fact makes him more powerful.

But the reader may not rely upon Slemmons characterization. Why did this character exchange his life from urban areas with lots of opportunities for a simple life in a rural area? The reader does not yet have the answer to this question. As is often typical of an unreliable narrator, elements of Slemmons characterization are

inserted in order to convince the reader that he is really like that. However, things are not what they seem.

The two male characters who compete for Lena's love in "Spunk" are also described in opposite ways. The character's name is the title of the story and his real name is not just an external element of the subject. In this case the name highlights his characterization as a brave man. As critic Lillie Howard (1980) suggests, this is "a story of a man who uses his spunk to intimidate and manipulate others." Therefore, his name is linked to his most important characterization in the narrative. The selected name shows his identity and what he is. Although Spunk is considered the hero, it is Joe who engages one symbolic journey to reclaim from what has been lost, that means not only his wife, but also his reputation within his community.

When readers are introduced to the married couple in "Under the Bridge", they have no idea of how Luke and Vangie have approached each other, and the reason for their marital communion. Luke's power over his wife Vangie has to be preserved and the way he finds to assure his power is through his words. He is the powerful one, the authoritative one, who speaks. The rules are set again when he treats Vangie as his property. The power of determining, giving the rules is Luke's; the passive powerlessness is Vangie's. He confirms that Vangie belongs to him and to no one else. In the silent space of 'home', he exerts his power over her. He verifies this when he says: "Youse mah wife", […] and closed his gnarled black hand upon her brown one. [..] Vangie did not return the cares, but neither did she draw her hand away. So Luke was satisfied" (191). The alternating voice of character and narrator in this example does not show any distinction between them as they could speak for each other. The voice of the narrator in the indirect discourse reveals important aspects of both characters such as Luke's age emphasized by the adjective "gnarled" and Vangie's immobility in reaction to his caress. Even more, Luke is not able to understand that her silence and inertia do not mean agreement. She cannot do anything differently from what she did in that moment. She is not free to choose and not powerful enough to make her private world conform to her own reality. When behaving in the way her 'owner' wants, she makes use of the Afro-American strategy of masking. She is consciously suppressing what she truly feels. In this moment, silence masks hidden facts and becomes a device to save Vangie's life. As Ralph

Ellison (1964: 55) asserts in his book of criticism *Shadow and Act* the masks are worn for the "purposes of aggression as well as defense… the motives hidden behind the mask are as numerous as the ambiguities the mask conceals." In the context of "Under the Bridge", Vangie is not permitted speech, and this lack of verbal initiative is accepted by the reader who realizes that there is no other exit to this situation. Silence in this way is the character's mask. Following another line of thought, the Brazilian critic Eni Orlandi (1997) has argued for the importance of silence in the process of signification. Despite the fact that silence has been excluded and relegated to a secondary position, it does not mean lack of words. Silence has as many interpretations as words and as such it guarantees the movement of meanings. Although neither visible and nor easily interpretated, silence as shown in this example, converges with the use of the mask in the Afro-American terms. Silence can be seen as an expression of emotions, revolt, discipline, power or resistance. It pushes the limits of what can be said, and just as when something is said, other meanings are left over.

Returning to "Under the Bridge", another way of Luke's protecting what he considers his property (Vangie) is shown when he reminds his son that Artie is going to have his twenty acres as soon as he marries. But Artie does not think about this possibility and this certainly is an indication that Artie loves his father's wife.

Marriage in "Sweat" determines the place and role assigned to the married couple and dictates a set of rules and a code of behavior to both man and woman in each community. In "Sweat", however, the reader observes that the black couple diverges from the dominant conventions of womanhood and manhood. Although, Delia's work is connected with the domestic sphere, this black female character earns her own money to survive. In contrast to the white dominant model of womanhood, she encompasses a sense of autonomy and strength when struggling for her existence. She seems to be very organized in doing her job in the best way she can do it. She is the provider of her own material life. Working for white people is not a great problem to her and this gives us a hint that the narrator believes that black and white people can live peacefully in the same community. Everything in the beginning of the story is linked to Delia's inner and external world and is mainly told by the third person narrator.

The reader may infer that Vangie, a young and beautiful girl in "Under the Bridge", has married with the old Luke to have a better life and someone to support her economically. The same cannot be said about Delia Jones and Sykes in "Sweat". Why did the marriage happen? Readers are given some hints that in the beginning of Delia Jones and Sykes' marriage there was love. However, Sykes, not satisfied with his wife, criticizes her behavior, despises her attachment to religion and says: "You ain't nothing but a hypocrite. One of them amen-corner Christians- sing, whoop, and shout, then come home and wash white folks' clothes on the Sabbath" (40). These last sentences together with other insults of Sykes confirm his lack of love. If love has been once the reason for their marriage for fifteen years, now he is full of hatred for her. For this reason, the narrator concentrates on Sykes' childish behavior: "He stepped roughly upon the whitest pile of things, kicking them helter-skelter as he crossed the room" (41). Although he despises her job, he is not able to provide any means for her to stop working. Sykes' not accepting her job is associated with racism and his frustration in not following the codes which govern manhood.

Aware of his infidelity, Delia reflects upon their married life and reaches at some conclusions. The narrator assumes the characters' perspective and shows what comes to her mind while she lays awake:

> Not an image left standing along the way. Anything like flowers had long ago been drowned in the salty stream that had been passed from her heart. Her tears, her sweat, her blood. She had brought love to the union and he had brought a longing after the flesh. Two months after the wedding, he had given her the first brutal beating. She had the memory of his numerous trips to Orlando with all his wages when he had returned to her penniless, even before the first year had passed. She was young and soft then, but now she thought of her knotty, muscled limbs, her harsh knuckly hands, and drew herself up into an unhappy little ball in the middle of the big feather bed. Too late now to hope for love, even if it were not Bertha it would be someone else. This case differed from the others only in that she was bolder than the others. Too late for everything except her little home. She had built it for her old days, and planted one by one the trees and flowers there. It was lovely to her, lovely (41).

The strong image of drowned flowers in the salty stream represents exactly what Delia feels at this moment of insight. The love she once has felt for Sykes has been destroyed in the same way the flowers were in this example. She is conscious of having brought love to their marital relationship. Sykes, on the other hand, since the very beginning of their union has despised her. The suffering of not being loved for all those years and the recognition of Sykes as a lusty and irresponsible man hurts her. There is also a sense of losing her softness and youth as her physical characterization above – "thin, stooped shoulders, poor little body", her "bare knuckly hands" and "muscled limbs" – shows. She has become another woman since they married. The way she was psychologically mistreated and abused has destroyed her beauty, body, and also her soul. She has been entrapped by the institution of marriage. However, the act of cultivating her garden, planting trees demonstrates her strength to survive in that oppressive condition. Although Delia carries the residual signs of frustration, hope has never been abandoned by this female character in "Sweat".

In "Spunk", readers do not know details of the married life of Lena and Joe as they do the details of the couples Delia Jones and Sykes in "Sweat" and Missie May and Joe in "The Gilded Six-Bits". In this last short-story, one of the first appearances of the female character Missie May is marked by an atmosphere of happiness and sensuality. The couple performs a ritual every Saturday morning where Joe throws "silver dollars in the floor for her to pick up and pile beside her plate at dinner" (55). Lena, in "Spunk" is introduced to the reader not beside her husband, but with her lover from the very beginning of the story. In this narrative, as in "Under the Bridge", the married woman is seen as the husband's possession. But, in "Spunk", characters are influenced by the rules of their black community since they do not live in isolation and they do interact with others. In all Hurston's stories characters are involved in love triangles and the scenes are set by an external voice from the community in which they live. However, in "Under the Bridge" the story is constructed in a claustrophobic way as there are no neighbors with whom Vangie, Artie, and Luke share, explain or complain about their true feelings. Characters in this story are not inserted within a community as in the other stories of the *Spunk* collection analyzed in this thesis.

A common device used in two other narratives selected is the presence of the black community. The village men who always appear on the front porch of Joe Clark's store function as providers of moral judgment in "Spunk" and also in "Sweat". They observe the characters' comings and goings and usually make comments on characters' lives. They are aware of the entrapped situation in which characters live. They know about Joe and his hatred for the rival Spunk, and Delia in facing a rattlesnake in a cage in the kitchen of her house. In the first story mentioned, "Spunk", the community gives its opinion in order to influence Joe, "a round – shouldered figure in overalls … nervously in the door" (1). As a man he does not fit the moral values of the community and because of that he has to eliminate his feeling of inadequacy as in: "Tain't even decent for a man to take like he do." The community's words seem to be catalyst for his confrontation with Spunk: **"**Well, Ah'm goin' after her to-day. Ah'm goin and' fetch her back. Spunk done gone too fur" (2). The restricted dialogue between both Joe and the village men suggests that the truth of his wife's betrayal is well known by everyone. Behind Joe's back, the men laughed at him. Ashamed of the village men gossip, he grabs a razor, an instrument that seems to give him power to face his enemy in the ensuing tense confrontation. The townsmen are aware of the violent acts that might be performed by Joe, but they are not worried about their lives. They see Joe with his razor and do not try to stop him. They could have avoided the confrontation between Joe and the brave Spunk. The community has the same function as the chrorus of a Greek tragedy. As a character, both the community and the chorus in a play have voice to give advice, provide opinions, ask questions and sometimes to take the control of the narrative when criticizing the social and moral values of society. Both work as a public voice or as an ideal spectator by reacting for/against the main events of the story. The chorus as well as the community express dramatic emotions. As Georg Lukács (2007: 34) asserts in *A Teoria do Romance,* the chorus in the Greek tragedy has an artistic function and provides the essence or the background of the actors' action. The grand words which give meaning to the drama are revealed. The chorus crystallizes the situation and the characters' fate. Significantly, African and Afro-American cultural forms emphasize the importance of "the entire community" involved in the telling of a story. As Roger Abrahams (1989) explains the community "celebrates its identity as a group" when making such interventions throughout the stories. In "Spunk", for instance, it is precisely because characters have been constructed in opposite terms by

the narrator and by the community that the reader has no or few doubts of what is going to happen next in this short-story. Joe's death is not avoided by the community and violence becomes the solution to this situation.

The lack of physical power of the community in "Spunk" is recurrent in "Sweat". In this respect, the male community is not able to engage in any activity to help the characters' lives. Their intrusive comments represent the views they hold about any event in town. In another example of "Sweat", the townspeople talk and eat on the porch on a hot day when they see Sykes' arrival with his lover Bertha. They are sympathetic with Delia, but they disapprove of Sykes' behavior toward his wife. Knowing about the dangerous snake at Delia's house, the townsmen do not do anything to help her or stop Sykes. Their inertia is what prevails in the whole story. Unable to act, they talk in a lively conversation among the village men. Clarke, the owner of the store where people meet, for the first time says that nothing can turn Sykes into a decent man. Clarke comments on men's attitudes by taking into account Sykes' behaviour. His statement is mainly applied to Sykes, but also to the male category.

> There's plenty men dat takes a wife lak dey do a joint uh- sugar cane. It's round, juicy an' sweet when dey gits it. But dey squeeze an'grind, an' wring tell dey wring every drop uh pleasure dat's in' 'em out. When dey's satisfied dat dey is wrung dry, dey treats 'em jes' lak dey do a cane-chew. Dey thows 'em away. Dey knows whut dey is doin' while dey is at it, an' hates theirselves fuh it, but they keeps on hanging' after huh tell she's empty. Den dey hates huh fuh being' a cane-chew an' in de way (43-44).

This image of an abused woman is certainly one with which the majority of black men of this community empathize. In representing and talking as the representative of the village men, he is denying women's voice in the community. Women at Joe Clarke's store do not speak. Furthermore, they are like the sexual objects, he has described in the previous example. The role of Clarke in this story can be compared to the artist or performer in oral literature whose words arises communally from the people. Individual authorship and originality has never been in question. In her study on oral literature, Ruth Finnegan (1998) asserts the importance

of the chorus, the community who directly participates in certain parts of the performance. In this way, the members of the audience as well as the ones in the fictional community of "Sweat" contribute to the development of the episode by making verbal contributions, spontaneous exclamations, questions and also echoing emotional reactions. In the fictional context, the enactment of Clarke's words involves not only his vocal expressiveness and movements, but also the responses, reactions and participation of listeners and spectators. Although representing that group, Clarke communicates the message to them. In this sense, he speaks to that audience and also on the behalf of it.

The conventions of the society have much to do with the conduct of relationships. Therefore, the marital relationship is referred to in terms of the peculiar inferiority of the female character in opposition to men's superiority. As victims and objects of male exploitation, women are devoid of their own humanity. In "Sweat", the violence of diminishing and abusing Delia is what maintains Sykes' power. The reader might question how Delia has endured his infidelity and brutality for so much time. All her beauty has been squeezed out by him. His actions have degraded, dominated and humiliated her. Aiming at controlling Delia's behavior and decisions, he has used several strategies, both physical and psychological to threaten her.

Returning to "Spunk", the focus of this narrative converges on Joe's and Spunk's behavior and attitudes as the central male figures in this story. The verbal confrontation between the male characters establishes the roles of Joe and Lena, confirming Spunk's superiority and his status with respect to the married couple, as the excerpt illustrates:

> Call her and see if she'll come. A woman knows her boss an' she answers when he calls' Lena, ain't I you' husband? Joe sorter whines out. Lena looked at him real disgusted but she don't move outa her tracks. Then Spunk reaches out an'takes hold of her arm an'says: "Lena youse mine. From now on Ah works for you an' fights for you an' Ah never wants you to look to nobody for a crumb of bread (…) but me long as Ah live. All'get the lumber forh owah house to-morrow. Go home an' git things together (3).

In this passage, the story's central concern is captured with the forms and sources of power and domination. Lena's verbal submission is very explicit. She does not seem to be very happy. Though her mood shows disapproval, she does not say a word and by doing that she agrees with her role as a 'property – one – thing'. Lena's feelings and motivations are seen only in relation to black male characters – her lover and her husband. What is expected from her is the role of a sexual object as the constructions of black womanhood in Afro-American literature generally prescribe them. Since slavery black women have suffered from violence against their bodies. A black woman from her early childhood learned that in her conditions of being a woman and black, she had to submit herself to the man – mainly, the white man. In this short-story, there is no way to female self-fulfillment within the racial, male dominated community. Black womanhood in this context is defined by the exploitation of black female body and Lena's 'virtue' as a woman is not protected.

On the other hand, the notions of black manhood are strengthened and fixed according to the expectations of the community. Spunk, for instance, shows his power by dictating what Lena has to do as his partner. His words are made true when he takes her arm. However, he assumes the task of being responsible for her and because of that he fights for her. In response to his protection and love, Lena has to nullify her social life (if she has ever had one) and dedicates herself to him as long as he lives. What maintains this relationship is not mutual love, but mainly Spunk's desire for Lena. As Lena violates the codes of a woman conduct in a rural community, the narrator does not allow the female character's voice. Although Lena was constructed as a silent subject, her agency will be perceived by the act of adultery which is curiously 'accepted' by the village people. Her sexuality is the way she expresses her agency. As a sexual being, Lena will be free to choose or be chosen by someone who fits the established patterns of manhood.

Lena's attitude of agreement, subservience and domesticity to Spunk is what is expected of Delia Jones to Joe in "Sweat", and Vangie to Luke in "Under the Bridge". These stories are structured in a coercive atmosphere so that female characters are not free to express their inner thoughts. Vangie in "Under the Bridge" has just set the table before her husband's arrival from a trip to Orlando. She is responsible for the private sphere of the house and because of that she assumes the

role of a black woman as a domestic servant without any right to speak her own voice. Her husband brings her some presents which reinforce the pattern of black women confined to domesticity. The narrator, in the portrayal of the presents' distribution, reveals more to the reader than Luke knows about himself and his wife as the example demonstrates: "First the churn, a big brown earthen affair – and Vangie exclaimed happily over it, but there was a little disappointment in her voice which Luke would have noticed had he not been so consumed by the joy of giving" (193). In this context, her behavior and attitudes do not deviate from some of the classical black female script that in Deborah E. McDowell's (1995: 109) words rigidly defines "'good' black womanhood as loyalty to black men, sexual fidelity, self-abnegation, and the idealization of marriage and motherhood". However, the reader can identify more complex meanings in Hurston's female protagonists behavior than McDowell's list proposes.

Vangie's self-abnegation, for instance, is a resource to avoid Luke's disappointment. He was so excited that he could not notice that her voice does not show happiness, as the intrusive narrator demonstrates. Then, she receives the calico and finally the broom and candy. After receiving her gifts, she exclaims**:** "Ah reckon Ah got the bestest husband' in Floridy" (193). Thus, Luke happyly sits at the table and the historical condition of black women's powerlessness, as in Vangie's last example is perpetuated.

In "Sweat", Delia Jones tries to survive her victimization and the psychological violence against herself. Delia's silence as well as Vangie and Lena's silence does not mean agreement. Sykes, the black male character in "Sweat" is ready to fight with his wife Delia as the narrator's description of the male character behavior demonstrates. He kicks her neat pile of clothes and "stood in her way truculently, his whole manner hoping, *praying*, for an argument" (39). The word praying in italic illustrates his insistence on having a verbal disagreement. Her smart attitude of avoiding the verbal confrontation with him does not mean passivity. Her religious faith provides her inner strength when dealing with such difficult situation. She has just come from church and senses that the best strategy to deal with him is avoiding an argument with her oppressor.

But the opposite is said in relation to Missie May and Joe in "The Gilded Six-Bits" who have based their union on love. The first appearance of the couple provides an atmosphere of spontaneous joy. Every Saturday morning, they play a kind of ritual, when Joe throws "silver dollars in the floor for her to pick up and pile beside her plate at dinner" (55). The "joyful mischief'' and "mock anger" of their play as described by the narrative voice is confirmed by the warm verbal exchange of the couple:

> "Who dat chunkin' money in mah do'way? (…)
> "Nobody ain't gointer be chunkin' money, at me and Ah not do 'em nothin"
> "Missie May, take yo'hand out mah pocket!
> "Ah ain't, Joe, not lessen you gwine gimme whateve I it is good you got in yo' pocket. Turn it go Joe, do Ah'll tear yo' clothes
> "Go on tear' em. You de one dat pushes de needles round heah. Move yo' hand Missie May."
> "Lemme git dat paper sack out out yo' pocket. Ah bet its candy kisses"
> "Tain't. Mo yo' hand. Woman ain't got no business in a man's clothes nohow. Go' way" (…) "Unhhunh! Ah got it. It 'tis so candy kisses. Ah knowed yoy had something' for me in yo' clothes. Now Ah got to see whut's in every pocket you got" (55-56).

Elements of subservience are not only observed in Vangie, Lena and Delia's characters, but also in Missie May as the previous example illustrated. Despite the fact that Missie May tries to stop the play, it is Joe who sets the rules by determining the time to have dinner: "Have it on de table when Ah git out de tub" (57). The dichotomy of a man belonging to the public sphere and a woman to the private is once more perpetuated by another couple in one of Hurston's short-stories. The husband in "The Gilded Six-Bits" assumes the role of the economic provider as for he works at the Fertilizer Company. On the other hand, the woman's sensuality with her dark-brown skin and stiff young breasts in a washtub in her bedroom confirms the feminine role that is generally assigned to women. From all Hurston's female characters she is the only woman who seems to have a happy sexual life. Like Vangie and Delia, she assumes the activities of the private sphere of the house. She cleans the house, decorates the yard, and prepares special food to her husband so that when he gets home from work everything is ready for him. She keeps everything very well cleaned

and organized. Nevertheless, Missie May seems to be content with the role of a housewife, as it is noticed by her warning to her husband not to "mess wid mah [her business. (…) she`s] a real wife, (…) but if you burn me, you won't git a thing but wife ashes" (57). In this assertion, the female character assumes her passivity and reduces herself to a thing, an object. Furthermore, the availability to have intercourse is replaced by the male needs to bathe and have supper.

After his bath the couple is ready to have dinner. Once more the details of the setting are reinforced in "The Gilded Six-Bits". The narrator describes what is linked to the dinner moment: the table with plenty of food and a red and white checked table cloth, the objects on the table such as the pitcher of the buttermilk, and the churn. The details presented reinforce Missie May's love towards her husband. Her affection is shown through the simple gestures of preparing this dinner. The careful description of the dinner appliances contrasts with the lack of talk during the meal. But at dinner once more the resignation of the female character is seen when Joe controls what his wife can eat and the determination of his plans for the night: "Nope, sweetenin' is for us men-folks. Y'all pretty lil'l frail eels don't need nothin' lak dis. You too sweet already (…) We "goin' down the road al li'l piece t'night so yo' put on yo' Sunday – go – to – meetin' things" (57). In this example, he reproduces the strongest concept of womanhood when considering his wife fragile. She has to follow his orders and dress up in order to go to the ice cream parlor. The male domination is accepted by the female character who does not question her role or even the way her marriage is conducted.

Even though female characters in Hurston's stories are neither able to contest the order nor make their voices heard, the reader may guess these women might be happy enough in their ordinary life that they do not feel immersed in an oppressive situation. They are accommodated, adapted in the marital dominant structure and the conventions prescribed to them. But in another way, the awareness of women's condition is only achieved if they are ready to reflect upon their relationship with the other. Female liberation, in other words, is not a given process and it requires a constant search. Vangie, Lena, Delia Jones and Missie May do not seem to be 'consciously' engaged in this struggle as they are more likely to be spectators when

following societal prescriptions instead of being powerful to transform and re-create the world they inhabit. And this does not seem to be a great problem to them.

Nevertheless, the next section demonstrates that the reversal of these parameters is promoted when elements of nature interact with characters' inner state. The development or growth of women characters is almost always linked to the transformations of nature and consequently to the end of prohibitive acts perpetrated by oppressors.

The Cosmic/Symbolic Space

Elements of nature in a pastoral setting are inserted in the narratives with a specific purpose and most of the time these elements are connected with characters' actions, behavior or the revelation of a key element to the development of the short-stories. According to Carl E. Bain and others (1991: 131), "the more we know of the setting, and of the relationship of the character to the setting, the more likely we are to understand the character and the story." Following this view, nature in Hurston's "Under the Bridge", "Sweat", "Spunk", and "The Gilded Six-Bits" exercises power over characters and provides a suitable atmosphere to the stories. Her emphasis on nature, animated objects, the behavior of animals, the transformation of trees, and mainly the recurrent appearance of the sun finds explanation in her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942: 52, 106). There she confesses her intimacy with nature since she was a child. She says that the wind and trees spoke to her, and one tree was so 'friendly' that she named it 'the loving pine.' According to her, life has become larger by including the mysteries of nature. Therefore, if nature contains possibilities of transformation and is analogous to Hurston's feelings and experiences, it is easy to comprehend the interaction of setting, character's behavior and plot in her short fiction.

The use of a natural setting is observed in all Hurston's short-stories studied in this thesis. "Under the Bridge", however, is dealt with separately from the other narratives. In "Under the Bridge", Hurston brilliantly shows her talent for absorbing

the reader's attention as he/she is informed by the different elements of nature which are related to the larger context of the story configuring the power of the cosmic and symbolic space.

- "Under The Bridge"

In "Under the Bridge", the first appearance of the sun reveals a new phase in characters' lives and how the young characters Vangie and Artie became more attached to each other. "May was burned to June beneath the Florida sun"… "June for Luke, for Artie, for Vangie-June in the world" (191). The repetition of the month of the year and the use of the verb 'burn' to indicate how fast the month June has come is associated with the implicit awakening of the characters' passion and also the arrival of summer time. June, the month in which most people get married in the United States, is surrounded by the atmosphere of sensuality and fertility. There is a parallel between the female character and nature's behavior. External conditions of life are subordinate to internal and natural factors. And the fact that "the woods were also full of colors and odors" (191) highlights the pleasant atmosphere that has been created between Vangie and Artie.

By choosing June as the month in which things start to happen, the narrator is bringing to the reader's mind that June is the breeding time. Male characters in the narrative start an indirect competition for the female love as the animals in nature generally do. The selection below tells us about the three characters, and how the narrator does not eliminate the negative characteristics and feelings of Luke.

> But Luke was not so happy as he had been. Not that he was jealous- […] but Artie and Vangie did seem to have a great deal to talk about in which he had no part. They could enjoy themselves for hours together and did not remember he was alone. Artie never seemed to do out "sparking" on girls anymore-he was forever calling Vangie or she was forever calling him (191).

Luke is not given voice to express his jealousy and this decision invariably leads him to failure and tragedy rather than happiness. Can we believe in the narrator's portrayal of Luke's behaviour? Why isn't Luke able to admit his jealousy? From this point of view the story keeps the reader engaged and makes him wandering about what will happen next.

Later in this narrative, all three characters noticed that something was different while having dinner. The natural signs outside the house such as the noisy dogs, the moonless black night, booming alligators and crying whippoorwill announce that the following day will be good for hunting. But it is not only that, when making noise, animals are announcing that they are ready to make love. Animals are competing for a partner to breed. These selected items provide the atmosphere of agitation; animals are not quiet and the night does not have a beautiful moon. The characterization of animals like that has one purpose in the narrative and probably it reflects the inner state of the characters turmoil. The interior conflict of Luke, Vangie and Artie has just started. The simple world of "Under the Bridge" is complicated by the diverse forces of nature and the basic human instincts which characters need to reconcile. The details selected prepare the reader for the unexpected.

Going hunting with Artie is one example that increases Vangie's attachment to Artie. She is not worried about Luke's restrictions when she makes her decision of going to the woods with Artie. "So Vangie drew on her husband's boots and followed Artie into the black woods" (192). Though her characterization has linked her to the ideas of 'true womanhood', in this example Vangie is courageous enough to be in the field alongside Artie. But Luke stays at home alone with the "dishrag" under his pillow – for that is a powerful charm to keep the marriage bed inviolate. Vangie and Artie are even more connected. Even the moon seems to be an indication that the atmosphere of completeness has been created between the young couple who are able to go through a world of adventures. On the other hand, embodying in his behavior the characteristics of dependency, passivity, weakness, slow movements, usually associated with old people, Luke feels completely isolated. As the Brazilian critic Ecléa Bosi (1995: 35) reminds us being old is not a human's fate, but it is a social category stigmatized by the opposition to young people. The competitive feelings between Artie-Vangie and Luke are illustrated in the next example:

> The late moon hung low and red when the two others returned, tired, but happy. But Luke could never hear a baying hound again or look at a low, full moon without painful heart contraction he had felt that night in the vastness of his bed alone while his wife strode thru the dark woods, depending upon, looking to someone other than himself for protection (192).

Luke's loneliness is highlighted when he becomes aware that his wife does not depend on him. She has found protection in the arms of someone much younger than him. His painful contracted heart shows his unhappiness in recognizing that he is not useful or helpful anymore. His life now seems to be meaningless. The idea of being threatened is intensified when he looks for the witch's help "to fix a hand" so that "nobody kain't git 'tween me and Vangie" (192). In doing that, Luke is making use of the ancient spiritual roots to bring peace to his house again, but he is also subverting the African notion that old people are sources of wisdom. Getting old in this short-story does not mean getting wiser. And his attitude in asking for the rootworker's help reinforces it, as the following example demonstrates:

> Long as you got dis [referring to a small parcel sewed up in red flannel], nobody can not never cross you. Wait till sundown, sprinkle it wid a drop or two of water and nobody kin git you 'thout water gittin' him. But don't sprinkle it tell youse sho' you wants somethin' done, cause it's bound to come after de sprinklin'. And don't never take it off once you put it, else it will work the other way (192).

The excerpt above showing the cautions and warnings, together with other organizing principles of the story such as the couple attachment and Luke's actions and reactions, are details which lead to a negative atmosphere. If age is what increases the gap between them, the magic will be the solution to make "their years equal" (192). Believing in the power of the magic, Luke sings a Biblical song, usually sung by parents to their children, in order to bring life to the sick soul. The sentences enacted demonstrate Luke's desire to be strong:

> There's a balm in Gilead
> To make the wounded whole,
> There is a balm in Gilead
> To heal the sinsick soul (192).

However, when he sings this song, he feels terrible. He is so wounded inside that he needs first to make use of a Christian song, and later in the narrative the magic of the witch. What Luke cannot express verbally, he does by using these two systems of nurturance. As Ruth Finnegan (1998) asserts in *Oral Literature in Africa,* songs may fulfill various functions in the narrative, therefore as a poem in a "musical setting", it can also be considered as an indirect means of communication with someone in power. In addition, the snatches of singing in "Under the Bridge" seem to contain the skeleton of the story.

From this moment on, forces of nature become recurrent in the story. The cosmic aspect of Hurston's aesthetics, in Robert Lowe's (1994) words, is perceived through the interaction between human feelings and nature and more specifically the sun's appearance towards the end of the story. The distinct ways of the sun appearance are sometimes related to the inner state of the old man. Nonetheless, in the first example in the story "Under the Bridge", this assumption does not proceed:

> The old sun, so careless of human woes, shone brightly every day. If Luke wept in his hell of misgivings, the sun came up and sped across the blue, glorying hotlty in its strength and power, just the same. Old trees rotted at the heart, and the sun
> nourished young saplings that quickly buried the struggling old forest monarch in their shadows. The sun went on and on to his sky bed at night, pulling the gray and purple hangings of his couch about him and slept, indifferent to human tears (194).

In opposition to the weakness and unhappiness of Luke, forces of nature are personified and animated. The sun shines powerfully while the old trees die and new ones grow. The poetic diction of this passage highlights the cosmos. According to Jean Chevalier (1996: 836-840) the sun is the resource of light, heat and life. It brings the intuitive and immediate knowledge. The sun is at the center of the sky as the heart

is at the center of the human beings. In this way, the sun is attached to the human souls. When the sun shines, it brings day and shows the truth of ourselves and the world.

Taking the young couple's descriptions – "their lowered eyes, their happy gaze, their love spread all over the house" (194), Luke felt suffocated in his own house, but he could not do anything to stop them. "He could not rage, he could not kill" (194). This sentence shows the naivety of Luke who has not thought about the consequences of marrying a much younger girl. Now, Luke is aware of the bad idea of the marriage and he is also able to perceive how the couple suffers silently as they repress what they really feel to each other.

Artie suggests the idea of negating himself and his love for Vangie in order to see his father's happiness. However, human feelings are not so easily controlled. Artie and Vangie's involvement is very lively, their gestures and attitudes show their love. Luke's jealousy increases when he sees Vangie wearing her new clothes given by Artie every Sunday. The narrator is ready at explaining that Luke "of the calico age, could not understand the tastes of the age silk" (194). In this way, the difference of ages is seen as the main barrier between Luke and Vangie. Maybe the psychological destabilization of Luke would not happen if the triangle were not constructed.

Later, the hot sun announces the beginning of August, a decisive month in the characters lives. As they can not do anything for the crops, Luke makes the decision to go on a fishing trip. But, the true reason for this trip is not known yet. The three characters are individually searching for a solution to the dilemma in which they live. In the structure of the narrative, the fishing trip can be seen as an opportunity to define their fates as people discover new places, events and also learn more about themselves and the other when traveling. More than simply a movement forward, as the critic Margaret T. Drewal (1992: 33) realizes, the act of traveling implies a transformation in the process, a progression. Journeying is also a result of the whole experience or presumed growth.

The setting moves to nature and it serves as a backdrop for the key moment of the story. In Cleanth Brooks' work on the elements of narrative structure (1960) such

a moment brings into focus all previous events and interprets all of them. Characters are close to reaching their individual awareness of each other's selves. In this story, the poetic description of "the awakening sun" as "a flaming sword upon the St. John's river" (194) on the morning they embarked, announces the beginning of their trip. But there is something mysterious about this sudden trip. The three characters involved in a boat scene, for sure are not grouped together to have fun. They are leaving the known and steady place of their home to take an 'adventurous' trip on a boat. Nevertheless, the hardship along the route is prefigured by Luke's mood and the sun's portrayal that indicate that something bad might happen. All characters make room for great changes in their lives as the image of the awakening sun suggests. However, the sunlight can hurt people in the same way a sword does. Instead of bringing life, it takes people's lives.

Also, the opposite home/river shows the danger of the departure. The uncertainty of the future is related to the unexpected movement of the water. But the sea, as the first home of mankind, is the proper setting for the resolution of the characters' inner tensions. Hurston seems to share Mircea Eliade's (1965: 105) belief that fishing is a sacred ritual from which human beings can perceive "a mode of existence of divinity, of the primordial man, of the civilizing hero." Chevalier's assumptions on this topic go beyond comparisons of the sea to the human unconscious where richness is found. The knowledge/ richness will be brought to the surface through the metaphorical act of fishing. This means that things rescued are not extracted intentionally. They come out fortuitously. In this way, the natural setting and the activity of fishing proposed by Luke have vital interrelations to the character's intimate state.

Although Artie rows the boat, showing his physical strength, Luke, the old man gives directions. Artie is in the center of the boat, next to the pile of the camp necessities, Vangie is in the low stern, facing him, and Luke is in the high prow seat. Even their seats on a boat, show the position they assume in this triangle. Artie and Vangie are in the same level, while Luke is in a superior position.

The image of the sun losing its redness is introduced in the narrative to show their approach to a dangerous place as noted in Artie's description: "Dere's panthers,

catamounts, deers and bears in dem woods' bout 20 miles off" (195). Vangie is scared of the place and Artie asks his father to tell her how he had saved his life by killing a wild cat with his pocket knife. In the beginning, he feels embarrassed in telling the story:

> Oh, tain't much to tell, Vangie. He wuz in dese same woods we gwine to now. […] we flushed a wile cat an' she leaped right at mah boy, but Ah wuz too quick fur her. Ah got in betwixt an' she landed on me. An' Ah had to fight wid mah han's an'a pocketknife. Ah kilt her, but she clawed me up so's de doctah had to take a whole heap uh stitches (195).

Despite the fact that Luke's having been once described as a hero, the same qualities can not be applied to him in the present moment. The remembrance of this brave story does not keep them from the danger they are about to face, but is a device to reaffirm Artie's gratitude and debt to his father. "An' fuh dat," Artie said flippantly, but with a husky voice, "h'm goin 'ter let him be mah papa till Ah die" (195). This dialogue between characters might be seen as the most emotional exchange they have in black dialect. After that, "they all laughed excessively to hide their feelings" (195). The sun at this moment "sweated" them, quieted the noisy dogs and fried the paint on the boat. Artie sang Negro melodies "filling Vangie's ears with his music, her eyes with his body and her heart with love of him" (195). Artie and Vangie do not talk but they exchange glances. They are hooked on each other's body and soul. Their bodies seem to emanate their hidden inner feelings, as the narrator points out:

> They suffer from the heat- Artie, rowing, most of all. Vangie wets her handkerchief in the river and spreads it over Artie's head under his hat. His arteries swell, her hands tremble. Their faces are close- their lips nearly meet. Involuntarily Luke grasps for his 'hand' and all but faints. It was gone. God knows where. String must have worn in two (195).

The hotter the weather the more their physical and emotional reactions grow uncontrolled. The disappearance of the 'hand' is the proof that the magic did not work. The couple could not be separated and Luke becomes the victim of his own

plan. The narrator is free to report Luke's inner thoughts of his past life while this character pretends to be asleep. The narrator is objectively scrutinizing Luke's suffering when he explains that "he had never loved any woman but Vangie. His whole life had been lived for his boy, so that Artie might know nothing but happiness. And now, that which would give Artie happiness would at one stroke rob him of both wife and son" (196). The awareness of these facts further strengthens Luke's pain, and as a result "his heart contracted so painfully that he gasped and opened his eyes" (196). But afterwards he immediately closed his eyes again making room for the narrator's arrangement for the resolution of the story.

The sun set, the sky was dark, "Artie leaned nearer Vangie and, she forgetting, was leaning toward him" (196) as they come close to the bridge. There is no way to hide their feelings anymore. The bridge, which symbolically connects places and people, does the same when it allows the most intimate moment of the couple. There, under the bridge, they can at last touch each other. "His hand touched Vangie's, his feverish lips touched her hungry ones, and lazily, slowly the boat was wafted out again into the light" (196). Under the bridge, in fast movements, the young couple can express what they have repressed for so long. When passing under the bridge, characters are embedded in the anguish of crossing a dangerous and difficult place, but this crossing does not only mean overcoming geographical boundaries. More importantly, it represents the end of the characters' conflicts and the beginning of a new cycle in their lives.

When they came into light, the father was not there anymore. Forgetting the oars, the boat floated. The resolution achieved by the characters is verified at the same moment as the sunset. The characters' feelings are associated with the forces of nature. The divine, nature interact with human beings as the final sentences of the story emphasize: "The indifferent sun, in bed, drew round his purple curtain and slept/ On the river they wept on. The boat drifted on, for Destiny, the grim steersman had seized the rudder and they were bound – whiter?" (196) At the end, things have become settled again, however the return to a natural setting and the challenges this experience provides do not guarantee human fulfillment. Although the couple is now bound together, how they would live with the guilt of contributing to Luke's disgrace.

As the color purple[21] of the sun might indicate the couple was unable to reach self-fulfillment.

- "Sweat", "Spunk", and "The Gilded Six-Bits"

In the short-stories of this section, Hurston employs the same strategies used in "Under the Bridge". As Karla Holloway (1987) states, there is an African concept, an ancient concept that truth is constant in nature. Whatever deceit may occur to obfuscate the soul, nature is a symbol of what is right. Consequently, the narrators imply a connection between the characters' state of mind and the transformations in nature.

In "Sweat", for instance the situation of the married couple Delia Jones and Sykes has become worse. Although the couple has more frequent arguments, the protagonist Delia tries timidly to get close to Sykes. As a religious woman, she gives signs of forgiving him and accepting the humiliations she has suffered for so long time. But the beginning of August has announced the arrival of a new cycle. Elements of nature such as the grass and the leaves are reducing their color and strength. As Chevalier (1996: 172) states, brown degrades the pure colors, so that the color of the earth and leaves reminds us of the dead leaves, autumn and melancholy. Nature is crying out against the extreme heat of the sun. The description of the course of nature introduces the beginning of a new confrontation of the married couple. Parallels are drawn between characters and nature.

As his strategies have failed, Sykes takes a more drastic measure by bringing a rattlesnake to the kitchen in a soap box. The introduction of this animal in the narrative is highly symbolic. The kitchen is the right place to leave the caged snake. As Chevalier (1996: 191) maintains, the kitchen promotes psychical transformations, transmutations and makes room for the interior evolution, whether progressive or

[21] At the end of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Celie's bedroom is painted purple. In this novel, this color symbolizes the protagonist's self-assertion and fulfillment after a long period of suffering.

regressive; spiritualized or materialized. It is in the kitchen that Delia faces what torments her life. Therefore, the kitchen configures the inside and the outside worlds of characters, what comes out from Delia's and Sykes' interior conflict. The snake as evil carries a phallic connotation and comes to represent all that is demonic about Sykes' masculinity. The snake described as "ol satan" (49) or "ol scratch" (51) destabilizes the environment they live in and because of that its image is associated with traditional Christian symbolism. Therefore, as a phallic and religious symbol, the snake is seen as an allegory of what is evil. The introduction of the rattlesnake in the narrative has the function of preparing the reader for a tragic closure of the story. By introducing the rattlesnake, the male character of "Sweat" seems to be resolving his internal crisis by reconfirming the power and masculinity that have been once negated in another way.

When Sykes arrived at home he could not listen to the noise of the snake and he also looked for a match to have some light. He repeated the same gestures as Delia, but he was not smart enough to run away from his own trap. There, on his marital bed was the snake. Delia felt sick when she saw and heard a cry that might have come from "a maddened chimpanzee, a stricken gorilla" (52). She could have prevented his death and warned him. His initial plan of killing his wife has turned into his own destruction. At the end of the story, ironically Delia escapes and accomplishes her victory over him in observing his death. He calls out her name, but Delia's inertia represents revolt against her oppressor, as the narrator describes: "Delia could not move – her legs had gone flabby. She never moved, he called, and the sun kept rising" (52). Delia's 'transgressive' reaction goes against everything taught and preached by her religion. Although she has given some signs of trying to start the subversion process, most of the time she has been seen as an acquiescent woman. Nevertheless, she is able to break with her religious ties.

The recurrence of the sun at the closure of "Sweat" also reinforces her new cycle of life. When Delia approached the door, "the sun was growing warm" and she could listen to his cry for help. Without Delia's forgiveness, he dies at her feet with "his horribly swollen neck and his one open eye shining with hope" (52-53). The same eye which has asked for her help is the eye which has known she could have helped him and avoided his death. The beauty of the sun is juxtaposed with the

ugliness of Sykes in his last moment. His last image resembles the sinuosity of the snake. Sykes has become the snake. By the end of the story, the reader knows that Delia could not fight against her oppressor, although she was aware of her subordinate condition. Providential forces such as nature, the snake, her attachment to religion and her psychological strength favored her liberty.

Lena in "Spunk" is freed from her oppressor too. The irony of achieving liberty in both stories is that neither Delia nor Lena was engaged in a conscious process to gain their independence. However, power and authority are asserted by these women in the short-stories. Although the bobcat is not the central figure in the next excerpt, the appearance of an element of the conjure belief makes room for Lena's reverse of power. The townspeople's conversation brings the topic into discussion, as the next passage demonstrates:

> He done moved most of Lena's things- and her along wid'em – over right to the Bradley house. He's buying it. Jus' like Ah told yo' all right in heah the night Joe wuz kilt. Spunk's crazy 'bout Lena. He don't want folks to keep on talkin' 'bout her-thass reason he's rushin' so. Funny thing 'bout that bob-cat, wan't it? (5)

This passage captures the village men's attention to how fast Spunk wants to get married to Lena. Later, the townspeople are able to comment on the confrontation between the black cat and Spunk, as they describe: "The thing got Spunk so nervoused up he couldn't up he couldn't shoot. But Spunk says twan't no bob-cat nohow. He says it was Joe done sneaked back from Hell!" (6). Only a supernatural force is able to scare Spunk. As Hurston's biographer Robert E. Hemenway (1977: 68) asserts, men's behavior is an action capable of being determined by magic powers. The black cat symbolizes this magic. Paralyzed, he could not kill the cat as it "looked him in the eye, and howled right at him" (6). From this moment on, Joe, Lena's husband, is proclaimed by the community as the bravest man for having confronted an armed man. The ghost of Joe has come back in the form of a black cat to take a revenge on the person who has gotten everything he had: Lena.

Literary devices are not chosen randomly. The use of a symbol, the black cat, frequently found in stories of the past community, highlights the belief of the townspeople in supernatural forces. The appearance of the supernatural force puts an end to the third section of "Spunk". In the next part of this story, Spunk's death is the topic of the conversation of the village men who explain that Spunk was pushed into the blade of the saw at the mill. This explanation is confirmed by Spunk's last words to a member of the community: "It was Joe, 'Lige … the dirty sneak shoved me … he did not dare come to mah face … but Ah'll get the son-of-wood louse soon's Ah get an' make hell too hot for him … Ah felt him shove me…! Thass how he died" (7). By inserting Spunk's statement, the narrator provides the reader both the cause of his death, and this explanation of the unnatural force which is validated by the townsmen. Several voices of the townsmen – Eliah, Walter, Ilke Clarke, Lige – introduce the dialogical orientation of discourse. What each member of the community pronounces is not a neutral resource, since language according to Bakhtin (1993: 100) is populated with their specific intention and accent. Nevertheless, the narration and comments on the life and behavior of the tragic hero keep alive the consensus of manhood in this black community of "Spunk".

In the last excerpt, the spirit of Joe was able to fight with Spunk. Only after his death, does Joe gain power over Spunk. Joe reclaims his manhood that had been despised for such a long time when he was alive. As a supernatural force, he was able to destroy who earlier had killed him. By killing him in this awkward way, the cycle of violence and tragedy is maintained. Spunk's curse at his death reinforces this idea. Nevertheless, superstition and the supernatural, generally the background of black communities, represent the crucial elements for the development of "Sweat" as well as "Spunk".

In "The Gilded Six-Bits", nature also gives some signs that something unexpected might happen. In this narrative as well as in the others, nature has played a vital function when preparing the reader or giving a hint at future occurrence. In the beginning of this story, everything seems to be perfect in the routine of the couple Missie May and Joe, who have been married for more than a year. An atmosphere of happiness pervades the well detailed setting. The decorated yard has bottles stuck along the walk, the flowers bloom cheerily, fresh newspaper is displayed on the

kitchen shelves. All elements linked to the house, porch, steps fence, and even the house are scrubbed white. The association of the house to the characters is also revealed in the sentence that follows the narrative, "But there was something happy about the place" (54). In this example, love and happiness characterize the life of black people in the same way as white families. In this way, racial definition seems to be the first reference for the character's identity. The narrator wants to show Blacks perpetuating joy in living. The house is also painted white, and the surroundings are described: "It was a Negro yard around a Negro house in a Negro settlement that looked to the payroll of the G and G Fertilizer works for its support" (54). The repetition of the word Negro shows the importance of demarcating the place by distinguishing it from what is or belongs to white and emphasizing that the house is in a black context in a rural setting.

In the beginning of "The Gilded Six-Bits", it is Saturday and the front door stands open to the sunshine. The way the door is seen and the mention of the sunshine may suggest the acceptance of new possibilities. New people and things may bring light, knowledge to the house. By keeping the door opened, the owner of the house might be open to receiving and interacting with some news and that is what really happens throughout the story.

All these elements illustrated in the very start of the story suggest to the reader that unexpected events may appear. As in the previous short-stories, the narrator focuses not only on the characters' emotions, and in this case on Joe's, but also on how the natural force exercises power over characters or are attached to them. The scene where one night Joe drives home earlier than usual demonstrates how the moonlight has touched him. He could have gone home without noticing the moonlight. The perception of the moonlight and its connotation of women's fertility is in accordance with his disposition towards sex that night. More importantly, the image of the moon makes Joe aware of his desire of having a baby and being a father. Despite having a romantic night of love for himself, he faces his wife's betrayal with the outsider Slemmons. He is so naïve that he could have never imagined that Missie May was with somebody else. The reader, however, is not surprised by the stereotypical scene of the husband's discovery of his wife's lover.

In the dramatic scene of the discovery, Joe strikes a match and goes into the bedroom to find a man "fighting with his breeches in his frantic desire to get them on" (62). The narrator chooses to portray Slemmons in a comic situation when he tries to put his pants on and run away. As Hurston (1934) maintains in "Characteristics of Negro Expression", humor communicates human needs, emotions, and expressions by displacing the limitations of a spoken or written discourse. In "The Gilded Six-Bits", on the other hand, Joe expresses his inertia in facing this event. He is caught in his weakness. Unable to do anything, he laughs. "… he was too weak to take an action (…) He was assaulted in his weakness (…) So, he just opened his mouth and laughed" (62). His response to this fact is explained by the critic Geneva Smitherman (1997) who states that laughing does not occur as a response to a joke or something funny, however it can mean that a strong point has been made. Laughter suggests that a serious subject has come out. Thus, following the view of this critic, Joe is caught by an unexpected situation that destabilizes his marital relationship.

Unlike Joe in "Spunk", who becomes powerful only after his death, the black male character in "The Gilded Six-Bits" gains authority when he confronts and rules over Slemmons. In trying to get away from the house, the lover tries to grab his clothes and hat. Considering the idea that a person wearing a hat shows power, Slemmons is trying to recover power he has once had. At last, Joe knocks his rival down at the kitchen floor and also grabs the charm that had once given Slemmons' status. By keeping the broken golden chain in his hands, the irony of the reversal of positions is established. What seems interesting is that Hurston has again chosen the kitchen as the catalyst for Joe's action. Though he achieves power, he seems to be completely lost, as the narrator's description shows Joe not "knowing what to do with all his feelings". Finally "he put Slemmons' watch charm in his pants pocket and took a good laugh and went to bed" (63).

After the discovery of "The Gilded Six-Bits", the couple remains together, however with "no laughter, no banter" (64). Missie May keeps doing her activities around the house. She tries her best to please Joe, but the "yellow coin on the table between them" (64) is a sign that reminds her unfaithful act. The eagerness for having the gold watch chain and its attached coin has destroyed the beautiful relationship of

this married couple. The presence of the coin shows Joe's inability to forgive her and represents the source of her oppression. Her conscience is what tortures her.

The marriage continues in a very cold way. Missie May is aware of her love of Joe and does not understand why he does not leave her since he is at times "polite", but also aloof", as the narrator describes him (64). This reflection upon Joe's behavior occurs immediately after the description of nature. The reader may sense a connection between the described element of nature and the character's attitudes. Why does the narrator focus on nature and what does nature tell us in its metaphorical sense? The following excerpt provides some clues concerning "The Gilded Six-Bits":

> The sun, the hero of every day, the impersonal old man that beams as brightly on death as on birth, came up every morning and raced across the blue dome and dipped into the sea of fire every evening. Water ran down hill and birds nested (64).

The recurrent sun in Hurston's narratives provides the atmosphere of continuity, light and knowledge in this short-story. The image of running down water following its natural course is congruent with the gradual process in which characters deal with their unknown feelings. However, everything in the narrative moves toward an end, the resolution of the inner conflicts of both characters. Male and female are associated with the image of birds looking for their nests. The stability of having a nest maybe is a clue to show the reader that reconciliation of the couple is possible. Their nest, their home will regain the initial happiness of their married life, and this is what really happens in this narrative.

After three months of abstinence, Joe and Missie May make love. The day after, she finds the gold watch chain and its attached coin under her pillow. She discovers the coin not to be gold, but a gilded half dollar. She perceives the fake world of Slemmons for the first time. Now, she understands "why Slemmons had forbidden anyone touch his gold" (65). Later, she thinks that the coin was left there as a payment for a night of love, as the narrator shows in the thought that comes to her mind: "Fifty cents for her love" (65). Confused, she puts the money into Joe's Sunday pants pocket and leaves him. Still, she is not quite right about her decision. When she

leaves the house, she meets Joe's mother on the way. She could have met any other person, but the mother in black fiction has always theoretically been considered a source of women's empowerment. The reader does not know the content of their conversation, but the sudden appearance of this character, Joe's mother, changes Missie May's mind. Missie May knows she cannot abandon Joe, so she decided to come back and stay home. The third narrator intrudes and presents her inner thoughts by saying that "Joe must leave her" (66). And so this happens. However, Joe comes home every ten days "to be rubbed" (66). One day, he finds Missie May chopping wood. The dialogue between them and the appearance of the sun around the horizon announces the reconciliation of the couple:

> You ain't got no business choppin' wood, and you know it.
> How come? Ah been choppin' it for de last longest
> Ah ain't blind. You makin' feet for shoes
> Won't you be glad to have a li'l baby chile, Joe?
> You know dat' thout astin' me
> Iss gointer be a boy chile and de very spit of you
> You reckon, Missie May?
> Who else could it look lake? (66)

Although they have gone through difficult moments in their lives, Joe still loves her. However, he does not seem to believe that Missie May's child is also his. When the baby is born Joe does not show any affection to him. He is not convinced that the boy is his son. His mother's words are fundamental to making him believe in that: "You oughter be mighty proud cause he sho' is de spittin' image of yuy, son. Dat's yourn all right, if you never git another one, dat un is yourn" (67). After that he continues asking about Missie's health, and the baby is ignored for a while.

By the end of the story on Saturday, Joe goes to the market in Orlando. He has not been there for a long time and now he has good reasons to reactivate his ordinary life as a married man. In buying many things for the house, Joe clearly assumes the role of provider, the father who does all for his family. Missie May, as a wife and mother is confined to the private sphere. The birth of his son restores life to Joe and reinforces the dichotomy in a patriarchal society as well as the fixed notion that a

woman has to be a mother. The sense of having a family emerges again. At the store, he uses the gilded coin to pay for his staples. Surprised, the owner of the store asks him where he got it. Joe assumes a superior position and says that the man who possessed the coin tried to fool people in his community, but he "hauled off and knocked 'im down and took his 'old four-bits 'way from 'im" (68). Talking about the strange Slemmons was possible only after Joe's painful process of getting over the difficult moments he had lived. In fact, Joe makes a show off of himself by retelling the event which depicts him as a brave and intelligent man.

The image of a loving husband and father is also maintained in "The Gilded Six-Bits". When Joe leaves the store, the clerk turns to another customer and comments on the happiness of the darky Joe. He considers black people as an undifferentiated whole by saying that they are all the time laughing. In his words: "Wisht I could be like these darkies (…) Nothin' worries 'em" (68). Moreover, the irony of this sentence lies in the fact that as an outsider, the white customer does not have many elements by which to judge the lives of black folks, especially Joe's life. His comment reproduces the stereotypical image whites have created about black people.

The atmosphere of stability and happiness of the beginning of the story which have started on a previous Saturday is achieved again by the reenactment of the game played by the couple. The male character after a period of constraint is able to love and forgive his wife. The reenactment of the play performed by the couple in the beginning of the story is an essential tool for the maintenance of marriage. The crisis the couple lived through reinforced the love between them. The maturity of marital relationship has been strengthened by the characters' suffering as both of them have gone through a process of internal change. Through suffering they have achieved personal wholeness. Although marriage in most Afro-American narratives is seen as a situation of entrapment for the black woman in this short-story the portrayal of Joe and Missie May successful relationship is a result of their love and trust. Missie May does not feel oppressed by her marital relationship. On the contrary, she feels guilty for violating the black female parameters of womanhood in which a woman in McDowell's (1995) sense must be loyal to her black husband and enact sexual

fidelity. In this context, the reader is able to understand that Missie May's "disrespectable" behavior threatens her spirit.

Within the Hurston short-stories covered in this thesis, Missie May is the only female character who has a child. The element of not having children, exhibited by all the other female protagonists, differs from what is expected of a woman in a patriarchal society. Childbearing, domesticity and sexual assertion are dimensions exhibited only by the black female protagonist of "The Gilded Six-Bits".

The Language Space

The use of Black English in this study needs special attention as it is intimately related to the characters' feelings and emotions. Language in Hurston's short-stories builds up characters. Oral tradition within written literature was avoided by many of Hurston's contemporaries as it was seen as a vestige of slavery and also a sign of inferiority. Hurston challenged the notions of Negro speech as an evidence of low intellectual ability. In the words of the critic Holloway (1973: 114) in *A Critical Investigation of Literary and Linguistic Structures in the Fiction of Zora Neale Hurston,* the writer of the Harlem Renaissance time "was preserving a language that linguists saw as an attempt at English, broken or truncated, or otherwise disabled from full reflective and cognitive power… She had a powerful myth to overcome, but Hurston never abandoned the poetry of her folk." In this sense, she believed that she could transform of the use of dialect of the local color denigrated in the racist stereotypes into affirmative art. The African tradition of storytelling had been rescued by Afro-American culture so that it survived slavery and was kept as a source of cultural memory. According to John Lowe (1994: 146), who provides a remarkable study on Hurston's fiction, Afro-American folklore and language play a central role in sustaining the community. Thus, in using the black dialect in fiction, Hurston attempted to reconstruct the black voices she had heard in rural Florida. Black values and lifestyles are thus strengthened within the American context. Lowe (1994) also observes that language is seen as:

> a way to show one's love for life, an indirect mode useful in saying the unsayable and in negotiating differences, a wonderful teaching tool and thus a way to bridge the distances between rural and urban, black and white, rich and poor, men and women, author and reader (51).

Following this debate, the black literary language for Hurston shows not only love for life, but also the search for the self as Gates' (1990: 144) states. In other words it is a "telling" form of language which constitutes the subject. In "Characteristics of Negro Expression" (1934: 39) Hurston, herself, says that "Negro expression" is always characterized by the "will to adorn" which satisfies the soul of the creator. The adornment she describes is associated with the adornment of the story-teller and the potential for creating and improvising narratives, creating strategies to keep the reader's and the audience attention while in contact with the story. In addition to that, Holloway (1987) observes that some marks of dialect are added in fiction to emphasize Hurston's idea of adornment.

In this context, the representation of the speaking black voice is privileged in Hurston's texts. The verbal interaction among characters illustrates the tradition of "the speakerly text"[22] by which Gates (1988: 181) means: "a text whose rhetorical strategy is designed 'to emulate the phonetic, grammatical, and lexical patterns of actual speech and produce the 'illusion of oral narration.'" In this sense, characters' exchanges and the writing by indirection in the short-stories are an imitation of forms of oral narration to be found in Afro-American vernacular literature. According to Gates (1993: XII-XII) Hurston was successful in registering the range and timbers of spoken black voices in written form. The language of the characters dances so that Hurston's texts seem to come alive.

By introducing the black vernacular English in her short-stories, Hurston has distinguished the Standard English narrative voice from the characters' voice. Holloway (1987) reinforces the link between language and characters. She believes

[22] The word "speakerly" is derived from Roland Barthes' comment on the plurality of texts mentioned in his book S/Z. Barthes makes a distinction between 'readerly' texts (which allow the reader to consume them passively) and 'writerly' texts (which require the reader's participation in the construction of meaning). Gates, in this way, criticizes this dichotomy within a text when proposing the "speakerly'' text.

that the dialogues of Hurston's narratives capture something about the character of the person who is speaking, and provide a record of his/her language. To this idea, I add that black characters could only be themselves within the boundaries of the rural south. In a Black reality, in June Jordan's words (1974: 6), black people represent their own particular selves in a Family/Community setting that permits relaxations from the hunted/warrior postures. Consequently, linguistic forms, speeches reflect their social and cultural realities.

The distinction between narrators and characters is maintained throughout the development of all stories in this study. The conflict between the main characters is present through the third person narrator's point of view, but mainly by the characters' words or acts or their imagination. The voice of the characters differs from the narrator's voice. The structure and the sound of spoken words of the characters compose a song of their own. Descriptions are used as a means for the presentation of some characters, or as a commentary about them.

Characters, however, assert their power when they are able to express their own voice. The first person narrative articulates characters' experiences by asserting specific, individual subjectivity and keeps alive the idea that language reveals characters. The long process of suffering ends when black women break with, and consequently speak out against the chains of subservience that have enslaved them to black concepts of manhood. If inner feelings are resolved, Vangie, Lena, Delia Jones and Missie May may achieve the feeling of individual worth and dignity. According to the Afro-American critic bell hooks (1989: 12) "for women within oppressed groups ... coming to voice is an act of resistance", an act that challenges the politics of male dominance. In her words:

> moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and growth possible. It is that act of speech, of "talking back", that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject- the liberated voice (12).

In this sense, bell hooks suggests that oppressed people are transformed by the act of speaking. Borrowing the assumptions of the Brazilian pedagogical thinker Paulo Freire, who provides a system of integration rather than assimilation in *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1967) and later in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968/2007), bell hooks concludes that in her libertarian approach the beginning of the critical consciousness is achieved when a woman finds ways to self-expression. When assuming the role of subject, these women are able to define their identities and nominate their histories and experience.

The integrated person in Freire's (2007: 69-70) terms is not only able to adapt to one reality, but also to exercise critical capacity to make choices and transform reality. If one is not able to change reality, adaptation, instead is the weak form of defense. When adapting to one reality or the condition of oppression, critical consciousness is not at stake so that the more adapted the subject becomes, the more dominated the subject also becomes. Furthermore, critical consciousness is not based solely on integration within the bounding structure. Nevertheless, it is a transformation. In the black context, Gates (1983: 129) in the same way, concludes that even before the destruction of the object status of black people, they first have to represent themselves as 'speaking subjects'. Thus, in his view, a person who has been reified has to assert his/her own voice to start the process that will provide an end to their commodification within Western culture. Thus both in Gates and in Freire's terms there is no way to achieve liberation as an object in order that later the oppressed is transformed into a human being. The liberation of the oppressed as Paulo Freire (2007: 62) asserts is not the liberation of things, but of human beings. The oppressed have to start their struggle to create and act what they ascribe to their own lives by considering themselves as human beings, and not as commodities or objects.

This process of becoming integrated and consequently transformed rather than assimilated is very well illustrated in Hurston's short-story "Sweat". In this literary work, the reaction of the black female protagonist Delia Jones against her husband's words and gestures confirms the beginning of the process illustrated by bell hooks, Henry Louis Gates, and Paulo Freire. What Delia has suffered from all those years is now put on the table. Silence is broken by the revelation of her dissatisfaction: "Ah

been married to you fifteen years, and Ah been takin' in washin' fur fifteen years. Sweat, sweat, sweat! Work and sweat, cry and sweat, pray and sweat" (40). The narrator allows Delia's voice to express her discontent at carrying the burden of maintaining the marriage through her work. As hooks (1989: 128) has asserted, silence is the condition of one who has been dominated and has been made an object; talk, on the other hand, is the mark of freeing, of making one a subject. Silencing her, refusing her the opportunity to speak was a way to dominate the female character. When silence is imposed, Delia is not able to maintain another discourse. Her silence has worked with meanings she avoided expressing till that moment. Consequently, Delia's subservience is abandoned. She defends herself in her own way, gradually becomes strong, and is able to confront her husband and the conventions to which she is expected to adhere. Hurston's protagonist becomes the speaker and the actor of her own life. Further, being an assertive woman lays outside the realm of acceptable behavior for a 'true woman' in her community, according to the community's dominant notions of womanhood.

Although not happy, she works, cries, prays and never gives up. The narrator controls and organizes the text by inserting the black female character's speech. Every characterization of Delia has a very positive tone. When trusting the character and the narrator's voice on her hard work and suffering, the reader sympathizes with her. Delia awakes to her reality and is ready to confront her husband and to fight for her rights as the owner of the house the couple lives in. Her act of grabbing an iron skillet from the stove to defend herself surprises Sykes. Intimidated by this new type of woman, "he did not strike her as he usually did" (40). Later, she is able to curse her husband by saying in a loud voice: "Oh well, whatever goes over the Devil's back, is got to come under his belly. Sometime or ruther, Sykes like everybody else, is goingter reap his sowing" (41-42). In her meaningful prayer she predicts that something worse can happen to her. More importantly, she identifies Sykes with the devil, an evil force which damages her life. On the other hand, she believes in the justice of God and knows that later her husband will get what he really deserves. She recognizes Sykes as her oppressor. At this point, all details of the narrative arouse the reader's curiosity about what will happen next.

Later in the short-story, Sykes reasserts his psychological manipulation of Delia. The couple's relationship is again defined by Sykes' long time maintenance of power over her as the following dialogue demonstrates. Further, the more emotional the dialogue, the less standardization of language is found:

> Syke! Syke!, mah Gawd! You take dat rattlesnake way from heah! You got tuh. Oh, Jesus, have mussy!
> Ah ain't got tuh do nuthin 'uh de kin'- fact is you puttin' on airs makin' out lak you skeered uh dat snake- he's gointer stay right heah tell he die. He wouldn't bite me cause Ah knows how tuh handle 'im. Nohow he wouldn't risk breakin'out his fangs' gin yo skinny laigs.
> Naw, now Syke, don't keep dat thing' round tryin' tuh skeer me tuh death. You knows Ah'm even feared uh earth worms. Thass de biggest snake Ah evah did see. Kill'im Syke, please (47).

As hooks (1989: 131) asserts, dialogue is not the speech between a subject and object, as this conversation between Delia and Sykes has suggested. On the contrary, dialogue implies talk between two subjects; it is a humanizing speech, one that challenges and resists domination, a key tool for the liberation of the oppressed in Freire's (2007) sense. However, in this previous example, the inscription of power within the marital relationship reinforces masculine dominance. Sykes' verbal aggression is caused by the violation of his hopes as he fails to achieve his wish to live with Bertha in the house. As the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1993) concludes, the different voices in a dialogue are always in a tense negotiation as seen in the example above. Faced with her oppressor in this awful situation, Delia begs for her husband's compassion. The relationship is now reinforced by Delia's emotional subordination to him. Feeling frustrated, he behaves in a way to solve his problem and to eliminate his wife from his path.

In "Sweat", the way Sykes exercises power over Delia sustains a tense web of relations as described by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1978). Sykes assumes his superiority and reduces his wife to an object of his power and command. In this example, he assumes what Foucault has defined as a negative and coercive

force. As the critic maintains, power is not a kind of domination of one element or group over another. There is no binary opposition between dominated/dominant. Power is not homogeneous and conceived as a privilege of one person, but is everywhere and comes from all sides. According to Foucault (1978):

> Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And "Power", insofar, as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement… there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject (93).

In his terms, the subjects are sites where 'power' can be developed or transformed. However, Foucault does not provide any explanation about the personification and enforcement of power. He focuses on discourses rather than the actions of human beings, so that he does not explicitly leave room for agency. Nevertheless, he adds that the exercise of power always happens among subjects who are able to resist. In this sense, if there is power, there is always resistance and this makes room for negotiations, rebellions, alliances, as it occurs with the relationship between the couple Delia Jones and Sykes in "Sweat".

Delia's words to Sykes show how powerful she is and her behavior constitutes a threat to Sykes. She is able to liberate herself from her oppressive husband. She neither runs away anymore from the kitchen where the snake is left nor begs for Sykes to take it out from there. Finally, she looks at him and says: "Ah hates you, Sykes (…) Ah hate you tuh de same degree dat Ah useter love yuh" (48). But Sykes' words to Delia are even worse as he denigrates her physical appearance by saying: "You looks jes'lak de devul's doll – baby tuh me. You cain't hate me no worse dan Ah hates you. Ah been hatin'you fuh years" (49). When perpetrating violence on Delia as a way of social control, Sykes demonstrates his frustration in not properly assuming the subject position shaped to the male gender. There is no respect between them anymore and their mutual rage becomes very explicit. The lively verbal exchange between them shows that the marriage has dehumanized both of them. In *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed, Paulo Freire (2007) realizes that the rebellion of the oppressed is almost always as violent as the acts physically perpetrated or verbally inflicted on them. When the oppressed, as Delia Jones in this story, struggles for becoming, she breaks with the oppressive power so that she implicitly reestablishes her dignity and humanity.

The same pattern occurs for the married couple of "The Gilded Six-Bits". Although discontent with his wife's attitude in sleeping with another man, the brief dialogue between Missie May and Joe does not reveal hatred. The narrator maybe gives the reader a hint that Joe's forgiveness is possible, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

> Missie May, whut you cryin for?
> Cause Ah love you so hard and Ah know you don't love *me* no mo.
> Joe sank his face into the pillow for a spell then he said huskily, "You don't know the feelings of dat yet, Missie May.
> Oh Joe, honey, he said he wuz gointer dat gold money and he jes' kept after me- Well, don't cry no mo', Missie May. Ah got yo'gold piece for you (63).

Ashamed of what she has done, Missie May justifies her attitude. She finds in her husband a listener able to understand her reasons for what she has done. The reader notices that she was not interested in Slemmons' person, but in the gold charm he carried with him. In her rural narrow mindedness, the only way to possess it was to reduce her value to just her body. She recognizes her mistake in believing in the outsider's words. Her words to Joe before meeting her lover demonstrates her love for him when Joe says: "ah'm satisfied wid you jes' lak you is, baby. God took pattern after a pine tree and built you noble. Youse a pretty still man, and if Ah knowed any way to make you mo' pretty still Ah'd take and do it" (58). Although Missie May deviates from one of the norms of black womanhood, the reader empathizes and believes in her.

The harmonic tone of Missie May's voice differs completely from the one pronounced by Vangie in "Under the Bridge". When treating his son Artie like a baby Luke, the 'father husband', is not recognizing Artie's skills as a man responsible for his own life and attitudes. Vangie, in complaining about the father's treatment towards his son, is trying to rescue Artie's identity as a man.

> It's yo' fault, Honey. You kept callin' Artie 'yo' baby' an' Ah thought he wuz a lil teeny baby chile. Ah never knowed he wuz bigger' n a house. No grown body don't want no stepmama. If he wuz a lil boy, Ah figgered Ah'd teach him to love me like he wuz mine (190).

The black dialect and the marks of dialogue distinguish Vangie's speech from the standard prose of the narrator. The dialect is an important key to the strength of the dialogue as it illustrates the consciousness of this female character. Self-knowledge and awareness of sexual love and not maternal love are revealed through the character's female voice. Vangie and Artie, both, have their youth as a linking element. However, at this moment in the narrative, the father does not want to see the narrow bonds joining Vangie and Artie. Surrounding this last excerpt is Vangie's awareness of Artie's sexual love rather than the expected maternal love.

After that, father and son drive to town and the pleasant atmosphere of the whole trip is confirmed as they talk about the crops, tell jokes and laugh together. When they finally arrive in Orlando, Luke tells him the real reason for traveling. He wants to buy something for Vangie. He also reminds Artie that he has always tried to give him what he wanted. Now he is doing the same for Vangie. To Luke his son and his wife are the same and they deserve the same kind of treatment. In his words: "You an' her is the same in mah heart. […] You doan' mind, do you, Artie boy?" (190) He has already made his decision. However, when asking Artie with a childish and almost pathetic look, he is begging for his son's approval. Artie now is facing the same situation Vangie has dealt with before at the dinner table. Artie cannot show his true opinion. So, the third person narrator interferes and describes the son's gestures. He "put one arm quickly about his father's shoulder, then drew it away and roughly

tied the horse to the great oak tree" (190). His fast movement on his father's shoulder shows his unhappiness about the situation, however, his spoken words do not convey the same meaning. Artie states: "Oh, course, Papa, Ah wants to you to do for Vangie whutever you so desired. Ah wants you to be jes' as happy as a king. Whut you got in yo' mind to buy her?" (190) What he really feels is shown through the narrator's knowledge. In the previous examples, the character's thought and act are blend with the narrator's voice. Nonetheless, Artie's words are not in accordance with the narrator's description.

Consequently, Artie wears the mask his father has wanted him to wear by saying what his father really wants to hear. This strategy of masking is a way of seeking for protection. In the introduction of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon (1986)[23] states that black men want to belong to the mainstream. They follow the roles established by white people, imitating the white's attitudes and gestures to be included and considered by the center of power. Black people felt they had to wear the mask in talking about themselves. However, when black people mask, they erase their ethnic identities and make room for white dominance. If Fanon's view is applied to the analysis, it might be said that Artie follows what his father has established as the right thing. By doing so the correct order seems to be established and father and son are ready to do shopping.

Although both are shopping, the focus is on Luke's behavior and his choice presents. He knows exactly what to buy to Vangie – "a new churn, a store broom, and a new calliker" (190). Silently, Artie also buys a gift for her but he questions his father's choices. Luke assumes that all women need those appliances. He was so excited in shopping that he looked like a schoolgirl: "He shopped eagerly, giggling like a school-girl. Artie shopped also, but this purchase was made without any flourish, in another part of the store, and Luke in his excitement asked no questions" (190). Coming back home, they stopped at one store where Luke bought a large stock of red and white striped peppermint candy saying to himself that "she' ll be tickled to death to git dis candy" (190). Once again, Artie advises him that he should have

[23] The strategy of masking is the same used by black writers such as Charles Chesnutt and Paul Laurence Dunbar, as it was mentioned in the introduction of this work.

bought a box of candy for her and he replies that he is not going to spend much money (a whole dolah) on that tiny box if he could buy a bigger one for less (one dime).

This atmosphere of 'order' which has been created is suddenly broken by Artie's attitude in giving Vangie his presents immediately after his father's. He could have chosen another moment, and the reader may question why the narrator makes this choice. Certainly, most readers must not empathize with Artie's attitude at the moment he throws a parcel in Vangie's lap. He asserts that he has never given anything to her and she has always been looking after him. When she sees the white wool skirt and a pink silk blouse, she cannot contain the joy in her eyes and voice. She immediately holds the two pieces of clothes up to see if they fit and hugs them gleefully and says: "Oh, oh, Artie! She cried, grasping his hand. Youse so good to me! […] How do you know whut mah heart wanted so?" (194) Vangie's heated remarks on Artie's gifts and the implicit comparison that has been established by her response to each male character sets up the silent atmosphere of the meal. Luke's last attempt to get close to Vangie does not succeed. On the contrary, she becomes even more attached to his rival and because of that Luke decides to sprinkle his 'hand' and put it on. It is the last chance he has to try stop their blossoming love and to resolve his inner tensions.

The language of women characters indicates not only their culture, but also their behavioral manifestations by capturing their intimate feelings and thoughts. In all Hurston's stories, language has a vital function of representing directly or indirectly protagonists.

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The stories dealt with in this first chapter – "Under the Bridge","Sweat", "Spunk", and "The Gilded Six-Bits" portray a female/male relationship within the marriage institution and also provide a debate about the speaking or silent subject

within these narratives. The oppressive other in these stories is a figure of black power. The enclosure on domestic relationships reveals the psychological violence in which Vangie, Delia Jones, Lena, and Missie May live when confronting the male authority represented by the power of their husbands or lovers, and mainly the confining conventions of womanhood.

Nevertheless, the establishment of a triangle breaks up the order and brings about feelings that women have been repressed. The reverse of the triangle takes place in "Sweat" as Sykes struggles with his wife to get rid of her. On the other hand, she is the only female character who speaks aloud her inner thoughts. Despite the fact that Vangie, Lena and Missie May remain silent, their attitudes are signs expressing "agency". However, the course of their lives is not changed as a result of their commitment to it. Characters are built upon cosmic symbols enlarging the private home space. If forces of the cosmic nature had not helped them, female characters would be imprisoned by their partners and to the conventions of true womanhood. In this sense when following nature's rules, women's liberation is accomplished in a metaphorical way from male dominance.

These female characters inhabit the domestic space of the house. They are not given the motherhood possibility, even though it is introduced once in "The Gilded Six-Bits". In this story, the female/male relationship is grounded in reciprocity and mutual love. Further, the destabilization of the marital relationships is induced by the appearance of a new character who competes for the woman's love.

Nevertheless, characters live in a folk community and are embedded in their cultural heritage. The delineation of black folk culture in Hurston's pieces of short-fiction is particularly expressed through language and the rhythms of speech. The representation of an authentic culture enables some characters to survive and/or struggle against the oppressor within the closed boundaries of the black community. The lack of any reference to the outside world in Hurston's narratives is criticized by Hazel Carby (1999: 172, 182). To this critic, Hurston displaces the discourse of racial order and maintains the exclusion of black subject from history. Characters in her fiction are an aesthetically purified version of blackness and the black vernacular language becomes an aesthetic principle embodying the oral tradition. Hurston's

inattention to or exclusion of history is welcomed by Alice Walker through the development of her female characters in the short-stories analyzed in the next chapter. Significantly, as Carby (1987: 40) recalls, the ideology of true womanhood influenced and determined the "shape of the public voice of black women's writers". Therefore, what remains to be considered and compared by reading the next chapter is how this ideology that excluded black women writers from the woman category affected the portrayal of Hurston's female characters in this chapter and Walker's in the following one.

CHAPTER TWO

ALICE WALKER: THE CONSTRUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITIES

This chapter deals with four Alice Walker's short-stories, two from each of two collections - In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women and You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down. This chapter analyzes the strategies used by black female protagonists to survive in oppressive American society, by comparing the characters' agency when facing the restrictions imposed on them. According to Mary Helen Washington (1975: X) there is a need to deal with full characterizations of black women rather than typical female stereotypes. Idealized images of black women need not be protected and reverenced in literature. By considering the protagonists Roselily in "Roselily", Myrna in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", and the unnamed female characters of "Coming Apart – A Way of Introduction of Lorde, Teish and Gardner" and of "Porn", this study investigates how these women deal with conflicting situations, and how they are exploited by the other when pressured by their race and gender. The first part of this analysis focuses on gender roles in the space of marriage in "Roselily" and "Really Doesn't Crime Pay?" from the In Love & Trouble collection. The second part looks at "Coming Apart" and "Porn", and the analysis, discusses the "Reification of Women", "The Pornographic Space", with a section titled "On Becoming Subjects".

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The Afro-American critic Barbara Christian (1981: 22) in her essay "The Contrary Woman of Alice Walker" states that Walker's first collection *In Love & Trouble* (1973) presents the ways in which the black woman attempts to be whole in

her community. In her words, the conventions of the South may not help these women to grow as they have been restricted by their race, sex, and origins. However, the female characters engage in a process "to be themselves within the constraints of convention." As the title of the collection of short-stories suggests, black women are in love and trouble when facing tense relationships with their partners, husbands or lovers. The critic Dolan Hubbard (1995: 21) seems to be in accordance with Christian's view. According to Dolan, the pressures which destroy the community's integrity are portrayed in this short-story collection. Women who suffer different kinds of oppression try to bring meaning to their lives by reinserting their voices into a male-dominated structure. Most of the time female characters do not find in themselves strength to try to be free from the stereotypes of society.

Eight years separate the publication of Walker's first collection of short-stories, *In Love & Trouble- Stories of Black Women* (1973) from *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (1981). In the later collection of short-stories, black women are more powerful and conscious of their strength in the racist and sexist world they inhabit. They are committed to their blackness and create new forms and language to express themselves. Despite the fact that society imposes restrictions on development of women's potentialities, they fight for their freedom and individuality. In analyzing the stories of this collection, Barbara Christian (1984: 468) argues that Walker does not deliver the story to readers as a classic and clean product. These stories reflect the present, an era when the process of confusion, resistance to established order, and the discovery of a freeing order is especially significant for women, a prerequisite for growth. In this context, the main themes of the stories focus on sexual abuse, abortion, pornography, rape, love affairs, motherhood, sadomasochism, and several restrictions that challenged the black woman in the United States society of the 1960's. By reading the stories of this collection, the reader realizes that the limits of the conventions of true womanhood are questioned. In the dedication of *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down,* Walker "insists on the value and beauty of the authentic" and thanks all women who have passed to her their cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the idea of keeping alive the black tradition was first expressed in the dedication of *In Love & Trouble.* There, she writes: "and in loving memory of Zora Hurston, Nella Larsen, and Jean Toomer: The three mysteries." The titles of both collections hint at, or declare or announce the different tones in their stories. The first collection

highlights trouble and the second shows women who challenge societal changes that oppress them.

Both “Roselily” and “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?” are female centered, however the protagonist of “Roselily” does not have voice to speak her own words. In “Roselily”, the narrator is responsible for presenting the female’s inner thoughts, feelings, emotions and her disillusionment with the world. Instead of using the first person “I”, Walker makes use of the impersonal third person “she”, as an external point of view. And here, the reader may question the lack of the protagonist voice. As the beginning of the story demonstrates what Roselily does mostly is to dream. Roselily’s thoughts and words are never pronounced by herself. She is not powerful enough to speak up. Everything related to Roselily, the title character, is perceived through the narrator’s lenses. And the narrator makes no room for the protagonist’s direct words. There is no verbal exchange with other characters. Her silence and, consequently, her interior monologue show how the black female character deals with what torments her- the marriage with a Black Muslim.

In “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?”, Walker chooses to use the first person narrator to portray Myrna’s narrative. The black female character introduces the reader to her feelings, emotions, thoughts and events that happened by writing in her diary. First, she selects the events which happened in September of 1961, and later, she goes back to the year 1958. The form of the narrative written in fragments taken from her dairy reveals the inner self of the black female character. She gradually writes down on the empty pages of her diary and constructs her story according to events rescued by her memory. Memory is slippery, so that what comes to her mind does not follow a chronological order. Even if she does not have a voice to speak her own mind in the story, the act of writing is her strategy to express her feelings. Everything the reader learns about Myrna is filtered through the finite focus of her private and personal notes. In writing, Myrna finds a way to have freedom from the social obstacles that imprison and oppress her.

Roselily, on the other hand does not write. Instead she dreams and reflects upon her condition during her wedding ceremony. Her body is present at the ceremony, but her mind is far away as her thoughts during the wedding reveal. She

does not live the experience of the ceremony and little of her wedding is shown. She is completely detached from what is happening. Her thoughts do not focus on the present moment. She thinks about her children and she wishes she did not have children. She neither concentrates on the ceremony nor demonstrates happiness, as the following description by the third person narrator illustrates: “She looks for the first time at the preacher, forces humility into her eyes, as if she believes he is, in fact, a man of God” (4). In trying to pay attention to the ceremony, she makes an effort to imagine God as Black. Whether in first person or third person narration, black women characters in “Roselily” and “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?” are trapped by their marital relationships and are powerless against the structure of the dominant society. Although Zora Neale Hurston has already written about this entrapment and powerlessness, Alice Walker presents the situation from a different angle by using different literary techniques.

The narrative action of “Roselily” and “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?” is psychologically personal and intimate. Both female characters are revealed exclusively through the inner self. As Deborah E. McDowell (1995: 37), a literary critic of Afro-American texts states in “The Changing Same”, characterization in black women narratives is not a purely aesthetic question. In the literary structure one confronts political and cultural questions that must be embedded in the historical context. In this sense, Roselily and Myrna’s lack of an authorized voice is comprehensible as for the black woman in America has been denied recognition for so long time.

Gender Roles in The Space of Marriage in “Roselily” and “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?”

Gender is a sign of the identity of the subject. According to a Brazilian critic of cultural studies Guacira Lopes Louro (2001: 17), men and women are constituted by cultural and social practices which determine gestures, ways of being, of speaking and acting. In the author’s words people are announced, regulated and shaped by the specific webs of power that construct positionings. In this sense, gender does not

imply the existence of a unique representation of what is masculine or feminine. The unity of a male and female category is contested. The gender concept is plural and it evolves several representations of subjects. There is no way of classifying black females based on the fixed notion that sex represents what one subject is biologically. Gender is not a biological category and it is not linked to sex. Following the same line of thought, Judith Butler (1990: 14), an American theorist who studies the questions of gender, power and sexuality argues that gender is performative and is not constituted in a coherent and consistent way. This category is not isolated from racial, classist, ethnic, sexual and regional categories which are culturally constructed. In this context, it is impossible to separate the notion of gender from the political and cultural intersections in which gender is produced and kept. Gender does not come 'before' race or class. In her 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 array of 'women' is constructed." In the very beginning of *Gender Trouble,* Butler states that she does not believe in any 'strategic' use of 'women', or 'identity' or any totalizing and essentialist notion. Consequently, any artificial notion of unity is useless for a feminist political agenda.

The female gender experience has a multiple and specific character. There is no way of presenting a monolithic view of the behavior and values assigned to women. Issues of gender are no longer permeated by sexual stereotypes of women and assertions of male authority. Differences within the category of women have to be valued. Gates (1990: 4-5) seems to agree with Butler's arguments when he affirms that black feminists "rather than to attempt to construct a monolith of 'the' black woman's experience, have sought to chart the multiplicity of experiences and perspectives." The vision of the black woman is a pluralistic one and this pluralism is expressed through all their different voices.

The patriarchal society was responsible for the naturalizing of socially constructed differences. The superiority of the dominant group was maintained by the conventions which determined the femininity and sensuality of the white woman in contrast with the exotic blackness. However, when considering the black woman, the situation was worse, as racial and sexual difference were in evidence. Racism and sexism assigned the most subordinate place to the Negro who believed in the

stereotypes which classified him/her as an element of a secondary category. The black woman since very young had been taught that servitude was in her condition of being a woman and black. She was convinced that she was dependent on men and mainly on the white man.

Nevertheless, the limited view of binary oppositions, the fixed polarities among black man versus black woman, black woman versus white woman have been imposed by the hegemonic power. In this sense, the female subjectivity has been silenced by the oppressive male structure throughout the time. However, in this study it is argued that each polarity is plural, fragmented and the diversity of each polarity must be considered so that the established hierarchies would be destroyed. Although Walker, in her essays as well as in her fiction, attempts to break with the opposition between dichotomies and the internal unity of each polarity, the short-stories selected for this study do not follow this ideal.

The first sentence of "Roselily" shows the black female protagonist in her most common device throughout the narrative. She "dreams, dragging herself across the world" (3). The act of dreaming seems to be true for the whole story. The omniscient narrator presents Roselily's thoughts during her wedding ceremony. Instead of showing the traditional rite a bride engages in on the wedding day, such as going to the hairdresser, having beautiful make up, putting on the dress, the narrator chooses to portray what comes to Roselily's mind. The female character is not happy as usually brides are on this day. She feels depressed. "She feels old. Yoked"(6). The images that come to the dreamer's mind at that time are linked not only with the past, but also with her future. In this sense, Roselily's images are directly attached to her inner reality. Her dreams and images reveal something that has not happened yet. Therefore, what is not expressed verbally and is on her mind constitutes the valuable information about her future life.

The story happens on the day of Roselily's wedding. During the wedding ceremony, Roselily, "like cotton to be weighed" feels uncomfortable in wearing the bridal dress, that "satin and voile, organdy and lily of the valley" (3). The common sentence pronounced in wedding ceremonies, "We are gathered here in the sight of God to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony. If there is anybody here that

knows a reason why these two should not be joined together, let him speak or forever hold his peace", is gradually inserted, piece by piece, into this story, establishing the pace in which the events are shown. The reader does not see this sentence at once in the text, as it has been fragmented and inserted along the story with the events of Roselily's life. In other words, experimentation with the structure of this short-story is noticed when fragments of the wedding ceremony are alternated with Roselily's interior monologue. Her thoughts are more important than her actions and because of that Walker subverts the social conventions that are generally expected of a woman who is going to get married. What is moving about this story is Walker's treatment of the marriage theme and the "innovative" use of the fragmented technique representing Roselily's inner conflict of marrying a Black Muslim man as a way to provide material comfort to her children. This story happens at the time when many black women in the United States married with Black Muslims[24] looking for financial security. Walker, in this sense, inserts in her fiction a common practice of black women of that time. Marriage was a way to provide "social respectability" and had also been considered a vehicle for black women's protection from sexual exploitation.

The first sentences of "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" demonstrate how patriarchy influences the behavior of characters in the story. Power relations between the male and female character are not reconfigured to eliminate domination. The black couple in this story lives in an ongoing adversarial relationship. In her first appearance to the reader, the black female protagonist, Myrna expresses her conformity to the patterns of women's beauty when sitting by the window in a house with a thirty-year mortgage. She writes in her notebook, looking down at her Helena Rubenstein hands and she asks: "...And why not? Since I am not a serious writer, my nails need not to be bitten off. My cuticles need not have jagged edges. I can indulge myself – my hands – in Herbessence nailsoak, polish, lotions, and creams" (10). Myrna has accommodated herself to the circumscribed limits of the ideology of womanhood. She

[24] The term Black Muslim was associated to the conversion of Afro-Americans to Islam, via the Nation of Islam. The Black Muslim rhetoric focused on the racial issue and because of that white folks were considered devils. Malcolm X, a popular figure at that time, was influenced by the ideals of his mentor Elijah Muhammed, "the embodiment of the Divine". The religious experience within the Nation of Islam, was discredited by the white structure of power. There was an effort by black leaders to recognize a politicized religious faith that promised liberation. The main interest of this group was the Islamic religious teachings and ceremony, and their impact on black life. In: hooks, bell. "Sitting at the feet of the Messenger: Remembering Malcolm X." *Yearning-race, gender, and cultural politics*." South End Press: Boston MA, 1990, pp.79-87.

is surrounded by the superficiality of the capitalist world which values someone by the things he/she possesses. The subject is not "herself", but a product of what society and its norms have established as a woman. Her own words on the first page of her diary illustrate what she has become: "the result is a truly beautiful pair of hands: sweet-smelling, small, and soft…" (10). Thus, the value of the female character is determined by her appearance. The repression of her inner wish of being a writer, and her assimilation of societal rules is confirmed. Consequently, Myrna doubts her own intellectual skill as a writer. She lives the tension between social pressures and personal desire. When undervaluing her ability and knowledge, she takes part in the process of her own oppression, reinforcing her inferiority. She resigns herself to her new positioning by saying: "But I fit into my new surroundings perfectly; like a jar of cold cream melting on a mirrored vanity shelf" (11). In this context, she has learnt to suppress ideas in order to be in "her place". There is no complaint and thus she becomes so despersonalised by using these cosmetics that she fits just like a commodity.

However, the social roles assigned to the subjects are not based on biological needs. The inequalities between them are not pre-established, but are something produced by the construction of different genders. In this sense, the subject, throughout the time builds himself/herself as a man and woman by his/ her articulation with personal histories, sexual, ethnic, racial and classist identities. Identity is not preexistent, coherent and known. The multiple representations about/by men and women are constantly constituted and reformulated in the dialogue with other subjects. Nonetheless, as Hazel Carby (1987: 26), a well respected black literary critic and theorist, notes that in a black context the true discourses of femininity, wifehood and motherhood are "the purpose of a woman's being." The home was the space of all women's actions. For many years, the black woman in a southern society has been constructed as a 'mother' in a period in which slavery was the economic pillar and childbearing was the main task of a woman. But to many Afro-Americans, the social construct 'mother', does not mean nihilism. On the contrary, it promotes the emotional and social development of a black woman by deepening her roots with the values of her own community.

In “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?”, Myrna is married to the Southern black man, Ruel. His wish to have children is pointed out by his wife on page 79 of her diary. “Ruel came up to bed last night and actually cried in my arms! He would give anything, for a child” (20). He believes that knowledge is designated only for man, so that he could inhabit the public realm of society, and consequently he is the material provider. The social conventions of institutions such as schools, churches, family, marriage and so on constitute the subject. To the male protagonist in “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?”, a woman has to do the household activities, everything related to the private realm (family/home). She has to assume the roles of a wife and a mother. The domestic world as the ‘real universe’ of a woman maintains her invisibility in the patriarchal society. The female protagonist of this story, on the other hand, does not agree with the narrow roles her husband assigns to women in general.

In the beginning of the story, she does not see herself as a member of the fixed polarity of this dichotomy which assigns domesticity to a woman. She wishes she could be a writer, an activity performed only by men according to her husband Ruel. Myrna’s wish departs from the conventional expectations of womanhood. The female individuality, her personal integrity and her inner wishes are completely ignored. Any sign of personal/sexual fulfillment has to be repressed. In order to see his wife busy, he suggests she should “go shopping that new store in town” (16). The acceptance of these social pressures destroys her wish of becoming a writer. Her subservience is what her husband expects from her, when he says: “No wife of mine is going to embarrass me with a lot of foolish, vulgar stuff” (15). He sees his wife as property and reinforces his sexist assumption that a woman cannot take part in the realm of knowledge. Myrna, in her diary, reports her husband’s thoughts about the female condition: *“Every time he tells me how peculiar I am for wanting to write stories he brings up having a baby or going shopping, as if these things are the same. Just something to occupy my time”* (15). The use of italics by the female protagonist highlights how painful it is to Myrna to give up her activity of writing and how powerful are her husband’s words in reducing her to a lower level than she really is. To his mind, motherhood is one of the main elements of womanhood. Nevertheless, writing in her diary is a way to preserve a voice that has been silenced, threatened. He advocates the conventions of the Victorian “cult of true womanhood”.

Roselily, on the other hand, when marrying a Black Muslim will be socially respected because of his religion. The veil she will wear is a sign of God's acceptance, and is indicative of Roselily's servitude. His religion assigns to women an inferior position to men. When following the rules of his religion and "sit[ting] apart with covered head" (4), she sacrifices herself to be away from poverty. However, "she thinks of ropes, chains, handcuffs, his religion. His place of worship" (4). Every metaphor that refers to religion is associated with tools used against black men during slavery. The selection of these words in the narrative has one purpose and increases the atmosphere of imprisonment. Every detail of her future life is linked to images of Roselily's feeling of entrapment. But, the narrator is very ironic in emphasizing her rescue from poverty. She will have "a new life! Respectable, reclaimed, renewed. Free! In robe and veil" (7). How could anyone be free when following so many impositions from society and religion? Nevertheless, she gives up her personal fulfillment and embodies a new way of life when she marries and moves to Chicago. That is the opportunity she has to raise her children with a father. Life in Chicago would offer more chances for her children's growth, although little for her own improvement. She gives up the place where she has lived, her country life in Mississipi and moves to her new 'home' in Chicago, Illinois. There, she feels "ignorant wrong, backward" (9). "She thinks of Lincoln, the president. That is all she knows about the place" (9). The association of Lincoln with the place she is moving to is very meaningful since Lincoln favored democracy and wanted the slaves' freedom. In a different way from slaves, Roselily wishes she too could achieve freedom. But she is sure that their children will have "a chance to build" and to overcome from "underneath the detrimental wheel." They will have "a chance to be on top" (4).

The conventions of society oppress her and the only way she finds to have a better life is to sacrifice her body, a commodity, for the benefit of her children. Her body is what she brings to marriage. Having a husband and a house will be safe for her and her children. By being a wife and a mother, Roselily assumes her fixed positioning in the marital relationship. Her attitude reinforces the myth of black womanhood in which black mothers sacrifice their lives for their children. In the Afro-American culture, there is a long tradition of "mother worship". Traditionally, the virtues of the self-sacrificing mother are praised. However, the self-sacrifice of a

mother, as hooks (1990: 45) reminds, does not imply a gesture of choice or will, but a perfect embodiment of a woman's natural role. Following hooks' views, I realize Roselily is doing what she should be doing. Her act is not seen as a free choice according to hooks' theory. This very restrictive myth focuses only on the stereotype of the strength of a mother who is denied several possibilities for her own growth.

The outside forces such as her husband's religion and the notions of female attachment to domestic and household activities weigh upon her. Marriage, motherhood and domestic servitude, the conventional expectations of womanhood are the main sources of Roselily's oppression. Julia Cooper in *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman from the South* (1892) believes that the separation of spheres inhabited by men and women are functional. She reiterates that men are identified with the workplace outside the home, the political arena and women with home. Thus, women occupy a more influential role in culture than men, as they are the "care-givers, childrearers and teachers of manners." The power of women relies on running the home, raising and educating children, so that these practices define the status of womanhood.

However, the site of home constitutes a safe place neither for Roselily nor for Myrna. According to hooks (1990: 42-43) black women have the hard task of constructing domestic households as spaces of care and nurturance when facing the brutal reality of racist oppression and sexist domination. In this sense, the black critic sees homeplace as a site of resistance and liberation struggle. There, women could affirm their beings, their blackness, their love by restoring the dignity denied them on the outside in the public world. Despite the fact that economic and social structures deprive many black women of the ability to make homeplace, Roselily, in this short-story finds at this domestic space a site for survival. But Roselily is not able to restore her dignity when living in an oppressed condition at home. Following hooks words, homeplace is also a crucial site for organizing and forming solidarity. Nevertheless, in this literary example, Roselily finds herself with her own thoughts.

In a different way, Myrna expresses discomfort to her homeplace in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" When Ruel shows her the brand new house where they will live, she reports her cold feelings towards her husband and the house, in contrast with her

husband's happiness. Her description of the house does not show excitement in starting a new phase of her life. On the contrary, the house is just like the new Southern houses everywhere. There is nothing different and special about the house. The way the yard is described reflects a sad atmosphere in the couple's relationship. The yard that is commonly cultivated by Afro-Americans is compared to a "long undressed wound" and the trees without leaves are "stuck in a mud cake" (11). The green walls of the house, she writes, turn her "bilious" (12). Her husband's hands on her hair are not welcomed either. Although dissatisfied, she pretends they will have a new life there. The blend of Myrna's thought and action within the structure of the narrative exemplifies her reluctance: "I do not want to forget the past, but I say 'Yes', like a parrot. 'We can forget the past'" (12). There is pressure to silence her voice. Though the events of the past are meaningful, she chooses to neglect them and follow the course of her new life. Also, the memory of someone who caused her emotional destabilization and the attempt at noisily murdering her husband with a chainsaw are not easily erased from her mind. The choice of metaphors and the texture of the sentences in the narrative represent the binding and suffocating marriage that denies her the right to speak. Despite the fact that home seems to be the safest place to survive, it is never sustained without experiences. In this sense, the meaning of home will be defined differently when characters are placed as dominated/dominators. Also, bell hooks (1990) asserts that homeplace does not refer to a place, but to multiple localities of dispersion and fragmentation.

Therefore, when living in a process of tension, Roselily does not know what to do with her memories in her new life of subservience to her children and husband. She is able to sense the difficulties of this new life. However, "she wonders how to make new roots. She wonders what one does with memories in a brand-new life" (6). Detachment from the past life and immersion into a new one is not an easy task for the black female characters in both narratives. By joining selected fragmentary pieces of their memories, the reader becomes aware of the painful process in which the black female characters are engaged to "free" themselves. The web of meanings constructed by the narrator converges to the idea that memory, as an individual act, is not integrated in a linear narrative. There is no memory without conflict since remembering is an act of joining fragments of her self. In "Roselily", the narrator emphasizes this by arguing that: "Memories crash against [Roselily] her" (6). The past

is not a moment that has been left behind, but an influence on her choices in the present. Moreover, the past is not dissociated from her self. It is a vital element causing her emotional destabilization in the present life. The oppressed condition of the black female protagonist is related to the appropriation of her language by the narrator in "Roselily". The same does not happen in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" since there are few dialogues between the married couple.

Roselily's silence and her interior monologue demonstrate her inability and weakness in dealing with the present and future moments. Her "symbolic journey" to the past and then to mostly the future increases her inner conflict. What comes to her mind causes her destabilization. The construction of the future is based on what people remember of the present or the experience they name in their present life. The past is in the present. Roselily does not speak up, but she thinks, and imagines. Myrna, on the other hand, writes in her diary the events she chooses to register. And I borrow Christian's (1981: 23) words who states that "through dreams, Walker's characters" and, in this example, Roselily "seek to be, characteristically and spontaneously." The fragmentation of the story keeps the reader's interest in its development. When silencing her voice, Roselily avoids the possibility of growth and demonstrates her weakness in resisting social and marital pressures. But it is a strategy which in that society is a method for self-protection. There is no effort to struggle for her own ideals at this moment. As a subservient woman, she maintains the order that is controlled by the male dominance represented by her husband.

Questioning Identities

The idealization of marriage and romantic love as the source of woman's completeness and material well being are dismissed in "Roselily" and "Really Doesn't Crime Pay?" Perhaps in "Roselily", Walker wants to say that a mother of four children, all of them from different fathers, does not have authority in the patriarchal society. Romantic love as the basis of marriage is a bad idea, as the narrator of this story seems to suggest. Roselily, like many black women of her time, is not given

many possibilities. Therefore, she is left with the marriage choice. She could have married for love, or she could have not married the black Muslim man. However, in her condition, she is aware that marriage without love is the best strategy to survive, at least to survive in material terms.

The critic Dollan Hubbard (1995: 211), when analyzing Walker's first collection of stories, states that Walker deals with sex and gender roles as social governors to prevent women from realizing their fullest potential. In his view, women are not able to recognize their inner strength. In this vein, neither Roselily nor Myrna is happy in accepting the essentialized parameters of womanhood. The terms which determine womanhood are not seen in a positive way by black female protagonists and because of that they fail to achieve a transformative and liberatory self. In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" Stuart Hall defines cultural identity as "a 'matter of 'becoming' as well 'being' ", and explains the processes in which these characters are engaged. According to Hall (1994: 233):

> Cultural identity…belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.

The processes of 'being' and 'becoming' are observed in Walker's "Roselily" as well as in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" In Hall's sense, "being" may refer to the characters' fixed roles, ideas, and patterns of behavior. This definition implies a stable self with certain expected characteristics within the community inhabited. In this sense, the social position of female characters is circumscribed by the narrow parameters set by the structures of Roselily's and Myrna's surroundings. Their identities in Hall's terms are fixed by the attribution given by the 'other', their husbands who embody the sexist conventions of society. On the other hand, the need

to question the taken for granted values and norms which may legitimize dominance is questioned when female characters look for better conditions by struggling against the oppressive conditions of womanhood which imprison them. The idea of "becoming" and constructing "themselves" in a process of interaction with the other is erased in this moment of the two narratives. The aspirations and dreams of black female characters are "invisible" to the members of the public sphere of their communities.

In "Roselily", the patriarchal gaze reinforces the idea of a unified, coherent and fixed subject. As a voiceless character, the narrator re-writes Roselily's aspirations. In this short-story, gender oppression as a construct of female identity is kept at home and consequently black womanhood is limited to the domestic sphere. Roselily's discontent towards this submissive position is also emphasized through the image of a trapped rat when "she sees herself as an animal" and maybe "she thinks of the something as a rat trapped, cornered, scurrying to and fro in her head, peering through the windows of her eyes" (8). The obsessive imagery of confinement reveals a character who feels trapped and suffocated by her own condition. She knows that she is not marrying just any black man, but someone who is from the Black cause, a man who has not been put down by his people. In her mind, she pictures a positive image of him as the narrator describes: "She thinks of the man who will be her husband, feels shut away from him because of the stiff severity of his plain black suit. His religion. A lifetime of black and white" (5). She is sure that he is a serious person and a well respected man within his community. He will not leave her to stay with a white woman. But the narrator also tells the reader that Roselily does not even know if she loves him as the description reveals: "She loves his sobriety. His refusal to sing just because he knows the tune. She loves his pride. His blackness and his gray car. She loves his understanding of her condition. She thinks she loves the efforts he will make to read her into what he truly means" (7).

Unlike Myrna's husband in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", "in whatever moment of the narrative Ruel's husband imposes things she has to do." The narrator neither makes room for the direct words of the couple nor for a lively conversation between Roselily and the Black Muslim man. Roselily may be a victim of poverty, but she is also powerful when she makes the smart marriage decision. A sense of

choice anchors all these happenings throughout the story. When making use of hooks' definitions, Roselily's marginality is classified as a chosen one. According to hooks (1990: 153) marginality is a location of possibility, the site of resistance that is continually formed in the culture of opposition.

But in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", the female character has a chance to reverse her subservient position. The restrictions that have been imposed on Myrna are her main concerns in the pages of her diary. Her sexual involvement with Mordecai Rich changes her temporary positioning that had been established previously. According to Myrna's husband the new character introduced to the story is "the man who Ruel claims, caused her breakdown" (12). Ruel, on the other hand sees his rival as "the skinny black tramp" (14). He does not consider his rival a threat. Therefore, both her husband, Ruel Johnson and her lover, Mordecai Rich have dominated, oppressed, and exploited her in different ways. Later, Myrna is able to demonstrate dissatisfaction with the structure of domination working in her life. Ruel, as the anagram of his name suggests, continues to set the rules of marriage. Even Myrna's notes on his behavior confirm this observation: "She is [I am] startled that he does not still wear some kind of military uniform" (11). In a very distinct way, Mordecai plays with Myrna's emotions by seducing her. However, he is the catalyst for Myrna's determination to write. When interacting with another male character the protagonist Myrna, in Hall's terms, is engaged in the process of 'becoming'. Consequently, what is at stake is the continuous negotiation and renegotiation of Myrna's identity which is never fully unified, complete, secure, and coherent. As Hall (1992) argues in *Modernity and Its Future,* "the coherent identity is a fantasy", therefore, a singular and comforting 'narrative of Myrna's self' from birth to death does not exist. What Hall is saying is that identities go through constant transformation and are continuously being shifted about with the articulation of antagonistic discourses, practices and positions.

Consequently, the affair with Mordecai allows her the expression of her inner desires and self-esteem. Myrna does not see herself as being in an inferior realm and the writing activity is not repressed anymore. Her motivation to write promotes the awareness of her sexuality and intellectuality, as it is described in the following excerpt: "Under Mordecai's fingers my body opened like a flower and carefully

bloomed. And it was strange as well as wonderful. For I don't think love had anything to do with this at all" (17). By doing that she removes herself as the silent object of her husband's gaze. Her sexuality is not expressed for the pleasure of her husband and in obedience to a moral code. However, the dangers of domination are not erased in her availability to have sex with another man. There is an exchange of her body for Mordecai's attention and words of support for her writing. Her body is the payment for Mordecai's benevolent words as her notes in a diary shows: "If he says one good thing about what I've written, I promised myself, I will go to bed with him" (17). And so her words become true.

The male characters in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", Ruel and Mordecai have been characterized in different physical forms. In a mocking, cruel way, Mordecai sees Ruel Johnson as "that old man". Myrna seems to agree with his description by saying that "looking old is just his way" (12). When he went off to war Ruel had just left the place where he once lived. He works in the store and also raises peanuts. Mordecai has had an adventurous life. Coming from the north of the United States, he is delighted with everything he sees in the South. Without a fixed destination, Mordecai is looking for stories of the Southern beauty. On page five of Myrna's diary, she reproduces what Mordecai has once said of himself. He says that he has: "A cold eye. An eye looking for Beauty. An eye looking for Truth" (14). Later, she sees him in "that snake-eyed way" (15). These characterizations are not on purpose and if they have been inserted in the narrative, they are related to the character of Mordecai as a human being. There is something of a snake in Mordecai which builds up an enigmatic and dissimulated subject upon whom the reader may not rely. Even his name, Mordecai **Rich** can be read as a sign of his ambition to become well to do. Therefore, it is the introduction of this male character in the story that brings chaos to the narrative 'order'.

Despite Myrna's having described Mordecai in this unfaithful way, the Black female character naively believes in her lover and shows him everything she has written for twenty years. He examines the material and selects three notebooks and promises her that he will try to publish the stories. Rich also says that she could have been another Zora Neale Hurston or Simone de Beauvoir. By mentioning a black female writer of the Harlem Renaissance and the French writer, both women of great

importance in the literay landscape, he reinforces Myrna's skills. Now she is able to think about herself as "a famous authoress, miles away from Ruel" (18). Because of his words, she seems to be powerful enough to leave her husband Ruel and consequently she begins to trust in herself. In constrast with her husband Ruel who undervalues her writings, Mordecai Rich notes Myrna's intelligence and her talents as a writer. Ruel neither recognizes her intellectuality nor her true physical appearance as the black protagonist emphasizes: "He married me because although my skin is brown he thinks I look like a Frenchwoman. Sometimes he tells me I Iook Oriental: Korean or Japanese" (13). This example shows that Ruel constructs images he considers conforming to patterns of beauty. There is no interest in the "I" of his wife. Being involved with someone who seems to respect her makes room for the short process of gaining her liberation from the oppressive condition in which she lives in the space of home. However, her disappointment in her lover's attitude is reflected in the narrative form. From that moment forward telegraphic messages inhabit the pages of her diary.

The strategic choice of female subservience is temporary in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?". Myrna seems to redefine herself from the position of weakness. Her inability to express herself verbally at this moment in the narrative follows an unstable path. Here, again I borrow Stuart Hall's (1992, 1995) views on the question of identity. According to him, identities are in process and are not seen as fixed points. Every subject has his or her own beliefs, creeds and is embedded in some historical and social situation. When interacting with the other he/she can assume or deny different positionings. Louro (2001: 12) has the same opinion when she argues for multiple identities, distinctive and constitutive of the subjects as each one is influenced by different situations, institutions or social groups so that identities are provisionally attracted and later they seem to be disposable.

Therefore, the period of Myrna's self empowerment does not last very long. After Modercai's disappearance she "has been hunting Mordecai up and down the streets" (19). The thirty-two-year old female character feels old and tormented by the events which have caused her emotional destabilization. Rich who has once been compared to a snake metaphorically acts like a snake when coming and going unexpectedly from Myrna's life. After discovering that her lover has published her

story "The One Legged Woman"[25] in a magazine, she thinks about suicide. Her nervous breakdown achieves its climax with her attempted killing her husband when "[she] I washed the prints of his hands off [her] my body. Then [she] I plugged in one of his chain saws and tried to slice off his head" (21). Her plan does not succeed and she is still held in bondage or connection to the one who oppresses her. Myrna's reaction accords with what hooks (1990: 19) observes about a short-lived rebellion of the subject. She believes that moments of rage and resentment are very intense, as people respond, react against their oppressors. Although momentary, this inner uprising leads Myrna's rebellion.

Taking into consideration the studies of the post-colonial Indian writer Gayatri Spivak (1993: 103-104), I realize that the impossibility of speaking of the subaltern subject is based on notions constructed by the dominant power which determines the 'other' as non-historical. In this context, the subaltern woman has her voice silenced since there is a lack of a place from which she can speak. There is no space for the voice of the subaltern. This assumption is applicable to Myrna who reproduces patriarchal roles. If Myrna can not write or speak, her stories will express it in her own way by essentialized gestures and attitudes, as the following excerpt shows:

> I wait, beautiful and perfect in every limb, cooking supper as if my life depended on it. Lying unresisting on his bed like a drowned body washed to shore. But he is not happy. For he knows now that I do not intend to do nothing but say yes until he is completely exhausted.
> I go to the new shopping mall twice a day now; once in the morning and once in the afternoon, or at night. I buy hats I would not dream of wearing, or even owing… And I keep the bottles of perfume, the skin softeners, the pots of gloss and eye shadow. I amuse myself painting my own face (22-23).

[25] This story is about a poor couple, who produced dairy goods. One day, her husband was drunk and his wife assumed the task of milking the cows. The animals were afraid of the storm and threw her to the ground. When she arrived at home, her husband ashamed of the situation did not take her to the doctor. He took care of the wound in her leg. When the doctor finally saw her leg, he needed to cut it off. After that, her husband was not interested in having intercourse with her anymore. Consequently, she hanged herself and the husband buried her corpse and said to their neighbors that she is visiting her mother. It is interesting to notice that, as Chevalier (1996: 710) points out, the legs symbolize social roots, getting people closer, decreasing distances among people. Myrna, in losing her stories, also loses her opportunity for taking part of the public world.

As a married woman, she was not encouraged to develop her intellect. Myrna has become "a fluff of nothing" (22) and her duty now is to her husband. Her clothes, smiles, the availability to have sex, the way she takes care of the house are signs which confirm her subservient condition. Temporarily she fails to grow, to change, and she conforms to Spivak's (1993: 83) subaltern who "has no history" and "is even more deeply in shadows." However, her agreement with everything is imbued with a negative connotation. When she hides from her husband that she religiously takes a contraceptive, the Pill, the female character achieves her victory over him, a victory for a woman denied her right to write or speak in her own voice. She therefore believes that one day Ruel will give up his attempts at fatherhood.

In her book of interviews, Spivak (1990: 51)[26] states that temporary strategic choices are inevitable to those who do not wish to be silenced forever. She asserts that the subaltern position makes room for the following agency to the woman's benefit. Essentializations can be required in any moment, so that the racist and sexist structures can be confronted. In the author's words: "So, then, strategically you can look at essentialisms, not as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of anything". The questions asked are never neutral and because of that the temporary essentialism is allowed. When accepting the burdens of the female suffering and nullism as part of an inheritance, Roselily reproduces the fixed gender identity. In Spivak's terms, the position of the subject without speaking can be changed by investigation of the structure of power which determines the subject's silence. In the short-story "Roselily", the black female character sees marriage as a way up for a black woman. On the other hand, in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", Myrna assumes the strategies of nihilism and self-abnegation by avoiding direct disagreement from conventions, so that later she will try to be free.

[26] Spivak's 'strategic essentialism' is criticized by Judith Butler who proposes a 'strategic positionality'. By considering the strategic provisionality of the sign (instead of the strategic essentialism), identity in Butler's terms is seen as a site for revision and contestation and it can also bring about a series of future meanings that one has not been able to foresee. In: BUTLER, Judith. "Corpos que Pesam: Sobre Limites Discursivos do Sexo". In: *O Corpo Educado: Pedagogias da sexualidade*. Belo Horizonte.: Autêntica, 2001, pp. 153-172.

> When he is quite, quite tired of me I will tell him how long I've relieved on the security of the Pill. When I am quite, quite tired of the sweet, sweet smell of my body and the softness of these Helena Rubenstein hands I will leave him and this house. Leave them forever without once looking back (23).

The implied suggestion of Myrna's freedom is one of the possible endings of the story. However, the reader may believe in the reinforcement of the existent hierarchies. Myrna might remain as a troubled, disappointed woman confined to the prison of her marriage. She hides her emotions and her thoughts, but not her body. Enforcing the silence of this character proves to be a problem to the action-narrative.

The lack of any chronological order in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" does not prevent the reader from following the development of the story. He/she is able to identify the conflict Myrna lives, and her tensions in Southern society. The final pages of the diary, the use of flashback, the metaphors, the figurative language, the fragmentation of the narrative, the selected events and the characterization require the reader's participation. By joining the fragmented pieces of the character's mind, the reader is able to understand the story. The fragments of Myrna's diary in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" illustrate the characteristic of experimentation assigned to the short-story genre, and this narrative is a vehicle for the female character's liberation from the subaltern position. The interrogative end of this short-story leaves the conclusion to the reader who will be free to provide the most pertinent ending-whether Myrna is or is not able to successfully challenge social conventions which have oppressed her.

In "Roselily", the end also forces the reader to reflect upon the female character's ability to reverse the situation. The last words very timidly demonstrate Roselily's wish to live. The third person narrator reports her current condition: "She wants to live for once. But does not quite know what that means. Wonders if she has ever done it. If she ever will" (8). However, her lack of initiative towards her self-fulfillment is what pervades the story. In these narratives, there is an attempt to transform the experience of female oppression, but neither Roselily nor Myrna meets the social demands for women who are internalizing their oppression as black women.

The same process does not occur with the female protagonists of the stories of *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* to be analyzed in the next section.

Reification of Women in "Coming Apart" and "Porn"

The stories "Coming Apart – A Way of Introduction to Lorde, Teish and Gardner" and "Porn" included in the collection of short-stories *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* are dealt with in this section. The narratives, which illustrate the current debate regarding appropriate sexual female behavior among the black community, focus on the theme of pornography. Both content and structure of the stories reflect part of the questioning of conventions in the seventies. As the critic Karrer (1993: 9) reminds us, most of the short story of the seventies and eighties is openly didactic and it aims at strengthening the black community. The well written formula story was passed down from the nineteenth century, relying on fragmentation, and also crossing genre boundaries with poetry, the sketch and novel.

Black writers like Alice Walker looked for more experimental modes of literature. The systematic repetition of forms of the past as the French critic Alain Robbe-Grillet believes (2000: 810) is harmful because it blinds contemporary writers to their real situation in the world they live. This French thinker also mentions the difficulties a writer has when he/she tries to renounce the narrative strategies of the past. Nevertheless, Walker feels the need to use another form instead of the ones she used in her first collection of stories. In the first part of "Coming Apart", the reader is faced with Walker's personal point of view about the process of writing the text. Initially, the text was written to be part of a book *Take Back The Night*, whose introduction Walker have been invited to write. She received essays of black lesbian writers Audre Lorde, Lusiah Teish, and Tracey A. Gardner whose names appear in the title. Walker also reports having difficulty in classifying this narrative as a story, a fable or an introduction. Finally, she chooses to call it a short-story as she asserts in the introduction of the story. Walker develops this narrative in a hybrid form by using excerpts from theoretical texts of those authors within the plot.

Walker abandons ‘well-worn formulas’ and attempts to create her own way of writing. The plot has not been the ‘armature’ of the analyzed narratives. Walker seems to be following a tendency, which has been noted by Grillet (2000: 817), who asserts that in the last few years the plot has disintegrated. Ways of expressing have gained another shape as the form could no longer be separated from the content.

In “Coming Apart” and “Porn”, the black female characters (de) construct stereotypes and prejudices assigned to black women in male pornographic magazines. Invented classifications by/in the power structure are questioned by them in order to put an end to the circulated images of a reified sexuality of black women. Because of that, this section presents black female characters who are and who are not able to undermine the social/sexual prescriptions of society by exerting their agency. There is a focus on the process of reversing the classical script of black womanhood.

The female and male characters in both stories are not referred to by their names. The names do not really matter, however characters’ actions and feelings seem to be more important as they appear to represent the whole black race. Signs of the personal identities of the subjects are erased throughout the narratives and this strategy suggests that they represent the community as a whole. Moreover, the fact of not having proper names may be a sign of exclusion from the society they live. Not having names represents the lack of space and recognition from the outside world. Women become objects of desire. In “Coming Apart”, the female character is essentially the good wife and in “Porn”, she is the good lover. In the beginning of both stories, they never need to be told what their ‘loved’ men need.

Power relations within the dominant structure are depicted in terms of female oppression. The coercive structure of the patriarchal relationships establishes woman’s subordination and dependency as norms to be followed in these stories. However, in the beginning of “Porn”, this assumption is contested “in between the lines”. The opening excerpt of the story introduces the reader to a distinction between men and women:

> Like many thoughtful women of the seventies, she had decided women were far more interesting than men. But, again like most thoughtful women, she rarely admitted this aloud. Besides, again like her contemporaries, she maintained a close connection with man (77).

Significantly, the short-story opening evokes the representation of a personal experience as if it were a collective one. The third person narrator illustrates the impersonal tone of the narrative which is about to follow. The narrator reports what the female character, the "representative" of the black women of the seventies thinks about the positive characteristics of women. The depiction of women as more thoughtful, more articulate and more interesting than men is applied to the whole category of women. This general representation refers to women who live at a time when the Black Arts Movement had turned to a masculinist approach with claims for black manhood and racial pride.

The previous quote showed women who do not speak out against male dominance. Societal mechanisms keep them attached to the reified stereotypes of inferior human beings and because of that some of them do not feel comfortable verbalizing their inner thoughts. The more silenced or voiceless women are, the more powerful men become. This observation is confirmed in the beginning of "Coming Apart". The classical black female script which demands loyalty, sexual fidelity, self-abnegation, and idealization of marriage is present. The opening paragraph of "Coming Apart" shows a black middle aged man coming home after work. His wife greets him at the door and tells him dinner is ready. At this moment, there is a repetition of the social roles of women and men. The hegemonic power fixes the woman as a passive and subservient subject, confined to marriage, home and domestic chores while the activities of the public realm are performed by men. However, in this narrative the relations of domination and submission are gradually changed throughout the story.

When the black male character enters home, first he goes to the bathroom. After masturbating by looking at *Jiveboy* magazine, he is relaxed to have dinner. The following description shows how the male character becomes almost animalistic by

references to basic drives like sex, defecation and hunger. Women are reduced to their bodies and are seen like objects when compared to elastic waists and the eyes are an invitation for sex:

> He studies the young women-blonde, perhaps (the national craze), with elastic waists and inviting eyes- and strokes his penis. At the same time, his bowels stir with the desire to defecate. He is in the bathroom a luxurious ten minutes (42-43).

In this first excerpt from "Coming Apart", Walker subverts the notion of female animality due to its closeness to nature. The male character is also criticized as he makes use of pornographic magazines to defecate. The basic instincts refer to the man, not to the woman. Immediately after, his wife gets into the bathroom and sees the magazine with blonde and brunette women. Bodies of blonde women on a magazine are vehicles for sexual pleasure. She feels inferior and invisible when noticing the contrast with the other women who provide pleasure to her husband. Although frustrated, she is not able to express her opinion. First, she questions her husband about the use of the magazine, but later she agrees with what he says: "You are being a) silly, b) prude and c) ridiculous, [...] You know I love you" (43). After that she recognizes her silliness and accepts this situation. She is not happy, although she will adjust. She is not powerful enough to fight against this situation. Feeling rejected, the female character nullifies herself and conforms to the female norms of society as she shows in what plays, very telegraphically in her mind: "He is right. I will grow up. Adjust. Swim with the tide" (43). Her lack of speech maintains the male domain. The strategic use of this narrative's point of view reinforces the female's weakness at this moment of the story.

Both in "Coming Apart" and in "Porn", power is institutionalized when differences are maintained. The acceptable behavior for black women is almost always constructed as contingent in relation to men. When looking at the other, one is able to define herself/himself by oppositional characteristics. If the black female character in the beginning of "Coming Apart" is not able to break up with women's expected silence, the female character in "Porn" will deal with the conventions of

society differently. Although most women do not recognize their potentialities aloud in “Porn”, they do not repress their involvement with men, as the story suggests.

Thus, the description and behavior of women in “Porn” could not be applied to females, but to males in a patriarchal society. In this short-story, there is a subversion of what is generally conformed to by a black woman since the female character asserts herself as a sexual subject. Moreover, the assumption of the first sentence of the story seems to present a “true conclusion” or the result of a thoughtful process of analysis and comprehension of the women category.

But the connection to a man is mainly described as a sexual one in “Porn”. While many women are coerced into a kind of passive sacrifice of the body, the female protagonist of “Porn” actively chooses the ends to which her body will be used. The female sexuality is the expression of freedom. The historical condition of the black woman’s powerlessness is questioned when she diverges from ‘normativity’. When keeping a sexual connection with the male character she freely takes hold of what the conventions have always denied to her. The excerpt also leaves implicit the idea that women of the seventies are repeating the gestures of women of the sixties, the ‘thoughtful’ contemporary women. Mainly in 1968-1969, the Black Power Movement empowered people of African descent by providing a sense of pride that could pierce the myths and lies that had grown up around the antebellum period.

Since the literature of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the female codes of social/sexual behavior had been defined by the “politics of silence”. In a patriarchal society, women were generally devoid of sexual desires as coped with men to satisfy the male’s needs. Since slavery time the black woman had been seen as an object for others.

Therefore, in “Porn”, the implied voice of the Afro-American writer is brought alive by the female character. Female sexuality is not defined in terms of victimization and male dominance/female submission. On the contrary, the female protagonist exhibits new dimensions of agency by (re) defining new subjectivities outside the racist and sexist circumscriptions of society. She is able to transcend stereotypes about her sexuality and moral character. When the black female character

asserts that her primary interest in the man was sexual, she defines herself as a sexual subject, free to choose her partner. When not focusing on the relationship between the couple in love, but on sexual terms, Walker goes against the romantic discourse imposed on women in general. Love is not always the main pillar of a couple's relationship. Consequently, the female character affirms her enjoyment of sex not attached to love. Although there are changes in attitudes towards sex and sexual behavior, in a patriarchal society men are still seen as the ones who have a "natural" tendency to get involved in a sexual relationship without love. But in this story there is a reverse of the polarities when the female character incorporates general male characteristics, for example, in not repressing inner desires and sexual attraction. Female sexuality is far from being an objectification of male desire. Thus, what really attracts her and keeps her attached to him is her sexual attraction for him:

> Sex together was incredibly good: like conversation with female friends, who were never abstract, rarely distant enough from nature to be critical in their appraisal of it. (…)The touch of his fingers- (…) were like tongues of women, talking, questing, searching for the true place, the place which, when touched has no choice but to respond (78).

First sex is compared to conversation among her women friends who speak their minds and were not afraid to "talk back"[27]. Their conversation was never abstract, and they dealt with real and relevant facts. His touch is compared to the female conversation, extensive, long lasting, ending up to the moment they achieve the right, true place. Everything in the narrative is expected. Nothing surprises the reader who is introduced to the ritual, they enact when they meet. Whether lust or love, the fast pace of words and telegraphic sentences, the mix of fiction and the journalism style and the brevity of the actions emphasize how ephemeral is their relationship, their feeling, their involvement:

[27] According to bell hooks "back talk" or "talking back" is not just the use of words without meaning, but it is the expression of the movement from object to subject- the liberated voice. The satisfaction they received from talking to one another, the pleasure, the intimacy and intensity of their speech provides the world of women with tongues quick and sharp. In: hooks, bell. *Talking Back. Thinking Feminist. Thinking Theory*. Boston, MA: South end Press,1989: 6, 9.

> They would come home. Smoke a joint. He would put music on. She would run water in the tub with lots of bubbles (…) He would carry her in to bed.
> *Music. Emotion. Sensation. Presence.*
> *Satisfaction like rivers*
> *flowing and silver* (78).

The words in italics reinforce what characters do and the reader does not suggest, hint or imply anything. Everything is stated openly[28]. In this sense, the reader does not have to join pieces of information to infer the possible events or characters' attitudes in "Porn". Everything is given to the reader and characters are exactly what they do. The reader is left to the position of an observer, who is shown the situations, the descriptions. When analyzing the collection of stories *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, the critic Alice Hall Petry (1993: 203) notes Walker's preference for *telling* over *showing*. To tell a story in the words of the writer Grillet (2000: 816) is to make what one writes resemble the prefabricated schemas people are used to, their ready made idea of reality. The writer is always supposed to know more than he/she says. In his/her description he must give the impression of offering only the essentials, but of being able to tell much more. The fiction writer invents freely without a model. Georg Lukács (1965), on the other hand argues for the use of "showing" rather than "telling" in a literary text. He believes that "telling" does not provide an artistic approach as the events come to represent a series of 'portraits' which have been described in isolation. Following Lukács concern on this issue, Walker has failed in the narrative power.

In "Porn", the reader is introduced to a woman who breaks the rigid discourses concerning female sexuality. She goes against the rules of society when determining her own actions as described by the narrator. Therefore, her trajectory is an anomaly to the roles prescribed for black women by the dominant social narrative. But the same cannot be said in relation to the black female character of "Coming Apart" since the couples of "Porn" and "Coming Apart" are engaged in different kinds of

[28] Bader A. L. (1978) in "The Structure of Modern short-story" states that a favored contemporary technique consists on suggesting, implying, but not to state directly or openly.

relationships. Elements of the couple intimacy are not present in "Coming Apart". Although the attitudes of the black woman in "Coming Apart" are not considered transgressive in the beginning of the narrative, she is completely aware of the matrixes of sexual domination in society. While walking behind her husband on a street, she becomes paralyzed by the women she sees on display as mannequins as commodities in a window:

> Four plastic dolls - one a skinny Farrah Fawcet (or so the doll looks to her) posed for anal inspection; one, an oriental, with her eyes, strangely closed, but her mouth, a pouting red suction cup, open: an enormous eskimo woman, with fur around her neck and ankles, and vagina, and a black woman dressed entirely in a leopard skin, complete with tail (44).

Her husband is fascinated by everything he sees. As objects of male desire, women are present in positions of sexual submission. They are ready to please the men's needs. The acessories women wear and the focus on the female genitalia, anus, lips, on the parts of their bodies are signs of their reification. Female sexuality is reduced to their bodies and their bodies are reduced to their buttocks, vagina and breasts. The women's bodies are the discursive terrain for the convergence of racism and sexism. It is clear that the image of animal sexuality is projected onto black women such that they are left far from the standards of true womanhood and excluded from the 'white' parameters of virtuosity.

Another example in the short-story reveals the black female's indignation with two commercials on the TV hotel. In the first one, the black woman wears a dress and a chain around her ankle reminding the spectator of slavery. In the second one, she sings: "ready, aim, fire, my name is desire (…) shoot me with your love" (45). Men are hunters while women are captured animals. In both examples, women do not seem to want freedom. The black female character, after facing these stereotypical examples, reflects upon her own behavior, her own way of being and her own physical appearance. She has become more silent, introspective and because of that she has been criticized by her husband who says: "you're the only black woman in the world that worries about this stuff" (45).

The same process of awareness happens in "Porn" when the male character decides to show his "porn" collection to his partner. But before that the narrator tries to convince the reader that their union is predictable and convenient for both of them. It seems like an arrangement, a deal which promotes benefits for both of them. Attraction, sex touch, and everything related to sexual interaction or deep emotional moments, builds the atmosphere of their libidinuous satisfaction and enjoyment while they are together. In a telegraphic framework, the narrator presents what both characters do after their first meeting and how they have structured their relationship: "They met. Liked each other. Wrote five or six letters over the next seven years. Married other people. Had children. Lived in different cities. Divorced. Met again to discover they now shared a city and lived barely three miles apart" (77). The reader may feel uncomfortable with the lack of characterization, accompanied by detailed descriptions of what characters do. The life of both characters is summarized in a brief way. Both characters have been involved in similar experiences in the course of their lives. No difference is provided between the male and female character's lives. The same way of life and the responsibility for supporting their children are some of the elements that join them. The first part of "Porn" focuses on the similarities between them rather than differences.

Later in "Porn", however, in a reflection on intellectual distinctions between the sexes frustrates the female character as she becomes aware of the differences between them: "It was not that she did not respect his mind; she did. It was a fine mind. More scientific than hers, more given to abstractions" (78). If he is only scientific and abstract, she senses she could be much more than these characteristics as another excerpt from the story demonstrates: "… In conversation, he could be only scientific, only be abstract, and she was, because of her intrepid, garrulous women friends - whom she continued frequently, and often in desperation, to see - used to so much more" (79). Because women are traditionally seen as garrulous, they have gone beyond abstraction and developed critical skills. Being talkative is not a negative aspect, on the contrary, it provides women another way of dealing with reality. However, the tendency of men to deal with abstractions and to working in the field of sciences keeps alive another cliché. But what puts an end to their relationship is the

stereotyped view her partner has concerning the bodies of women. And this reduced view also characterizes the black male character.

The Pornographic Space

If "Coming Apart" and "Porn" deal with pornography, a very brief consideration of the theme can help the analysis of the short-stories. In pornography, women are defined by how they look according to how they can be sexually used. Susan Griffin (1981: 233), in her studies of sexuality, states that the pornographic image is the path used by men to construct an objectified reality of women. She is ridiculed and treated with hostility in the male world. Women's bodies are exploited rather than recognized as human beings. Pornography degrades women as they are presented as sexual objects, things, or commodities, experiencing pleasure in rape, enjoying humiliation and pain. Women are subordinated to the sexuality of male supremacy. There is a mixture of domination and submission with the social construction of the male and female gender. Cultural meanings are inscribed within the female body. In pornography people have the opportunity to develop their imaginations.

The perception of the differences between the female and male character becomes clearer in both narratives. In "Porn", this awareness takes place when the female character sees the stories and pictures of her partner and in "Coming Apart" when the female protagonist sees first the cover of a magazine *Jivers* which her husband uses to masturbate, and later when she faces the women on display in a window while they walk on the street. There is an explicit subordination of women through the picture on the magazine cover and in the stories of the porn collection. Pornography is not associated with sex, however it is linked to the destabilization of power relationships. Women who are kept by the male dominance are depicted in the most humiliating and degrading way. Moreover, the characterization of black women in those materials is based on patterns of women's sexuality of the nineteenth century. The colored skin, the primitive genitalia, the large size of the female body and

buttocks were signs that degraded black female sexuality. As Sander Gilman (1985) argues in her article "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature", the medicine of this century also looked for explanations for the differences noticed between the black and white bodies. The black woman was constructed as "polluted" and thus there was a need to control her sexuality. In the following excerpt of "Coming Apart", the black woman on the cover of the magazine is at the man's feet and the man, in the foreground reinforces his superiority:

> on the cover are legs and shoes of a well-dressed black man, carrying a briefcase and rolled Wall Street Journal in one hand. At his feet there is a woman, a brownskin woman like herself, twisted and contorted in such a way that her head is not even visible. Only her glistening body- her back and derriere- so that she looks like a human at the man's feet (43).

This excerpt shows the power relations determining the differences between the male and female subjects. The man has power to subjugate the woman who is strategically placed in an inferior position. A well dressed black man carries a briefcase and a Wall Street Journal. This characterization can be associated with social respectability and rationality as he belongs to the business world. But the same cannot be said of the female character. The woman with dark skin is bent, contorted so that her head is not so visible. Only her back and her derriere are seen. In this fragment, the subjects are restricted to the expressions of their bodies. Signs of identity are inscribed on the female and male bodies. As Carby (1987: 25) observes, external physical qualities were seen as a reflection of internal qualities of character according to the discourse of true womanhood.

Nevertheless, when considering images, it is important to observe not only what or who has been represented (portrayed), but also who makes the iconographic image. From where does this subject speak? What is her/his 'lócus of enunciation'? These are relevant questions raised when one confronts any kind of representation- visual or not. Visual conventions are responsible for the ways in which one perceives and transmits the understanding of the world. Social meanings produce and reproduce

discourses that are in accordance with the dominant structure. In "Coming Apart", there is an effort to link female sexuality with inferiority. As Gilman (1985: 223-224) realizes "the aesthetic icons may (or may not) be rooted in some observed reality." Thus, I argue that the stereotypes of black women have its origins in the observation of South African black women of the ethnic group named "khoikhoi"[29]. Based on a characteristic identified with these women, the inferiority of black women was 'proved'. Their larger buttocks (a common disease of the women of this group called steatopygia) inscribed the pathology of a black woman. The hottentot, in Gilman's words, remained representative of the black, especially the black female. In this context, the literary stereotypes in the short-stories with the theme of pornography reflect or represent a reality. Nevertheless, this procedure of paralleling is condemned by Hazel Carby (1987: 22) who does not relate "the social processes in the terms of resemblance, homology or analogy" of the African woman. In her words, stereotypes do not reflect an underlying reality, however it functions as a "disguise, or mystification of objective social relations."

The stories and pictures of "Porn" provide the same negative female characterization as "Coming Apart". The couple in "Porn" sees black and white people on magazines. At this moment, the narrative control deals with the representation of sexuality and sexual activity. In the first story, there is a "*gorgeous black woman*", "a *white gay boy"* and another man "who *is not gorgeous*". These

[29] In 1810, Saarjie Baartman, Sarah Bartman or Saat Jee, most known as "Hottentot Venus" was brought from Africa to London and Paris by Alexander Dunlop and Henrick Caesar after the genocide committed against her people by Dutch settlers in South Africa. In London the keeper Caesar maintained her in a cage and ordered her to move backwards and forwards, to come out and go into her cage. She was treated like an animal rather than a human being. She was exhibited based on her physical difference or pathology at the freak shows and became the main attraction of it. In Paris, the public display of her body was said to have an 'educational' purpose as researchers and scientists were invited to investigate a rare ethnographic type. She was daily placed on a stage so that people could touch, smell and poke her with any object. In 1815, at the age of 26 she died in Paris after several public displays in Europe. The French anatomist Georges Cuvier dissected Baartman and considered her as the representative of the lowest human species in comparison to the highest ape, the orangutan. Parts of her body, her genitalia were exhibited at "Museé de l'Homme" in Paris and were used as an explanation to the maintenance of the difference and inferiority of the black race. Several caricatures, newspaper articles were produced at that time in order to depict her anomalous body as it is observed at the illustration section. In: STROTHER, Z. S. "Display of the Body Hottentot". In: LINDFORS, Bernth (ed.). *Africans on Stage. Studies in Ethnological Show Business*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 1- 61 and YOUNG, Jean. "The Re-Objectification and Re-Commodification of Saartjie Baartman in Suzan-Lori Parks's Venus." In: *African American Review*, vol. 31, no 4. *Contemporary Theatre Issue.* (Winter, 1997), pp.699-708. See illustrations 3 and 4.

characters of the story are ready to get involved in sexual interaction: "*without holding hands or eating or bathing or putting on music, they strip and begin to fondle each other.[The woman] looks amused as they take turns licking and sucking her. She smiles benignly as they do the same things to each other…"* (80). The content of the first story shows that sexual interaction is a mechanical act. There is no personal involvement among them. The description is not objective as the narrator focuses on the details of the characters involved. Sex presents the opportunity for the gleaning of the desires of their bodies. The woman sets the roles and establishes what is going to give pleasure to her. She is amused by their touches.

But the second story of the collection shocks her too. A young blonde girl from Minnesota faces two black men fighting. In her "naïve white self", she gets them separated. *"In their gratitude for her peace making they take her to their place and do everything they can think of to her. (...) Finally they make a sandwich of her: one filling the anus and the other the vagina, so that all that is visible of her body between them is a silver of white thighs"* (80). What is most shocking is the woman's description as if she is ready to have intercourse. The girl described as "horny" and "lonely" is a victim of sexual exploitation. The glorification of male violence against women is a constant in pornographic material. Rape reinforces patriarchal social control over female sexuality. Power and sexuality are closely connected to male domination and female oppression. Freedom in bell hooks' (1990: 63) words was equated with manhood, and manhood with the right of men to have indiscriminate access to bodies of women. This is what truly happens in this example of the porn collection in the short-story "Porn".

The stories of the collection are presented in italics and alternated with the events in the lives of the characters in "Porn". There is a mix of elements from the porn collection with what happens to the protagonists of the short-story. The mechanical description of sex noticed in the porn material is not applied to the male and female characters of the short-story. Their relationship represents more than intercourse. Personal relation is an indication of the success of the couple's sexual interaction. When having sex, she is held by his touch. The interrupted sequence of actions sets the pace of the story:

> He is massaging the back of her neck, her shoulders. Her buttocks. The backs of her thighs. She has bent over a hot typewriter all day and is tired. She sinks into the feeling of being desired and pampered. Valued. Loved. Soon she is completely restored. Alert (81).

The focus of the narrative turns to the female character's feelings and her consequent attitudes towards her partner. The reader does not have to piece together the details of the gestures enacted by her. As an independent woman, she does not see any problem in making the decision of being ready for intercourse. She believes she is not a victim of sexual exploitation as she is the one who allows sexual interaction. Instead of giving power to a man, Walker subverts this notion and presents a woman free to make this decision. The black female protagonist assumes what is generally attributed to men. However, she cannot dissociate sex from her emotional state where she feels valued and loved.

Coming back to the literary examples of pornographic material, women are represented by their silence and their bodies. Their images affirm a general perception of what black women are. In the media site, in the pornographic magazine, women are seen as typological figures. Brian Wallis (1995: 54-57), in his studies of white science and black bodies, states that "types" erase the identity of the subject when making subjective distortions in the name of a logic of observation. What is present is the product of a social construct that defines, regulates and crystallizes difference. There is no wish to present the culture of the photographed woman. When depersonalized, she is seen as an anonymous body, an object of desire, without language, history, memory or mind. If the woman is reduced to her body, the distortions of her black body and the allusion to the exotic keep alive her inferiority. The manipulation of what has to be understood by the observer is in accordance with the imposed ideological principles. The classification of the 'other' as an inferior race and gender is structured by his/her superficial physical characterization. According to Annette Kuhn's (1985) in *The Power of Image*, the protagonists of both short-stories are described in the same way as the characters of the magazines and stories of the porn collection. In her short-fiction, Walker relies on the same strategies of narrative as those used in the pornographic text, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

> … in pornography stories, literary as well visual, characters are never very strongly developed or psychologically rounded human beings…characters are what they do, and given a minimal account of familiarity… Pornography has a good deal in common with other simple narratives stories in which characters are no more what they do…

When these words are applied to the treatment of protagonists in "Coming Apart" and "Porn", the reader perceives their lack of characterization. Pornography seems to be essential to the construction of the black characters' manhood. Being reified by their partners slowly brings about the images of male violence in daily culture. The female characters become aware of the violence committed to their own bodies and to women's bodies in general. In this sense, they are able to comprehend how the matrices of male domination work in their own lives ensuring subordination. As the filmmaker Pratibha Parmar (1990) states in "Black Feminism: The Politics of Articulation":

> Images play a crucial role in defining and controlling the political and social power to which both individuals and marginalized groups have access. The deeply ideological nature of imagery determines not only how other people think about us but how we think about ourselves.

The dominant discourse of male power is reproduced when the male characters in both stories are unable to question these images and the stories in which blackness and black people have been objectified. Neither male character is smart enough to notice the dehumanization of women when he is consuming these constructed and marketed images.

When differences are homogeneized, stereotypes are strengthened. Black female stereotypes fix some characteristics that have been described by society as "anomalous". The black woman, as an inferior human being, has a pre-disposition to a lascivious behavior. Thus, the control of her sexuality is justified in these terms as there is an association of blackness with illicit sexuality. She is seen through a metonymic process of presence in which only white America recognizes the negative characterization rather than considering the plenitude of negative characterizations.

They represent the personification of what is polluted in society. The metonymic displacement, in Toni Morrison's (1990: 68) words, counts on the reader's complicity in dismissing the other. In this sense, color coding, physical traits become metonyms that displace rather than signify characters. Black women remain nameless and setereotyped rather than named and personalized.

The studies of Indian cultural thinker Homi K. Bhabha (1994) on the representation of the colonized in the colonial discourse, helps us to understand the inferiorization of the black woman and the stereotype problem. First of all, Bhabha does not argue for the substitution of the negative images of the colonized with new ones. Ambivalence in Bhabha's terms is the basis of stereotypes. The stereotype is almost always linked to something that is familiar, with a fixed position. Further, the stereotype needs to be engaged in a constant process of repetition so that the negative characteristics of the colonized can be proved. The more these 'invented' stories are told, the more the difference is packaged. This limited mechanism does not make room for the dialogic interplay of identity construction. Threatened by the difference of the 'Other', the colonizer needs to impose the idea of a pure and static identity. When classifying the racial, sexual or cultural 'other' as inferior, the colonizer keeps alive the dominant superiority by making use of stereotypes. The different element is not eliminated. In his reading of Bhabha's study on the practices of colonial discourse, Lynn Mario Menezes (1995) reinforces the importance of the concept of fetish to understand how the stereotype functions. The discriminatory stereotype rejects the difference of the other and provides limited characteristics of the subjects. As a fetish, the stereotype is a false representation of reality and also a simplification, as it denies the process of identity construction. As a linguistic strategy employed in fiction, the fetishization of color, as Morrison (1990: 68) asserts "evokes erotic fears or desires and establishes difference where difference does not exist or is minimal." Following these fixed terms, black female characters' identities in "Porn" and in "Coming Apart" are not hybrid, but pure. As Hazel Carby (1987) asserts in *Reconstructing Womanhood* black women came to represent not only sexuality in general, but also illicit and/or 'taboo' sexuality. Black women's images were built in an antithetical relationship with the values embodied in the cult of true womanhood. In addition, Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1900: 99) realizes that no matter their strengths to change these fixed constructions, black women are "painfully aware that they were devalued".

Therefore, the cult of true womanhood, as the critic remembers was not intended to apply to them.

On Becoming Subjects

Although, the black female characters of "Coming Apart" and "Porn" do not agree with their partners' views of black bodies, they have different reactions. The black woman in "Coming Apart" is engaged in a process of trying to bring consciousness to her husband. Not only that, the female character is engaged in a process of her own recognition. In Butler's sense (2004: 44), this process does not require recognition of what one already is; it has to instigate transformation, as the future is always related to an interaction with the Other in a process of becoming. The marital relationship survives and the woman character makes an effort to rescue her husband. The very simple plot of "Coming Apart" turns to the transformation of the black male character and his wife's efforts to provide this change. But in "Porn", the independent woman, very aware of the implications of the porn stories and pictures, does not react in the same way. Thus, the woman who has been attached to domesticity in the beginning of "Coming Apart" is powerful enough to challenge societal conventions. In "It Ain't Where You Are From, It's Where You Are At", what the critic Paul Gilroy[30] (1993: 134-135) calls a "politics of transfiguration" seems to be applied to this woman. According to him this utopian politics enacts

[30] Paul Gilroy asserts that the subject of this article is culture and resistance. Therefore, he asks the reader's attention to what is being resisted and by what means the resistance is accomplished. He also argues for the pluralistic position which affirms blackness in opposition to essentialism. "There is no unitary idea of black community", as he states, so that the polyphony of black cultural expression constitutes an aesthetic. When rethinking the tradition of cultural expression, he refuses to separate ethics and aesthetics, culture and politics. He suggests the non-coextensive politics of fulfillment and of transfiguration. The first one is related to its normative vein and the second to its utopian aspirations. What might be called "politics of fulfillment" is a discursive mode of communication and its mainly connected to what is said, shouted, screamed or sung (in the context of music). The social and political promises for justice, for instance are left unaccomplished. The utopian "politics of transfiguration" is more complex, as there is a move beyond linguistic, textual or discursive context. New desires, social relations within the community are enacted. In Gilroy's words, there is a "struggle to repeat the unrepeatable, to present the unpresentable" as the main issue consists of "to conjure up and enact the new modes of friendship, happiness, and solidarity that are consequent on the overcoming of racial oppression" (135). Thus, in the context of this work, the female character's reaction in "Porn" is associated to the "politics of fulfillment" while the "politics of transfiguration" seems to be applied to the woman character in "Coming Apart".

solitary actions for change, so that racial and sexual oppression are denied in favor of new social practices. The overcoming of racial oppression promotes new modes of relationships. On the other hand, the woman in "Porn" who has challenged conventions when asserting her sexual identity is not able to make room for the partner's awareness of the stereotypes invented. Furthermore, the death relationship is established when the female character decides not to cope with the male fantasies in "Porn". This female character may represent what Gilroy has called the "politics of fulfillment" in which there is recognition of an unaccomplished society. Although there is an assimilation of the demands for justice into a verbal and textual context, the practice does not come true. Every demand permeates only the textual discourse. hooks' (1989: 70) adds to this debate that individuals change and are changed by events and circumstances so that they have power to transform reality. In this context, Hall's (1995: 66) concerns with "sliding identities", however "not infinitely sliding", find grounding in the different responses both female characters exhibit when facing similar situations. Hall asserts there is always a need to stop when he talks about the process of identity construction. According to him: "If you don't, you cannot construct meaning. You have to come to a full stop, not because you have uttered your last word, but because you need to start a new sentence in which may take back everything you have just said." At the point of Hall's closure, an indeterminacy enters the chain of discourse; another place of enunciation occurs. Hall's full stop is meaningful to the comprehension of the female characters' agency in these short-stories that deal with the theme of pornography as well as the other selected stories of *In Love & Trouble.*

Therefore, in dealing with the types of female characters' agency, I highlight the formation of differing subjects through different processes (economic, political, cultural) that leave their mark on variable experiences and identities. This relationship between agency and identity becomes clear when the points of temporary attachment to the subject are understood. And explaining his theory of identity, Hall (1995) says:

> So I certainly don't want to restore the notion of identity as a unified essence… On the contrary, I understand identities as points of suture, (…) as a way of understanding the constant transformations of who one is or as Foucault put it, 'who one is to become'. You only discover who you are because the

> identities you are required to take on, into which you are interpellated: but **you must take up those positionalities**, however temporarily, in order to **act** at all. Identities are, as it were the forms in which we are obliged to **act**, while always knowing that they are representations which never be adequate to the subject process that are temporarily invested in them (65).

Coming back to the literary texts, the female character in "Porn" in contrast with the one from "Coming Apart", chooses not to act. She no longer accepts her partner nor, consequently, his conception of a woman as a mere object. On the other hand, the male character in this short-story cannot live without pornography as his male identity is supported by pornographic means. The more the woman is devalued, the more he shapes his manhood.

The awareness of the women's subordination and reification is what puts an end to the couple's involvement in "Porn". Pornography becomes harmful to the relationship. The narrator seems to empathize with the female character of "Porn" by arousing disgust, outrage and anger at the male exploitation of female bodies. The female character does not resonate with this material as she does not see women as "objects", so that those situations to which she is exposed are neither stimulating nor exciting. Her reaction surprises the male character. Instead of feeling excited (as her partner), she feels sad and thinks about those women and even herself who have been devalued and de-humanized. In the beginning of the narrative there was an attempt to show the liberated approach of women who express sexual liberty when having a loving affair, however this notion is rejected. The black female protagonist cannot associate her sexuality with pornography, and cannot help her partner to understand the implications of the pornographic material within the racist and sexist society. Although women are involved in relationships in which sex does not mean love, sex in several instances is not a de-humanizing act.

After looking at her man's porn collection, the behavior of the female protagonist in "Porn" towards him changes. She can not take her mind away from the terrible pictures and stories she has touched. The stories she has read have changed and influenced her behavior. "Now when he makes love to her, she tries to fit herself

into the white-woman, two-black-men story. But who she will be" […] She cannot stop herself from thinking: Poor: Ignorant: Sleazy: Depressing. This does not excite or stimulate" (83). She is not the same person anymore as she realizes how the bodies of women were reified in those porn stories. Consequently, her lack of interest in sex is also confirmed by the male character. The feelings, perceptions of the male and female characters through the narrator's lenses converge to the same concern - the death of relationship. All these elements come together to affect the lives of both characters. Pornography has damaged the relationship of the couple. Even though, there is a male attempt to regain her body, as the following excerpt illustrates:

> Is she moving less rhythmically under him? Does she seem distracted? There seems to be a separate activity in her body, to which she is attentive, and which is not connected to the current he is sending through his fingertips. […] He thinks frantically of what she might be thinking of him. Realizes he is moving in her desperately, as if he is climbing the walls of a closed building. As if she reads his mind, she moans encouragingly. But it is a distracted moan that offends him. (83).

She is not there. Her body is there, but her mind is far away. Nothing brings her to sexual interaction anymore, as the narrator notes: "[…] she is involved in the activity inside herself and holding him – nostalgically. He feels himself down the wall that is her body, and expelled from inside her." (84) Awakening to this reality brings up the female body/mind dichotomy. She wishes she could go back to the past, but the present has been changed by the awareness of the true person with whom she has been involved. The short-story "Porn" ends in an atmosphere of oppositions and differences between the couple. The reader concludes that the woman is not imprisoned by the pornographic material as the man is. Walker's essentialist concept of "womanism"[31] in which the black woman is superior, and exhibits "willful" behavior is embodied in these stories. Thus, the binary opposition from which the woman emerges as a privileged human being is reaffirmed. Although they have been

[31] Some concerns on the "womanism" concept were present in the introduction of this thesis.

devalued throughout the story, women do not need to make use pornography to have a happy and healthy sexual life.

On the other hand, from the moment the female character in "Coming Apart" realizes her husband's racist and sexist assumptions, she looks for ways to change or subvert the disciplinary investments of society on women's body. And her decision was made shortly after her recalling her mother: "But surprisingly, while watching herself become her mother in the mirror, she discovers her mother ... very sexy" (45). Instead of seeing her own image in the mirror, she sees the image of her mother. Thus, she decides to fight against the pornography industry to change her husband's mind. Women's images as vehicles for the men's needs have to be analyzed, contested and changed. The mother's image is catalyst for the female character's agency. Although aware of the condition of women's invisibility, she decides to save and share her ancestor's creative ability. In the essay: "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens", Alice Walker (1983: 233) pays tribute to her grandmother and mother. Walker argues that the black woman's spirituality and creativity was the secret that kept her ancestors alive under the adverse conditions of society.

Consequently, the main concern of the black female character in "Coming Apart" is an attempt to recreate the face of the black race, mainly of the feminine gender. In order to do that, the protagonist uses texts of black feminists like Audre Lorde, Lusiah Teish and Tracey A. Gardner, who portray positive characteristics of the Negro. Furthermore, she brings out the question of sexuality by providing a dialogue with the past. In choosing Afro-American lesbian writers, Walker historicizes what has been de-historicized by the male racist sexist world. The writer Alice Walker presents texts of writers who have been marginalized by the dominant discourse. All excerpts are unified by the common concern of the racial uplift, mainly in the struggle against the male industry of pornography.

First, the female protagonist of "Coming Apart" reads a passage of Audre Lorde to her husband. In the excerpt, the lesbian black writer presents her views on what she considers erotic and abusive. The woman is reduced to an object when she is compared to a paper handkerchief (Kleenex). The constant gaze upon her body without permission and the lack of feelings between people characterize abuse:

> To share the power of each other's feelings is different from using another's feelings as we would use Kleenex. And when we look the other way from our experience, erotic or otherwise, we use rather than share the feelings of those who participate in the experience with us. And use without consent of the used is abuse (46).

After reading, the husband sees how his wife is trying to change his thoughts and attitudes. He senses a violation of his rights to his position of power and the ways he enjoys pleasure. The challenge threatens him, and therefore, he senses the end of marriage. In pornography, the male character can find a way of regaining virility. His sexuality depends on pornography and the fantasies that have been created through it. Because of stereotypes, the woman is not recognized in her totality. Stereotypes are fixed to an image that seems to be immutable, however defining the woman. The female character is no longer foolish and submissive, and she can no longer be used, as it is observed in the following excerpt: "When they make love she tries to look him in the eye, but he refuses to return her gaze" (47). The male character does not exercise power over her as in the past. The awareness of who she really is rather than the image he has constructed of her for all these years torments him. He cannot love her the way she really is. The male character has identified himself with the white patterns of life: "he considers his wife to be still black, whereas he feels himself to have moved to some other plane" (48). However, in the past he used to be attached to his racial roots by keeping his Afro hair.

The slow process which the transformation of the male character proceeds is initiated by his wife. His non-acceptance of his blackness may be the reason for his exploitation of women's bodies through their images on a male magazine. As the narrator explains: "… He has detached himself from his blackness in attempting to identify black women only by their sex" (48). To the black man in the short-story, black women are identified only by their sex, however the desire for white women shows his interest in belonging to the white culture. The introduction of a quotation of Frantz Fanon in the middle of the story, although very unusual for a short-story, points out to some reasons for the inter-racial relationship. The Algerian psychiatrist

believes that by loving a white woman, a man can become worthwhile and be recognized in the center of power. Blacks give up their black race in order to be accepted. But when making use of the body of the white woman to have pleasure, the black man can avenge the brutality black people suffered from slavery and the lynchings of the sixties. Revenge is the weapon of the dominated black men to reverse their circumstance and regain power over women. Violence did not end in the past and it is still present as this narrative reveals.

In the narrative, his wife tries to show him that the black man has also been a victim of the system of oppression. Although married the couple does not show much intimacy. They are like friends engaged in a verbal argument. However, the black man is still oppressed in the present moment when he tries to imitate the white men's attitudes in order to be included in the mainstream. The awareness of this stage is fundamental, so that later the male character can reject the negative ongoing images of the whole group of blacks. Next the female character reads to the husband an excerpt from the Afro-American writer Tracey A. Gardner in which she states that she is "clear about all the abuse being done to herself as a black person and as a woman" (49). She raises this question and shows the omnipresent racism in white society. He starts to notice that his wife cannot be included in that reduced view of a male, racist, and sexist society.

However, he recalls stereotypes of American society. When reading the fragment of Lusiah Teish, who presents the importance of the Black Power Movement[32] to the construction of a new image of black people, he asks: "What does the bitch know about the Black Power Movement?" (47) When criticizing black women, he implicitly exposes that 'bitch' refers to any woman who questions the dominant norms. The words mentioned are based on the sexual sphere. The woman/writer, in this context, has the same role as the photographed woman in a male magazine. Both of them have an inferior position and satisfy the sexual needs of men.

[32] The Black Power Movement was a response to the violent acts against black people because of the different conditions of black and white people. This movement raised the self-esteem of blacks who became proud of their blackness and everything related to them (their clothes, hairstyles). *Black is Beautiful* was the known sentence pronounced by members of this group.

Finally, awareness of being influenced by the oppressive discourse is noticed in an excerpt that shocks the reader in the same way as the pornographic picture. The magazines represent white women as human bodies while black women are seen as animals:

> ...where white women are depicted in pornography as "objects", black women are depicted as animals. Where white women are depicted at least as human bodies if not beings, black women are depicted as shit.
> He begins to feel sick. For he realizes that he has bought some if not all of the advertisements about women, black and white. And further, inevitably, he has bought the advertisements about himself. In pornography the black man is portrayed as being capable of fucking anything … even a piece of shit. He is defined solely by the size, readiness and unselectivity of his cock.
> Still, he does not know how to make love without the fantasies fed to him by movies and magazines. Those movies and magazines (whose characters' pursuits are irrelevant or antithetical to his concerns) that have insinuated themselves between him and his wife, so that the totality of her body, her entire corporeal reality is alien to him. Even to clutch her in lust is automatically to shut his eyes. Shut his eyes, and … the chuckles bitterly… dream of England.
> For years he has been fucking himself (52-53).

Both characters in the last excerpt of "Coming Apart" are represented through stereotypes. The myth that black male power is determined by the size of his penis is repeated. However, the black male character is able to free himself from the social obstacles that determined the essentialist version of the subject. Black women were not constructed as "woman" as white women were. They were racially and sexually constructed as animals, sexualized and without rights, but not as human beings. As hooks (1990: 63) states, in a white supremacist sexist society all women's bodies are devalued, and white women's bodies are more valued than those of women of color. Therefore, all women were considered to be "naturally" available.

The dialogue with his wife, the discussions raised by the reading of the literary excerpts provided the male character's with an understanding of pornography as a mechanism of domination against black women. This reconstruction of the black woman's image was allowed by the encounter with the other. When taking into

consideration the theoretical assumptions of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1976) I argue that the influence of the other determines the inevitable supplement that is in a dialogical relation with what is supplemented. In the first moment, either the supplement or the supplemented are considered whole, however the cohabitation of both is as strange as necessary. In a second moment, the supplement is responsible for adding something that has existed before in order to fill a void. In Derrida's words:

> But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself in-the place-of; it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory (suppléant) and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which takes place (tient-lieu). As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy (144-145).

Therefore, the wholeness of the male character is questioned when he is supplemented by the other by not seeing the prejudices of the societal system. His blindness, however, is essential to his wife's knowledge which plays the role of the supplement and promotes the constitution of identity of the male character. She is responsible for the process of consciousness in her husband and she is thus considered a superior character, since she does not need external elements like magazines and films to have pleasure. The male's difficulty in asserting his new position with the supplemented information occurs in the narrative. His choices do not follow a fixed model, but are constructed in the articulation of the several positions, languages, and histories which constitute the subjects. The final words of the short-story confirm his transformation and his fear of dealing with a new situation, reinforcing the importance of his wife in this process: "Long before she returns he is reading her books and thinking of her (...) and when she returns, it is sixty percent her body that he moves against in the sun, her own black skin affirmed in the brightness of his eyes" (53). In this example, he recognizes that his wife is no longer an anonymous body as the ones portrayed on the pornographic magazines. He realizes that in buying those magazines

and consuming pornography, he was imprisoned by the stereotypes that turn women into sexual objects, things, or commodities.

Consequently, the deconstruction of the pornographic discourse as a parameter of the dominant values, makes room for demystifying prejudices and stereotypes incorporated by the male character. The male character in "Coming Apart" needs to give away his pre-established notions to fully recognize his wife as a true human being. The position of the male character in the beginning of the short-story has changed with the dialogic relation between the married couple. The final harmony demonstrates that the acceptance of difference was essential to the construction of new meanings. The idea of separation as the title of the story suggests does not come true. The characters stay together and deepen the relationship between them when perceiving and criticizing the dominant discourse that controls subjects in the male sexist racist society. The liberation of male and female characters in "Coming Apart" takes place when they become aware of how people are manipulated by the sexual industry. Gloria Steinem (1977: 284) in her article "Erotic vs Pornographic" states that if men no longer control women, they will find an identity not based on the idea of superiority. In this sense, they will find out that cooperation is more interesting than submission, so that empathy with the female sexual partner will highlight his own pleasure. Although the protagonists of "Porn" were involved in a dialogic relationship, a supplemental relationship is not established in the same way of "Coming Apart".

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The inner realities of black women characters are depicted in the stories "Roselily", "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", "Coming Apart", and "Porn", analyzed in this chapter. The black women's survival is threatened by the sexist/ racist norms of American society. The varied experience of black women converges to different kinds of female identities, one linked to societal norms and the other a result of inner struggle and change. The different kinds of black women's experience as a series of change is present in the stories analyzed. In an interview to Mary Helen Washington (1973: 212), Alice Walker considers women who are totally victimized by society and

by men, as well as a woman whose consciousness allows her to have some control over her life.

In the collection In Love & Trouble – Stories of Black Women, Myrna and Roselily, although they try to free themselves from the oppressive system represented by the institution of marriage, they become more attached to it. Despite Walker's references to 'suspended', 'assimilated' or 'emergent' women according to their experience within American society, these female characters are examples of suspended women since they are not powerful enough to change and become whole, complete subjects. They are not able to heal their wounds in order to grow. In the womanist aesthetics, characters should be able to heal themselves first. Personal liberation has to be achieved in the first moment within the self and once free one can be liberated at any place and guide one's life in one's own way.

The female protagonists of "Coming Apart" and "Porn" are not engaged in a process of becoming themselves. They are already whole as human beings since they are aware of the structures of domination that work in their lives. On becoming subjects, in hooks' words (1990: 15), these black women develop "critical thinking and critical consciousness", by inventing new, alternative habits of being, resisting from that marginal space of difference inwardly defined. Power relations between men and women in these stories are (re) configured to end domination. Deborah Mc Dowell (1995) seems to agree with hooks' concerns as she says that it is essential to think about a politics of transformation against multiple oppressions, so that patriarchal norms can be challenged. Liberation in these stories comes from freeing each other and not from placing limits on the oppressed. If liberation comes by placing limits, this is oppression, not liberation. The use of pornography makes room for the reification of women.

In this sense, both female protagonists in "Coming Apart" and "Porn" openly embrace the womanist aesthetics marked by sexual consciousness. In "Porn", she expresses a free, open sexuality which serves as example of her willful, audacious, and even courageous approach to life. In "Coming Apart", the woman exhibits the womanist attitude in refusing to accept the sexist, racist views of society which have been represented by her husband. She has audacity to challenge conventions related

to gender and race. Black male characters in these stories, on the other hand, react negatively when their partners show a different and more coherent view concerning the reality of black people in white America. Thus they also break with the parameters of the true womanhood.

In the selected stories of You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down, Walker seems to be more interested in criticizing pornography. Therefore, she discusses a polemic theme trying to persuade the reader to be agents against and not simply to react against the established conventions of womanhood. It is not just reaction, it has to be agency. The didacticism of the stories makes room for the positive development of the characters of "Coming Apart" and the female protagonist of "Porn" against the odds of racism and sexism. As the critic Petry (1993: 195) asserts, "the problem with the women of You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down is that they are very successful. All of them have reached a higher plane, personally and socially. Unlike Myrna and Roselily of In Love & Trouble, these women seem always to be struggling, to be growing." Invariably, women's agency is circumscribed by the oppressor.

Nevertheless, experimentation with the short-story genre is present in both collections. Walker introduces letters, inscriptions of the wedding ceremony, mixes theoretical texts within fiction, combines the telegraphic and concise style of journalism to her stories. The structure of the narratives, the techniques employed converge to the didactic means of uplifting not only the race, but the female gender.

CHAPTER THREE

REVISITING HURSTON-WALKER'S SHORT- FICTION

Based on Henry Louis Gates' theory of "Signifying", this chapter brings together the two Afro-American writers and aims to show the process in which Alice Walker signifies on the short-stories of Zora Neale Hurston when considering the notions of womanhood and female agency. Although influenced by her literary precursor, Walker has distinguished her own literary path when focusing on the question of womanhood. This polyvocality of black women writers' creativity provides means for their different procedures, strategies or techniques in the development of similar themes in short-fiction. Assuming that female characters have operated as contingent signs within different circumstances, and that they have been influenced by the cultural and historical boundaries of their time, an analysis on the ways in which Hurston and Walker have depicted their female characters is provided. Though most black women characters are conceived in terms of domination, subordination or 'subalternization', various types of agency have been asserted, so that the monolithic assumptions of womanhood and gender identities are destroyed or reinforced. Focusing not only on the literary production of black women writers, but also on literary criticism, this chapter starts demonstrating how black criticism has created its own tools for the analysis of black fiction and has filled in this great gap present in the history of the canonical North American literature. In this respect, critical concerns on theories of multiculturalism as well as some other views reading the canon are present. Thus, in order to deal with these questions, this chapter is divided into the following parts: Revisiting Hurston-Walker's Short Fiction, Destabilizing The Constructions of Black Womanhood and The Space of The Characters' Agency.

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In *The Anxiety of Influence,* Harold Bloom (1973: XXIII), a theorist devoted to defining the canon through literary influence offers a theory of poetry based on a description of poetic influence. Though he identifies six 'master tropes'[33] in poetry, which could also be applied to prose, not all of them are helpful for the approach of this thesis. In Bloom's view, one writer helps to form another writer. Therefore, the text an author writes is actually a revision of the texts he has read. Bloom defines the author's dependence on tradition as something that causes anxiety. In his words, "the anxiety of influence comes out of a complex act of strong misreading, a creative interpretation that the author has called "poetic misprision". When an author misreads previous writings he provides a different interpretation, a creative one.

This idea of creative interpretation performed upon forerunners can be applied to Black literature. However, when Bloom presented this theory, the literary production of black women writers was not the focus of his study. Other critics, such as the feminists Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979: 45-49) revised his work to make it applicable to women writers of the nineteenth century. In their study of the

[33] Bloom believes that ideas of influence should help us read more accurately any group of past poets who were contemporary with one another. Along with 'clinamen' or 'swerve' and 'tessera' or 'completion', which will be explained in the course of my argument above, he presents the following models: 'kenosis', 'daemonization', 'askesis', and 'apohrades'. 'Kenosis' implies a movement towards discontinuity with the precursor. There is a breaking device which is compared to the defense mechanisms our psyches employ against repetition compulsions. In the movement towards a personalized counter or 'daemonization', the later poet opens himself to what he believes to be a power in the parent poem that does not belong to the parent proper, but to a range of being just beyond that precursor. 'Askesis' refers to a movement which intends the achievement of a state of solitude. The later poet does not, as in 'kenosis', undergo a revisionary movement of emptying. He yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment, so as to separate himself from others, including the precursor, and finally in 'apohrades' or the return of the dead, the later poet, in his own final phase holds its own poem so open again to the precursor's work. The new poem's achievement makes it seem to us, not as though the precursor were writing it, but as though the later poet himself had written the precursor's characteristic work. For a careful study, see Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry.* New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.

The debate concerning 'authorship' was in vogue in the twentieth century. Although this chapter starts with Harold Bloom's theory, T. S. Eliott's (1919) concerns on the topic cannot be neglected. In his essay, "Tradition and Individual Talent", which seems to anticipate Bloom's 'anxiety of influence', he relies upon the importance of criticism rather than focusing on aesthetics. He believes that the individual author is constituted within a web of textual relations, so that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone." When taking into account the form of European, of English Literature, T.S. Eliott asserts that the whole existing order of texts is altered by the introduction of the new work of art. As he says: "The relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted." In this process the new work of art is valued, contrasted and compared to the past ones. Therefore, judgment of the modern work by standards of the past does not mean the 'amputation' of it, but a comparison with it. Nevertheless, he insists on the process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition.

relationship of the woman writer to patriarchal discourse, they pointed out the "lack" of a tradition of women writers, so that a female writer did not encounter an explicit model to be followed. There were few precursors who they might resemble. In their sense, Bloom's "anxiety of influence"[34] is not applicable to women writers as they struggle for recognition in this male canonical context. Thus, the "anxiety of influence" is substituted by the "anxiety of authorship"; the need to write and to establish their own tradition. Also, in the study of these feminists, the consideration of black women writers was neglected. However, when taking into account black women writers and criticism, these previous models of literary influence are useful in certain ways for this work.

Despite Bloom's approach to literature of separating the social and the aesthetic, and preconceiving the organic unity, the coherent whole rather than pluralism, his model of poetic precedence seems to be helpful to the comprehension of how one poet deviates another. In dealing with the several and different approaches in this chapter, the reader needs to be aware that each theoretical concern has its own roots in different moments of history. Therefore the consideration of this wide range of possibilities may help to light up the critical paths that could be followed in the analysis of Zora Neale Hurston's and Alice Walker's literary works.

According to Bloom a writer "*swerves"* away from his precursor, by reading his precursor's poem to make his own poem. There is a rewriting of the past when writers review the predecessor to make room for his work. The precursor poem goes accurately up to a certain point, but then it should swerve in the direction to a new poem. In this term, writers **deny** obligation to precursors when seeking for originality. The "*clinamen"* or "*swerve*", the central working concept of the theory of *Poetic Influence*, parts the poet from his poetic father as the latter writer metaphorically kills

[34] The same can not be said in relation to black male writers as Joseph T. Skerrett states in "The Wright Interpretation: Ralph Ellison and The Anxiety of Influence". In: *Massachusetts Review* 21. (Spring 1980): 196-212. The critic has appropriated Bloom's "anxiety of influence" to discuss the literary production of male writers. Skerrett specifically deals with Richard's Wright influence on the development of Ralph Ellison as a writer. As soon as Wright realized Ellison's talent, he tried to convince him to write fiction so that he became "an eager and apt pupil in Richard Wright's informal school." Wright's presence in Ellison's literary imagination was not questioned. However, later on Skerrett mentions that Ellison's career took another direction as he noticed the inadequacy of Wright's ideas which were classified as "beside the point". Searching for a more individualized manner, Ellison had the chance to interpret his predecessor when antithetically 'developing' and 'completing' his ideas. By extension, Ellison denied the literay model by reducing the value of his apprenticeship time.

the previous one. Thus, what is called "*clinamen"'* may characterize the relationship between writers. Although black contemporary women authors reread previous writers, they do not deny their precursors, on the contrary, they pay tribute to them by identifying them as their literary forebears. The suggested Oedipal war between fathers and sons of Bloom's model does not proceed with black women writers as they do not kill metaphorically their precursors. Nevertheless, their work is based on a literary line of continuity and supplementarity with the previous authors. In "Beyond the Peacock", for instance, the contemporary writer Alice Walker (1983) asserts these connections with literary foremothers by stating:

> I believe that the truth about any subject only comes when all the sides of the story are put together, and all their different meanings make one new one. Each writer writes the missing parts to the other writer's story. And the whole story is what I'm after (49).

In this sense, Walker does not seem to be engaged in an act of completion, but of supplementarity[35]. In Bloom's (1973: 14) *"tessera-completion"* mode, a writer "completes his precursor, by so reading the parent poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough". However, in Bloom's sense, the later writer will provide his imagination in an act of completing the "truncated" text. This may be the case of the relationship between writers of the Harlem Renaissance and black contemporary women writers. However, in this mode of poetic influence the writer "antithetically completes" the prior text. In Hurston-Walker's interrelationship context, it is dangerous to assume the idea that Hurston has failed in the development of her themes and Walker has succeeded in re-signifyin(g) them if the cultural, political and historical background of their time is considered. Alice Walker, according to the critic Clara Juncker (1998: 46), deconstructs Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* and his theory of aggressive misprision when proposing a "harmonious chorus of women writing/inviting/rewriting women" in her book of essays *In Search of Our Mothers'*

[35] Derrida's concept of supplement presented in the end of the second chapter of this thesis is applied to Hurston – Walker's context. As it was seen the supplement changes the process of signification as it inserts an essential part to the supplemented.

Gardens (1983) for example. In other words, the absence of the 'right' reading of the past through a literary text is not completed by the production of a new text through antithesis. Therefore, this theoretical assumption does not seem to be validated in the literary context of Hurston and Walker.

Neither Harold Bloom's masculinist model of "anxiety of influence" nor Gilbert and Gubar's feminist paradigms of "anxiety of authorship" hold among black women writers. This gap in traditional, canonical American criticism and literature is observed in *Playing in the Dark* (1990) by Toni Morrison who asserts that the literature of the United States was "free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the presence of first Africans, and then Afro-Americans". It seems that they had no importance in the origin and development of that culture's literature. Although Toni Morrison writes about the non-recognition of criticism and writings in the nineties, her words are very much applied to the debate in vogue. Morrison asserts that while the presence of black people in the United States has been removed, the white male views, genius and power have been preserved. Not surprisingly the "willed scholarly indifference" was practiced by critics who ignored Afro-American texts. Also, literary criticism was historically ruled by silence and evasion when race was in question. In this sense, invisibility through silence made little room for the black participation in the dominant cultural body. Therefore, literary critics remained as observers within American letters.

Though Henry Louis Gates (1983: XXIII) is aware of the importance of borrowing examples from western critics, the need to establish the black tradition with its own voice is prior to it. The previous models give way to the development of a black literary tradition which speaks for itself. As Gates (1983: XIX) remembers, the Black Tradition does not have to be read or viewed according to the literary theories of other traditions. He believes (1983: XXIII-XXIV) "the Black tradition has inscribed within it the very principles by which it can be read", so that it will be possible to "imagine the whole from the part." Therefore, in order to name the tradition, there is a need to rename its antecedents and to rename is to revise, to 'Signify'. Moreover, what the Afro-American critic suggests is that black texts not only employ some western literary conventions, but they also insert some differences. In this sense, the black writer presents a specific language, the black vernacular. Thus

in Gates's (1983) view as well as Robert Bone's (1975), black canonical texts have black and eurocentric antecedents. In Gates words:

> Black formal repetition always repeats with a difference, a black difference that manifests itself in specific language use. And the repository that contains the language that is the source- and the reflection – of black difference is the black vernacular tradition (XXIII).

Consequently, the literary tradition is constructed through formal literary relationships of signifying, and contemporary narratives enact repetition of tradition with difference. According to Gates, the black tradition has to speak for itself rather than to be read in terms of other traditions. In this sense, he does not intend to mystify black culture. On the contrary, he wants to point out the richness of black art.

What happens to the formation of black criticism is suitable for the "imaginary politics" of John Guillroy (1993), who argues that representation of minorities conceives the literary canon as a hypothetical image of social diversity, a mirror in which groups either see or do not see themselves reflected. However, in the context of Guillroy's study, black women writers and, for the most part, their theoretical assumptions are not represented within the canon, since they are considered in the words of the critic Michelle Wallace (1990: 53) the "other" of the "other" in the public discourse. The reflection of black women images is for instance invisible and their voices are not heard. Therefore, the representation or lack of representation of certain groups and their theoretical tools has made room for the canon formation. The critic John Guillroy suggests the urge for canonical revision, and its reconsideration must start with the notion of "social identity". Black women are aware of their specificities and are concerned with this revision and displacement of traditional positions assumed in society. In his terms, the categories of an author's racial, ethnic, or gender identity form a politics of revision. Accordingly, the canonical selection of literary works and criticism is operated with the process of social exclusion. The inclusion or exclusion of theoretical concerns is identical to the representation or non-representation of social groups. However, the critic argues that canonicity and non-canonicity cannot be reduced to the social identity of an author. In addition to this

discussion, Toni Morrison (1994: 207) remembers that the canon construction is the construction of the empire, so that the canon defense represents the national defense. In other words, the debate of what the canon is demonstrates the cultural clashes in society.

Gates' critical approach to Afro-American literature, in which texts of black authors enact repetition with difference, seems to be applicable to the texts of black women authors who felt excluded from the hegemonic center of power. According to him the repetition pays tribute to the precursor writer, while the difference is a way of revising the precursor's story or practice. The repetition and difference and the practice of inter-textuality are clear in black vernacular forms of Signifyin(g). Thus, in black tradition, language is not considered a self-contained system, set apart from everyday interactions, and the sign does not mean the signified plus the signifier. The idea of a fixed sign is rejected when the revision of the signifier disrupts the signified/signifier relation and opens up to new meaning. There is a kind of (re) naming ritual in which the received sign is reviewed. Signifyin(g), written with a bracketed final g, is fundamentally black. Therefore, black writers promote a chain of signifiers which is compared to the fundamental improvisation of black jazz musicians and blues singers. In a black discourse, Signifyin(g) represents the multifaceted principle of interpretation in which the figurative language, such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, hyperbol, repetition, displaces the coherent linearity of the chain of signifiers. Moreover, as Margaret T. Drewal (1992: 2, 7) highlights, improvisation can signal ironic difference from the conventional or the past while each move is contingent on a previous one and in some way influences the one that follows. In other words repetition "re-captures a moment". Yet, simultaneously, "repetition is the common denominator for differentiation." Therefore, improvisation also constitutes a process of augmentation which is transformational and participatory. Thus, it is embedded in this assumption that in this work some differences and similarities of Hurston and Walker's female characters' portrayal are established to discuss the process of supplementarity.

Writing as a collective act comes to represent the black literary tradition. However, Hazel Carby (1987: 16) criticizes the establishment of such a narrative in black tradition as she believes that a canon is being formed based on a reliance on a

common, or shared, essentialist view of experience. In her terms black feminist criticism has been reduced to an experiential relationship that exists between black women as critics and black women as writers who represent black women's reality. Some years later, the same critic, in the "Blackness of Theory" comments on Gates' initiative in writing about a black theory by proving that black scholars could use and manipulate theory, when providing a set of theoretical premises against both a dominant cultural formation and other subordinate ethnic formations. Indeed, Carby (1999: 233) criticizes Gates' impulse to establish critical and cultural autonomy when relying upon the existence of a desirable and necessary unique tradition. In this sense, as the cultural theorist realizes, in order to confront the exclusions of a literary canon new canons are created.

Although Gates seems to be creating an essentialist[36] black theory when neglecting the engagement of black feminism in his construction of black tradition, his critical approach is helpful in this study as it constitutes the basis of Walker's process of Signifyin(g) on Hurston's short-stories. In *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), the Afro-American critic suggests some modes[37] of Signifyin(g) which are applicable to black fiction. In the scope of this study, the "Speakerly Text" and "Tropological Revision" are identified through Hurston's and Walker's short-stories. The "Speakerly Text", which has been mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, reveals the play of many voices in the literary texts, as the analyzed short-stories demonstrate.

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[36] Here, I borrow Carby's critique of Gates' essentialist theory. According to her, black female critics have been excluded from the literary canon and because of that they searched for ways to create alternatives to the black male thinker dominance. In the establishment of a canon or tradition as a literary project, she reminds us, nothing is black or feminist. Despite the emphasis on the creation of a female literary tradition, Carby believes it is important to understand why the process of canon formation remains unexamined. The weakness of Gates' analysis according to her is twofold -- that the concept of race is not understood by Gates as a historically and politically contested category, and Gates' essentialist understanding of 'blackness' in his theory of Signifyin(g). Carby (1999: 235) concludes that Gates does not see women writers as equally significant as men by failing to notice the interventions by Debora McDowell, Hortense Spillers, Barbara Smith, Valeria Smith and Mary Helen Washington and others who also helped to develop critical body in the last decade. Finally, to summarize and simplify her analysis of Gates' theory of Signifyin(g), she disapproves his exclusion of black feminist criticism on the formation of blackness and concludes that the "Signifying Monkey" theory is a reflection of "the intellectual struggle to control the dominant paradigms that will determine the politics of Afro-American literary critical practice."

[37] "Talking Texts" and "Rewriting Speakerly" are also modes of Signifyin(g). In the first one, black texts talk to other texts, as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) in which the protagonists of both stories search for their voices, and finally, "Rewriting Speakerly", when a text is written in black dialect as Hurston's novel *Their Eyes.*

The speech of black characters is present through the direct discourse in "Under the Bridge", "Sweat", "Spunk" and "The Gilded Six-Bits" in the same way as the Standard English narrative voice. Also, the mode of "Tropological Revision" (Talking Book) provides means for the repetition of a specific trope with differences. Signification as "double voiced" refers to a new meaning inserted into the one that has always existed. In this sense, writers repeat, but there is some difference among the texts given by a parodic element inserted in the narrative.

An example of the process in which Walker signifies on Hurston's narratives is provided by the depiction of the theme of motherhood in Hurston's "The Gilded Six-Bits" and Walker's "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" and "Roselily". Although motherhood has not been previously a requirement to womanhood in Hurston's selected narratives, an appeal to it is observed in "The Gilded Six-Bits". When announcing her pregnancy to Joe, by questioning: "Won't you be glad to have a lil' l baby chile, Joe?" (66), the protagonist Missie May seems to happily fit the traditional convention of a woman as a mother and nurturer. Having a child in this short-story represents the chance for the couple's reconciliation. Furthermore, motherhood is imbued with a positive connotation as Missie May will have the chance to build up her family beside her husband. The baby boy, "de spittin' image of Joe" (67) binds together the lives of the couple who accept the responsibility of motherhood and fatherhood. There is no way for Joe to hide his satisfaction: "Goingter buy my wife some good ole' lasses kisses wid it. (…) Ah got a li'l boy chile home now. Tain't a week old yet, but he kin suck a sugar tit and maybe eat one them kisses himself" (68). The atmosphere of happiness with the boy's arrival leads the couple to a harmonious relationship which has been based on love.

This attitude diverges from the attitudes present in Walker's short-stories, for instance. Although the male character Ruel in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" wants to be a father, Myrna certainly does not want to bind her life to children. For her perhaps motherhood will form the basis of her double oppression in being a wife and a mother. If she is not free to express herself by writing, she will, when following the rules of her husband, take revenge on him by denying his so wished dream of fatherhood, as Myrna's diary reveals:

> Ruel came up to bed last night and actually cried in my arms! He would give anything for a child, he says.
> Do you think we could have one? he said
> Sure, I said. Why not?
> He began to kiss me and carry on about my goodness. I began to laugh. He became very angry, but finished what he started. He really does intend to have a child (20).

This excerpt reinforces the idea that the power of pregnancy and childbirth lies in the hands of Myrna. Though not moving from the domestic space and continuing to satisfy her husband's sexual needs as a duty, she ironically refuses the traditional notion of womanhood defined by motherhood. In the same way, Roselily who is already a mother in the beginning of "Roselily" does not seem to accept the conventions of womanhood. When providing emotional and economic stability, marriage is the chance to keep her family unit. But having more children means to be concerned with cooking, childcare, and the responsibilities around the house. For Roselily, motherhood is what threatens her freedom as she is conscious of the implications of her marriage and knows that "her place will be the home. He has said repeatedly, promising her rest she had prayed for. […] they will make babies – she thinks […] They will be inevitable. Her hands will be full. Full of what? Babies. She is not comforted" (7).

Thus, these literary excerpts demonstrate how Alice Walker is "speaking to" or "Signifyin(g) upon" Hurston's texts, through theme and rhetorical strategies. In Black fiction, black writers read each other's texts and by doing so, refigure the tropes received from the black tradition itself. Despite the differences, Hurston's and Walker's work helps to maintain the development of black tradition. In this context, the critics Marjorie Pryse and Hortense Spillers (1985: 22) assert that black contemporary writers should be able not only to notice that tradition, but also to have at least a minimal body of criticism. Black writers must speak with "each other's tongues" in order to illuminate women's lives. Also, women writers intend to demystify the omissions and distortions of the past and mistakes of a literary critical tradition which reflected a culture created, maintained and dominated by men as McDowell (1985: 186) asserts in "New Directions for Black Criticism". In "Saving the Life That Is Your Own: The Importance of Models in The Artist's Life", Alice

Walker (1983: 9) admits her wish to know and assimilate the experience and stories of earlier black women writers. "The acceptance of memory", as Lucinda Mackkethan (1990: 10) asserts is "the primary means of knowing" as writers move beyond the prescribed categories. Significantly, Walker in her narratives demonstrates that the black woman inherited a vibrant and creative spirit when keeping alive some elements of Afro-American folk such as: the black speech, storytelling, music, the handmade quilting, gardening, and conjuring. Although they have been considered invisible to the mainstream society, black women found ways of having alternative expressions. The strategy of privileging the folk modes displaces the authority of white cultural texts. However, in the same article mentioned, the contemporary writer Alice Walker also highlights the influence of black males and Southern white writers such as Flannery O'Connor on her formation as a writer. When defining tradition in black women's fiction, Barbara Christian (1990: 44-45) asserts the importance of "rememory" to reconstruct the past. In this sense, the themes, strategies and techniques dealt with by black women writers gain another form in the present moment. The different approaches of motherhood in "The Gilded Six-Bits", "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" and "Roselily" reveal that throughout the period black writers were interested in that theme. In this context, there is recognition of the past or some of its worries as well as the reconsideration of the established parameters dealt with by the precursor writer.

Thus, Gates' "Signifyin(g)" theory is worth of value to the study of Hurston-Walker narrative relationship. What is remarkable about his theory is that the representative trickster of Afro-American culture, The Signifying Monkey[38] reverses

[38] By studying the distinct tricksters: Esu-Elegbara (the messenger of the Yoruba culture found in Nigeria, Benin, Brazil, Cuba, and Haiti, among others) and the Signifying Monkey, the Afro-American trickster, Gates intends to demonstrate how the vernacular informs and constitutes the basis for black literature. In addition to his study, Jeanne Rosier Smith (1997: 3) who provides research on the trickster in ethnic literature, states that this figure redefines American cultural expression by reinventing the narrative form. These figures in the critic's words "are specially likely to appear when the culture's values or prosperity are threatened, either internally or externally." As a survivor and transformer, tricksters create order from chaos. In her terms, the trickster appears in American literature in moments of crisis. Therefore, the trickster focuses mainly on a specific trickster tradition and it makes sense embedded in a cultural context. Ruth Finnegan (1988) adds to this debate that this figure can be adapted to express the idea of opposition to the world or the distortion of acceptable human and social values. She realizes that the image of the trickster is usually but not invariably an animal representing traits or personalities which people recognize and fear. Not only that, but the trickster also helps to deal with these fears. Coming back to the black context of Gates' Signifyin(g), Esu was the first interpreter who survived the Middle Passage. As Gates (1988) asserts Esu is described as "a figure for the nature and function of interpretation." The monkey became in African myths a central character in the scene

the received racist image of the black as simian-like when embodying the ambiguities of language. As Gates (1984: 285-321) remembers The Signifying Monkey dwells at the margins of discourse, repeating and simultaneously reversing the discursive act. Furthermore, in applying this theory to the writing of this thesis, it is assumed that Hurston and Walker are following this path in different ways when dealing with the constructions of womanhood with its particular forms of oppression and consequently female characters' agency within the constraints of American society. Hurston does so with her representation of popular forms of folk culture and Walker when amplifying the themes dealt with by her precursor such as marriage, domestic violence, gender, stereotypes, and the need for self-expression. Signifyin(g) language creates a worldview that makes room for paradoxes, contradictions and multiple perspectives. Repetition that is the fundamental nature of Signifyin(g), with a signal of difference is, for instance, seen in the depiction of the couple's intimacy in Zora Neale Hurston's "The Gilded Six-Bits" as well as in Alice Walker's "Porn". Although, the sexuality of female characters is active, it is expressed in different and stark ways. In Hurston's narrative, for example, the couple's intimacy is suggested in between the lines. The reader knows that when Joe comes back from his usual trip from Orlando to his home in Eatonville, the moment of sexual intimacy is about to come. The following description highlights this assumption:

> He ran around the house with Missie May at his heels. She overtook him at the kitchen door. He ran inside but could not close it after him before she crowded in and locked with him in a rough and tumble. For several minutes the two were a furious mass of male and female energy. Shouting, laughing, twisting, turning, and Joe trying, but not too hard, to get away (68).

This excerpt does not point out explicitly to the sex act, but to its context, the affection of the couple and the lively seductive play enacted by them. On the other

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of instruction. In this sense, the Monkey and Esu are related to the process of interpretation. In the tales of the Signifying Monkey, there is a three-way or triune relationship among the monkey, the lion, and the elephant. The monkey always defeats his physical superior, the lion, by his power to manipulate language, speaking figuratively, representing in this sense the practice of Signifyin(g). When Gates (1988: 54) remembers the monkey's mastery verbal technique he says that: "The monkey is not only a master of technique, he is the technique."

hand, Walker breaks with the way in which Hurston depicts the couple's involvement in "The Gilded Six-Bits" as she does not imply anything related to intercourse in "Porn". Everything the couple does is present in Walker's short-story. Female sexuality is reduced to sex and it encompasses erotic desires and practices as the next passage demonstrates:

> She decides to make love to him. She turns over.
> She cradles his head in her ams. Kisses his forehead. His eyes. Massages his scalp with her fingers. Buries her nose in his neck. Kisses his neck. Caresses his chest. Flicks his nipples, back and forth, with her tongue. Slowly she moves down his body (81).

In this example, Walker shows how the female character exerts her sexual agency by keeping alive the traditional connotation of a strong and sexual independent black woman. Following Gates' theory of Signifyin(g), Walker inserts a new meaning into another context which has already had its own orientation. In both stories female characters are asserted as 'sexual beings.' Thus, the process of Signification, always given in a dialogic and contextualized way, is not abstract and detached from the social-ideological context. Therefore, the portrayal of the black women character of "Porn" coincides with the time in which black women in American society were under attack for their autonomy and self-assertion.

In "Speaking in Tongues. Dialogics, Dialectics and the Black Woman Writer's Literary Tradition", the critic Mae Gwendolyn Henderson (1991) asserts that black women's writing is interlocutory and dialogic as it reflects a relationship with the 'other(s)' and also an internal dialogue with the plural aspects of the self, so that the matrix of black female subjectivity is constructed. In addition, she acclaims the dialogue among black writers and argues that:

> the interlocutory character of black women's writing is, thus, not only a consequence of a dialogic relationship with an imaginary or generalized 'other', but a dialogue with aspects of 'otherness' within the self. The complex situatedness of the

> black woman as not only the 'Other' of the Same, but also the 'other' of the other(s) implies, as we shall see, a relationship of difference and identification with the other(s) (118).

Based on the critic's concerns, it can be said that Hurston and Walker not only focus on the several relationships with the others – the ones who oppress and consequently do not make room for the women's inner growth, but also with the multiplicity of their identities as being "en-gendered in the experience of race" as well as "racialized in the gender experience". In this sense, there are no ways to deny the differences in the female character's portrayal in Hurston's and Walker's literary texts. Walker, for example goes beyond the realm of sexist relations by depicting the intra-racial confrontation not dealt with by Hurston. For Walker, gender and racial oppression are portrayed as interlocking systems. In this context, the view of the critic Bill Mullen (1995) is important to explaining Hurston–Walker's literary relationship:

> Walker's extrapolations on Harlem Renaissance short fiction themes, particularly those of Hurston, now energized by black nationalist and black feminist awareness, heralded the revolutionized nature, form, and function of contemporary black women's short fiction as it suddenly became not a marginal but a central form in Afro-American women's cultural expression (201).

Consequently, the practice of intertextuality characterizes the Afro-American literary tradition. Also, the notion of double-voiced words and discourses in Hurston's and Walker's narratives finds support in theories about language of the Russian thinker, Mikhail Bakhtin. If language is always someone else, this view resonates with the narrative of these black women writers. According to Bakhtin, language is a terrain of ideological struggle as the speech of one subject is embedded with the words, meanings, values of the other. And these words, not always harmonious and symmetric, are essential to the construction of meaning. When people interact with each other, they assume or deny the words of the other. The difference makes room for the subject's awareness of himself/herself. Bakhtin (1981) in "Discourse in the

Novel" asserts the importance of the other in the process of identity construction and the language acquisition as the following excerpt shows:

> …in the makeup of almost every utterance spoken by a social person- from a brief response in a casual dialogue to a major verbal ideological works (literary, scholarly and others) – a significant number of words can be identified that are implicitly or explicitly admitted as someone else's, and that are transmitted by a variety of different means. Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other. The utterance so conceived is a considerably more complex and dynamic organism than it appears when construed simply as a thing that articulates the intention of the person uttering it, which is to see the utterance as a direct single-voiced vehicle for expression (354-355).

The "other" is essential to the constitution of one's identity. The dialogic principle of a text is promoted by the interaction of different values of distinct subjects. The multiple meanings of language arise from the fact that any utterance carries the traces of the other previous utterances. In Bakhtin's (1981: 294) terms: "language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – over populated with the intentions of others". Both the process of identity construction and language acquisition do not have a monolithic approach as they are constituted by the dialogue of voices. Judith Butler's words (2004: 45) support Bakhtin's assumptions when she asserts that social subjects are comported toward a 'you'. She argues that: "We are outside ourselves, constituted in cultural norms that precede and exceed us, given over to a set of cultural norms and field of power that condition us fundamentally." In this sense, language, culture and society are intertwined and exercise an important role when constituting the subject.

Therefore, in this study the words in the narratives of Alice Walker are overpopulated with the intentions of previous women writers such as Zora Neale Hurston. When Alice Walker takes the words from other context, they are made her own as she populates them with her intention, accent by adapting them to her

semantic and expressive intention. Consequently, influenced by the impact of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power/Black Arts Movements, Walker, provided the 'uplift' of the race. In some of her stories, some characters are attracted to the black center, so that they come to represent the unified and essential voice of the Black Aestheticians who attempted to portray Black life by displacing the Eurocentric cultural hegemony. As Butler-Evans (1989: 27) concludes, difference, opposition and change were the key elements in the formation of Black Aesthetic discourse. Nevertheless, the critic McDowell (1995: 105) maintains that Alice Walker envisioned, at times, a utopian new world in which "power relations between men and women, the colonizers and the colonized are reconfigured to eliminate domination and promote cooperation." In this sense, some of her female characters break with the established conventions of society.

The dialogic development of black narratives is based on what has been said before, but it is also oriented to what has not been said, the responses not yet given. The words carry meanings that are prior to its use. Even though, some of Hurston's characters like Vangie, Lena, and Missie May remain silent, they also construct meanings for themselves. Walker's characters, Myrna and Roselily, also remain silent. Nevertheless they find a way to express their feelings – Myrna writes and Roselily dreams. Though Myrna seems to reproduce the ideals of womanhood, she expresses her power when taking the contraceptive religiously. She remains silent, but she finds a strategy to survive the ideological constructions assigned to the female gender. Though characters in Walker's narratives seem to assume a more positive or active attitude towards their condition, they are still influenced by the current dichotomy of male dominance/female silence. Walker's discourse, in these terms, responds to prior discourses and anticipates discourses of the future.

Nevertheless, the different experiences of black women writers from the Harlem Renaissance and contemporary times inform their fiction in a different way. However, Alice Walker deals with the observation of how the encounter of two distinct consciousnesses takes place in black fiction, how the 'raceless' approach of Hurston's writing is intertwined with the effects of social oppression and exploitation of women. Bakhtin's proposal of the two ways of seeing the mixture of different voices helps to explain the portrayal of black womanhood in the short-fiction of

Hurston and Walker. The "mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance", as the Russian critic defines hybridization, is applied to black narratives. In his definition, Bakhtin (1981: 358) mentions "an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor." He also argues for the construction of meaning and the contingency of social language based on the values, thoughts, creeds of the speaker and draws a fundamental distinction between unconscious, 'organic', hybridization, and conscious intentional hybridization. The organic hybrid is produced by the encountering of different languages, which means that two different views are compounded in one. In this sense, there is a convergence of two or more points of view into something new. The importance of this mode is reinforced by the Russian thinker (1981) in the following excerpt:

> But unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages. We may even say that language and languages change historically primarily by means of hybridization, by means of a mixing of various 'languages' co-existing within the boundaries of a single effect, a single national language, a single branch, a single group of different branches or different groups of such branches, in the historical as well as paleontological past of languages (358-359).

The organic unintentional hybrid makes room for the new world views. The combination of different social elements is provided. However, this fusion has never considered contrasts and oppositions with a linguistic consciousness. On the other hand, what Bakhtin calls "intentional, conscious hybrid" is more relevant to the narratives of black women writers. Differences are confronted when distinct points of view are set side by side. Two individualized linguistic consciousnesses, two voices organize the intentional literary hybrid. There is always a dialogical confrontation of two distinct and sometimes opposite approaches, so that the resolution is never completely achieved. In his words (1981):

> (…) since concrete, isolated utterances are constructed in this represented language, it follows that the represented linguistic consciousness must necessarily be embodied in "authors" of some sort who speak in the given language, who structure utterances in the language and who therefore introduce into the potentialities of language itself, their own actualizing language intention. Thus, there are always two consciousnesses, two language-intentions, two accents participating in an intentional and conscious artistic hybrid (359).

There is no union or fusion of the represented voices, since they are constituted by their own intentions. The intentional hybrid characterizes literary arts. According to Bakhtin (1981: 361), it is "an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language."

Following Bakhtin's (1993: 82) views, language is neither neutral nor impersonal, and is constituted by the encounter of the centripetal and centrifugal forces. The centripetal force is normative and promotes a move towards the center, to a kind of stability which contains differences, while the centrifugal force is repelled from the parameters established by the 'center' as 'the right convention'. Decentralization, heterogeneity and the power of differences characterize the latter mode. Nevertheless, the union of these forces is found in black women texts. In Hurston's narratives, for example, the use of black dialect plays a central role in sustaining the black community and building up a positive image of that group. The stories "Under the Bridge", "Sweat", "Spunk", and "The Gilded Six-Bits" demonstrate that exchanges among characters are always presented in black English. Also, Hurston's writings combine issues of anthropology, folklore and sociology. There is a move to the black center with an emphasis on everything related to black tradition, mainly the black vernacular English which has been associated with the power of the centrifugal force. Though an emphasis is given to the black vernacular English, this dialect was neglected by many writers of Hurston's time.

Another centrifugal movement in Hurston's fiction is promoted by disengagement from racial uplift, since art is not associated with political concerns in

her stories. Interestingly, in a study of American women writing between 1890 and 1930, the white feminist scholar Elizabeth Ammos (1991: 23), insists that race was the main issue for the writers of Hurston's time. In her words: "while they suffered because they were women (…) they suffered more and primarily because they were black. If one or the other of the two issues had to take priority, it had to be race." Hurston, in this sense, transgressed this parameter when not fighting against racism, as did most Afro-American women who carried the burdens of race and gender difference. The centrifugal force operating within her narratives builds up another self-contained black center. Hurston's positioning at the time she produced her literary texts seems to be in accordance with what the French critic Grillet (2000: 824) asserts about the function of art. In the author's words, art cannot be reduced to the status of being in service of a cause. He adds that art "is not a more or less brilliantly colored envelope intended to embellish the author's message." Art, in his terms, has nothing to do with utility as it creates its own meanings. According to him, it is a misconception to believe that the writer has "something to say" and thus he or she searches for a way to say it.

Countering the apolitical approach to literature, Frederic Jameson has asserted that art cannot be seen as a "self-enclosed" sphere separated from social reality. In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson (1981: 99) asserts that the ideological element of a text is seen "in the area of literary genre", because "genre is a socio-symbolically message, or in other terms … form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right." Thus, there are no ways to separate form and structure from ideological content. Jameson's 'political unconsciousness' underlies the ideological content in literary texts. Following the vein of this Marxist critic, Hurston's literary perspective is condemned as the content of her stories is separated from the historical context. Hurston's rejection of the race problem in fiction comes to represent her ideological position though she does not 'raise the flag' for the condition of black people in society. She somewhat erases racism from history, she considers the effects of sexism. In contrast with the context of her time, racial definition does not come to be the first reference for Hurston's characters. In "How It Feels to Be Colored Me"[39], Hurston

[39] Nevertheless, in this same text, Hurston presents a contradiction when she asserts that she "remembers the very day that she became colored." This statement is directly connected with Hurston's move from the black community in Eatonville to Jacksonville in Florida after her mother's death. By

herself has once asserted that she had no race. The following words help to understand how she envisions her literary work:

> I am no tragically colored. There is no great sorrow damned up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirt deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it… No, I do not weep at the world – I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife (216).

In this sense, it is assumed that Hurston's approach in the stories analyzed in this thesis is detached from racial questions. Hurston seems to be more worried about her condition as a human being rather than as a Negro in American society. Thus Jameson's notion that ideology is intrinsic to any literary text and linked to history is not completely applied to Hurston's narratives.

Considering the form, Walker's writing gives power to the reader who must participate more by joining the fragmented pieces of the narratives in both short-story collections. By focusing not only on the content, but also on techniques, Walker blends different genres, inverts or subverts hierarchies, highlights the fragments. In this sense, the structure of her texts also differs from the traditional narrative patterns. By doing so her narratives seem to be more attached to the centrifugal forces of society instead of the centripetal. Moreover, even if structural and thematic elements of Hurston's texts are not repeated across Walker's narratives, this might be considered as an example of the Signifyin(g) process in which Alice Walker is engaged.

In Walker's "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", for instance, the way the story is presented is linked to the female character's instability and inner conflict. Myrna's diary first mentions the events of September 1961, which are simply devoted to her resigned position within marriage after a period of crisis. Afterwards there are many pages written in May of 1958, the time when Myrna has attempted a frustrated

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interacting with new people in another community she was confronted to the difference of skin color. Being black in Hurston's context was considered a matter of 'becoming'.

liberation from her husband's ties. Finally the narrative comes back to the same month and year as the beginning of the story, September 1961. Four pages of her diary whose content are not in chronological order are described here:

> SEPTEMBER, 1958
>
> page 80
>
> I must think of myself of something better to do than kill myself.
>
> page 81
> Ruel wants me to see a doctor about speeding up conception of the child.
> Will you go, honey? He asks,like a beggar.
> Sure, I say. Why not?
>
> page 82
> Today at the doctor's office the magazine I was reading fell open at a story about a one-legged story (…) The author is said to be Mordecai Rich.
>
> page 86
> Last night while Ruel snored on his side of the bed I washed the prints of his hands off my body. Then I plugged in one of his chain saws and tried to slice off his head. This failed because of the noise. Ruel woke up right in the nick of the time (20-21).

Myrna's crisis in the previous excerpts is based on the maintenance of a loveless marriage followed by the pressure of her husband on her to have a baby, and the discovery of the reason for her lover's abandonment. Everything contributes to her psychological instability, but the reader is not able to predict the end of the story. He/she is not a mere spectator of the events which are about to happen within "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" On the contrary, the reader participates in the construction of meanings. In this context, the notion of a firm meaning and an interpretative determinacy is challenged. The practices of deferral and displacement, which have been suggested by the critical approach in the late 1960s and early 1970s of the French poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida, come to represent the narrative structure of this story. In this short-story, the unresolved issues provide multiple

interpretations so that meaning is always deferred and interpretation is never definitive. In Derrida's (1981) process of signification meaning is dynamically constructed and is endlessly postponed. There is a chain of signification[40] in which meaning will always be shifted and deferred. Therefore, meaning is not achieved by a dualistic approach such as good versus bad, black versus white, etc. Western thought of binary oppositions tend to overvalue one pole of the polarity. However the two poles are not opposed, but mutually involved. The belatedness of meaning in Derrida's process is similar to what Gates presents in his black theory of 'Signifyin(g)' in which there is a tendency to refuse to resolve ambiguities and an emphasis on forms of multiple meanings. Thus, meaning to both critics, Derrida and Gates, seems to be shifting rather than being fixed, stable and unified.

This dynamic process in which readers are not faced with completeness and closure is also suggested in Walker's stories that deal with the theme of pornography. Though the reader remains a spectator of the events in "Porn" and "Coming Apart", they are invited to reflect upon the ways in which stereotypes of black women have been created. Contrary to Hurston's position, the message Walker wants to deliver is expressed by her characters' gestures and words. Walker's narrative strategy of telling rather than showing strengthens the use of the "didactic uplift" themes and gives authority to black women characters in the stories "Coming Apart" and "Porn" of the collection *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down.* More specifically, in the introduction to "Coming Apart", Walker (1981) writes in italics: "*I believe it is only by writing stories in which pornography is confronted openly and explicitly that writers can make a contribution, in their own medium, to a necessary fight*" (42). In this context, she also suggests in between these lines the idea that when read, a literary

[40] When explaining the impossibility of an endpoint in the process of signification, Derrida (1981) combines the French verb 'to differ' and 'to defer' to form the key word *Différance*. In his words: " … this concept can be called gram or *difference* …Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each 'element' – phoneme or grapheme – being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the text produced only in transformation of another text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces. The gram, then, is the most general concept of semiology- which thus becomes grammatology" (26).

text is powerful enough to incite the reader's transformation or at least his/her awareness of a polemic theme. "Coming Apart" as well as other Walker's short-stories reflect not only how a character is influenced by the pressures of society as Myrna is in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", but they are also written as an attempt to change or increase the narrow constraints of society. In black fiction as hooks (1990: 147) states there is a need to create spaces where one is able to redeem and reclaim the past, legacies of pain, suffering, and triumph in ways that transform reality. Accordingly, to this debate I borrow Carby's view that literary texts should not be seen as "passive representations of history", but as "active influence within history." Furthermore, the dynamics of Walker's texts are embedded with ideological concerns so that the stories are influenced by, and influence the society into which they are inserted. By extension, the short-stories should also be considered as "cultural artifacts which shape the social conditions they enter", as Carby (1987: 95) reiterates in *Reconstructing Womanhood.* However, in Bhabha's sense, theoretical perspectives in literary narratives are produced according to the ''locus of enunciation'' of each writer, thus the hegemonic constructions are subverted and new sites of cultural negotiation are provided.

In this context, taking into account Hurston's "locus of enunciation", the form of her short-stories will demonstrate another approach. Hurston's narratives have one or two central characters involved in some kind of conflict which undergoes resolution in the end of the story. The reader is not invited to reflect upon the end or even to make a decision about the life of the characters of the short-stories. Everything is ready, given to the reader in an artistically constructed plot. Her narratives seem to respond well to the new critical concerns which highlight the importance of the reader in being involved with the conflicts of the story. The course of the short-stories follows the stages of a dramatic structure, however not always in the conventional order of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. In "The Gilded Six-Bits", the narrative follows this sequence. Exposition is given by the characterization of Missie May and Joe, their lively married relationship. The setting is very well described as well as mentioning the day of the week the story starts. The arrival of Slemmons, the "up to date" newcomer announces the rising action. The order established is broken and the story takes another course with the introduction of new characters and events complicating the narrative up to

the moment of the climax – Joe's discovery of Missie May's involvement with Slemmons. After that, the couple's separation and their sadness surround the actions after the climax (falling action), and finally the resolution of the story comes with the happy ending of the couple's reconciliation and the arrival of the newborn baby.

The closings or conclusions of her texts can surprise some readers. However, if the reader follows all the details and choices made by the narrator in all Hurston's stories of this work, he/she will perceive an understandable conclusion or ending. Each point selected has an importance and is organic to the comprehension of the narrative sequence. Unlike Walker who 'tells', Hurston prefers to 'show' rather than to 'tell' as her stories speak for themselves. Hurston's short-stories in few pages draw the reader's attention to the development and finally to the end of the conflict. A unified plot and a progressive intensity of action leads to some kind of transformation in characters as the stories present a chain of meaningful events. A variety of incidents and moments of complication have been inserted into a sequence and refers to the central conflict. In a general context, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (1960: 665) state that the "line of interest makes us feel that the incidents have some significance", as they really have in all Hurston's narratives. In this sense, Hurston's procedure seems to be in accordance with the ideals of brevity and single effect of the nineteenth century North-American poet and short-story writer Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)[41]. His concern about art seems to be welcomed by Hurston, although she

[41] Though Poe has been considered one of the most racist writers of the south in his portrayal of black characters, his theoretical views on narrative structure might be helpful. When writing about the process of creation of a poem in "The Philosophy of Composition", Poe stands against the notion that inspiration is the main requirement to the composition of fiction. The creation is not a mere product of intuition. The writer must have a plan to be followed. Therefore, the process of literary creation, in his view, is compared to the resolution of a math problem. Everything must be guided to an end. The narrowed parameters of the South's white author in judging and creating fiction were very much criticized by American critics and writers. Poe's study of the genre mainly focused on the way a writer developed techniques to compose fiction. His commitment to the form of the story rather than the theme showed that art is not aimed at didactic and moral principles. The short-story, as Poe asserted is "a prose narrative, often concentrating on a certain unique or single effect which could be read in one sitting of half an hour to two hours." He is worried about the effects the writer can create on a reader while reading a story. He focuses on the techniques to reach the planned effect. By combining events and incidents, the writer chooses the important details to the development of the intention, the achievement of the 'single effect'.

has not stated anything about that. The organization of Hurston's stories relies much more on the importance of the events, even though the reader can follow a particular time line. Nevertheless, people are not more important than things, animals, or objects.

Unlike Walker in the analyzed stories, Hurston is very much concerned with the setting, the forces of nature which are deeply connected with the character's state of mind. Among Walker's stories, this association of nature and character is perceived only in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?". The yard is a "long undressed wound" and the "few trees" are described as "bereft of foliage as hairpins stuck in a mud cake" (11). The appearance of elements of nature reveals how sad Myrna is about moving to the new house. This description seems to be constructed in parallel with her inner feelings, as happens in all Hurston's stories chosen for this thesis. The sun, for instance, is a key figure in "Under the Bridge", "Sweat", "The Gilded Six-Bits". The poetic diction of her short-stories and the sun as a recurrent element reinforce the cosmic dimension of her literary work, and make room for the circulation of power in a less centralized way. Nevertheless, nature has been a vital force of Hurston's character. Her attachment to it, her perception of the beauty of nature is maintained in her literary work. Personified elements of nature do not defeat human beings. In her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942: 71), she declares that in Jacksonville, she "was deprived of the loving pine, the lakes, the wild violets in the woods and the animals she [I] used to know." Hurston also talks about the dreams of her youth when she looks for the horizon and says:

> I know that I shall still be part and parcel of the world. I was a part before the sun rolled into shape and burst forth in the glory of change. I was, when the earth was hurled out from its fiery rim. I shall return with the earth to Father Sun, and still exist in substance when the sun has lost its fire, and is disintegrated in infinity to perhaps become a part of the whirling rubble in space …what need of denominations and creeds. The wide belt of the universe has no need for finger-rings. I am one with the infinite and need no other assurance (279).

In this book, she writes about the comments of her mother, Lucy Hurston, who said to her children to "'jump' at de sun" … they [we] might not land on the sun, but at least, they [we] would get off the ground." By bringing this metaphorical image to the public fore through her autobiography, Hurston implicitly says that she has followed her mother's advice since in her narratives there is an attempt not to accept everything that comes from outside as the 'right' thing. Children's thoughts and dreams are reliable and worthy of value.

Beyond the emphasis on setting, another important device observed in Hurston's stories is the explicit intromission of the narrator by the use of Standard English in contrast with the dialogue of characters in Black English. Thus, her stories are inhabited by the narrative voice, the dialogue between the main characters and the comments of the members of the community who always meet on the porches. Like the Greek chorus in tragedies, the community is not voiceless and provides their opinion on the latest emerging events. In this way, the point of view comes to be the community voice and the information exchanged among them. Gates' (1883: 199) analysis of the function of the porch in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is applied to "Spunk", "Sweat", and "The Gilded Six Bits". The porch in these short-stories as well as in the novel is personified and represents the 'eyes', 'mouth' and 'ears' of the community through a series of synecdoches.

Also, the comic mode, as John Lowe (1994: 14) notes, has a fundamental role in Hurston's narratives. Comic expressions, characters' laughs and jokes introduce and/or subvert the sexist/racist stereotypes and narratives of violence that have been imposed on them. According to Lowe, Hurston's characters "laugh, shriek, dance" when something seems to be funny. In general, the comic momentum is achieved when characters are able to keep their verbal exchange going. Nevertheless, the use of the comic mode tells the reader not only about Hurston's characters, but also about the writer herself, who seems to be looking for new modes of narration. She introduces this new form at a time when the Afro-American literature has totally ignored humorous aspects as Lowe argues. In this context, Hurston presents not only the comic mode, but also the cosmic when relating the characters' inner state with elements of nature such as the sun, the moon, the grass and others, as this thesis' prior analysis of Hurston's stories has demonstrated. It is precisely because Hurston brings

out from the margins the comic and the cosmic modes as well the black vernacular forms in literature that she subverts the notions which structured literary texts in the 1920s. Walker, in a different way, has also subverted the established notions when writing fragmented rather than linear narratives.

Destabilizing The Constructions of Womanhood

That the variety of black women's experience is grounded in different terms of (male) oppression and exploitation is an example of how these forces work in the short-fiction of Hurston and Walker. The American writer, Judith Butler (1990: 13), who deals with the questions of power, sexuality, identity in *Gender Trouble* believes that in the construction of the array of 'women', the multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections have to be considered, so that the coherence and unity of the category of women will be avoided. Gender is not an essence, but it is *performative*, fluid as it is modified through different time and contexts. Butler's words concerning multiplicity are present in the analysis of the female characters of the short-stories in question. Differences 'inside' the gender category have to be acknowledged. The female identity cannot be based on monolithic assumptions. The female experience and its multiple approaches come to represent the differences within this category. The Anglo-Indian critic Avtar Brah (1996: 102) when analyzing Asian immigrant women in Great Britain seems to be following the same direction by asserting that gender is constituted and represented differently according to the distinct locations within the relations of power.

There are not pure cultures or essences of what represents a woman, a man, a black or white person. All of them are intertwined and influence each other. The position of the subject is always negotiated in the interstitial space, so that they cannot find themselves as individual subjects or identities. The dialogical position of negotiation and interrogation provides the constitution of subjects. Female characters – Vangie, Lena, Missie May, Delia Jones, Roselily, Myrna, and the two unnamed characters – are engaged in the construction of agency. As the previous chapters demonstrated, the social representations of gender affected the subjective

constructions of black womanhood in a way that some female characters' practices reproduced dominant categories. In each short-story, womanhood is assumed to be unchanging, consisting of fixed traits, attributes or sex roles. However, womanhood has to be seen as a dynamic, continual process in which individuals are positioned and position themselves as women. Accordingly, the protagonists are able to assume different subject positions within different discourses and narratives. In this sense, as the critic Avtar Brah (1996: 117) believes, discursive formations contribute to the formation of one's identity. The notion of the unified, fixed already existing identities of the 'I' and the 'You' who act, disappear in spite of the modalities of multi-locationality which is continuously marked by everyday cultural practices. The same discourse of female subordination is at times found in different short-stories of both writers, positioning characters as subjects or objects in distinct ways. Nevertheless, female subjects are composed as a group of multiple and contradictory positions and subjectivities.

Although they have been shaped by contradictory discourses of gender, black female characters are internally differentiated and constituted. An individual category is not internally homogeneous. The sign of woman is constituted within and through specific configurations of gender relations. Specific meanings are assumed in the discourse of different 'womanhoods'. Different categories of women are faced by specific forms of oppression. In Hurston's stories, racism is not an autonomous structure of oppression as it is in Walker's. Carby (1999: 172-173) observed that the aesthetics of Hurston's works emphasized the rural black folk and the richness of oral culture so that the folk was created 'outside of history'. In Carby's sense, she excluded the black subject from history.

In "Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk", Hazel Carby (1999: 172-173) focuses the readers' attention on the crisis of representation in black cultural production and criticizes Hurston's portrayal of the rural black folk as a subaltern group. She asserts that Hurston privileged the nostalgic, and 'displaced' the important conflict of class by relying upon the rural folk as "the center of her representation". In Carby's terms, Hurston is responsible for the maintenance of a 'romantic' imagination of black people. As it has been noticed in the first chapter of this thesis, Hurston's

stories provide black characters only within the constraints of their black community and they indirectly contest patriarchy as a source of women's exploitation.

However, an allusion to the white world is present in two of Hurston's stories: "Sweat" and "The Gilded Six-Bits". In "Sweat", the male character Sykes rejects his wife's job as she does the laundry for white people. To Sykes, the white world determines his inferiority. As Fanon (1986) has once stated the glances of the other had fixed him in a way that "the white man's eye break up the black man's body and in that act of its own frame of reference is transgressed, its field of vision is disturbed." In this context, there is no way of accepting a pacific relationship with the people who oppress the black male character in the story. The black male character of "Sweat" believes that black people do not need to interact with the difference, so that he can live in his black community by himself. The same idea is seen in "The Gilded Six-Bits" when the narrator demarcates the Negro surrounding and the exact place where Missie May and Joe's house is located, a Negro neighborhood with Negro things. This need to show that everything belongs to the Negro world is a way to indirectly highlight their skills. The white men, in this case, will not impose discrimination on them as they do not have a well-defined place in that fictional community.

In a distinct way, Delia Jones in "Sweat" reproduces the stereotype of the benevolent white people who are ready to help, to 'teach' black people how to survive. She implicitly proclaims their superiority when considering the possibility of asking for the protection of white members of the church if her husband tries to do something against her. This harmonious relationship between black and white is also inserted in "The Gilded Six-Bits". Slemmons' money has come from the white women with whom he has been involved. Being with white women provides him a better position in that society. By so acting, he believes he will be as powerful as white people are. In Fanon's (1952: 63) terms, "he wishes to be acknowledged not as black, but as white." Slemmons' strategies, his appearance and his lies surprise and convince the black community. Slemmons is so up-to-date that in Joe's mind he looks like a rich white man. By saying that, he asserts the inferiority of black people. Although these examples are not deeply developed throughout the narratives, they remain at the background of the stories and depict the characters' visions about the

interaction with white people. Nevertheless, the reader does not face any interracial confrontation. As Butler-Evans (1989: 42) realizes Hurston prefers to restrict her narratives to the private and domestic spheres by exploring "the inner world of Black life".

In how they dealt with different female characters such as Delia Jones, Lena, Missie May, Vangie, Roselily, Myrna, the unnamed black female characters of 'Coming Apart' and 'Porn', one sees that Hurston and Walker worked with race and gender constructs in different ways. However, it is a mistake to reproduce the domination/resistance logic in the stories. The discourse of resistance cannot be seen simply as a response to hegemonic parameters. Following the concerns of the Indian thinker Homi K. Bhabha (1994: 1-2) there is a need "to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences". New signs of identity, sites of collaboration have to be elaborated, as he suggests, to the act of defining the idea of society itself. In his terms, the work of black women writer should examine how positions and privileges are constructed within society.

When focusing on the enunciative present in the articulation of culture, Bhabha intends to provide a change of objectified others into subjects of their history and experience. This attempt according to Bhabha (1994: 178) is promoted both by postcolonial and black critiques when politics of binary opposition is erased and new forms of contestatory subjectivities are empowered. Essentialism and the fixity of difference have to be destroyed in order to promote de-centered structures. Homi Bhabha (1990: 211) also questions the binary oppositions such as oppressor and oppressed, margin and periphery, negative and positive images. He also asserts that it is in the interstitial space that negotiations are made, and identities are constructed. Histories are displaced while new structures of authority and political initiatives are set up, making room for the emergence of other. In this sense, he focuses the reader's attention on the rupture of the theory-practice polarity by suggesting the concept of 'beyond theory', a form of signification which creates spaces for the contingent and the articulation of social 'experience'.

In the same vein, in "Negotiating Theories or 'going a piece of the way with them'", the Afro-American critic Carole Boyce (1994: 55), asserts that criticism and theoretical positions are in convergence with the lived experiences of black women writers during the seventies. Nevertheless, the representation of social experience as contingent makes room for the possibility of revision or subversion. This emphasis on the creative heterogeneity of the enunciatory present as Bhabha highlights (1994:185) is identified with the work of some black authors who also "liberate the discourse of emancipation from binary closures." Though Bhabha recognizes this attempt to put an end to the polarities within black literature, this work and especially Walker's narratives keep alive the dichotomy of male superiority versus the subordination of women. In addition, in "The Commitment to Theory", Homi Bhabha (1995: 111-112) asserts that the act of theory is constituted by the articulation process, so that "the event of theory becomes the negotiation of contradictory and antagonistic instances." In his terms, familiar polarities between knowledge and its objects open up hybrid sites. Each "position" is always a process of translation and transference of meaning. Moreover, Bhabha's views seem to be supported by the Afro-American theorist critic bell hooks (1990: 64) who believes that individuals committed to resisting politics of domination and also the eradication of sexism and racism, are aware of the importance of not promoting an either/or competition between oppressive systems. These writers, according to Mae Gwndolyn Henderson (1990: 137), do not want to move from margin to center, but they "remain on the borders of discourses", so that they can speak from the inside/outside, or in Bhabha's (1994) terms in between the two spaces. This intricate relationship of the margins to the center reveals awareness of these writers that they are a "vital part of the whole" in hooks' (1984: 149) terms since that they look from "the outside in" and from "the inside out". Living on the edge makes room for the development of a particular way of seeing reality. Although, black women writers realize the specificities that build up their characters, some of them still reproduce binary oppositions within their narratives.

Black women characters have distinct identities, different histories and live different experiences of gender oppression. Within different structures of social relations, they exist as differentiated categories. Missie May, Vangie, and Lena do not question normative tendencies. The centripetal forces of power relations act over these female characters who accept their subordination to an oppressive condition.

However, the female characters of “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?”, “Porn”, “Coming Apart”, and Hurston’s Delia Jones in “Sweat” question the male dominance exercised by their partners in different ways. Not satisfied with their condition, they refuse to repeat the roles established by the center. They act, as if they are influenced by the centrifugal force of society, which has a transformative power.

Following this line of thought, some of the female characters of Hurston and Walker’s short-fiction are able to act within the narrow conditions of their communities and create new possibilities for themselves. The existence of a plurality of femininities and masculinities within the same social context is proposed by Robert Connel (1987: 177). According to him, several types of social practices, discourses and institutions make room for multiple femininities and masculinities. The subject, in this sense, is able to ‘select’ or ‘invest’ in the multiple available positions. There is not only one femininity with which a woman can identify in her social contexts, but there are a variety of possible femininities and masculinities offered by contradictory discourses, produced and reproduced by practices and social institutions. Therefore, there are multiple ways of being a woman within the same context. In “Spunk”, the protagonist of the story modifies the course of Lena’s life. In fact, Lena’s behavior does not change throughout the story. She seems to be constructed as a silenced character from the beginning to the end of the narrative. Therefore, she does not take different sets of positionalities since she does not assume different identities.

In the short-stories of this work, the private sphere of the home and the relationship with male partners confine female characters to a subordinate position, yet some of them try to fight against the oppressive system in order to achieve personal liberation. In “Difference, diversity, differentiation”, Avtar Brah (1996: 117) asserts that “an event will be perceived or conceived according to how someone is culturally constructed.” Thus, female characters within their black community have their own values, beliefs, and ways of life, however on encountering the other, they accept or reject the imposed social meanings.

Displacement and destabilization, in the short-stories analyzed, occur when the figure of the ‘outsider’ is inserted into the narratives. The destabilized element breaks with the linearity, coherence and order of the narrative course and functions as a

catalyst for some protagonists' changes. Characters are always negotiating in any situation and are sometimes able to find fulfillment and resolution to their inner conflicts. In trying to understand both how people assume certain subject positions in one discourse, and what is the relation between discourses and personal identities, Wendy Holloway (1984: 238) developed the notion of 'investment'. At any moment there are competing and contradictory discourses of womanhood and manhood, so what motivates individuals to assume one subject position instead of another is his/her 'investment' in a particular subject position. Holloway sees the investments as something between the emotional commitment and the interest produced, in terms of the subject satisfaction, retribution or any advantage he/she may obtain. Certain subject positions promote individual satisfaction in the context of several institutionalized discourses and practices. Assuming one position or a variety of positions in competing discourses does not speak only to the construction of identity and subjectivity. Being positioned, in Holloway's terms, is always being positioned in relation to others, and the inter-relations among individuals also determine the positions assumed. He emphasizes that the 'investment' is not only a question of emotional satisfaction, but also of social and economic benefits. Non-dominant discourses certainly offer subject positions and ways of subjectivity that can be satisfactory when defying or resisting the dominant modes. In the light of this theory, assuming a subject position cannot be seen merely as a question of choice. The 'investment' notion of Holloway is mainly linked to emotional motivations, so that in this context, the fantasies of identity of one subject will be linked to fantasies of power and agency. The term fantasy reinforces the emotional and subconscious nature of the investment in several subject positions, and emphasizes the social strategies required to keep up with this investment. This issue of investment raised by Holloway may be similar to what Stuart Hall (1995: 64) considers a psychological approach to understanding agency. Hall says that "although people's political identifications may well contain contradictory strands, they nonetheless have a form, a structure, a shape and are always 'motivated' by powerful unconscious investments."

In Hurston's stories, for instance, the investment in one position is always provided by the introduction of an element of destabilization, often coming from the outside. In "The Gilded Six-Bits", Slemmons, as a newcomer to the community brings his fashionable way of life which makes people see things in a very different way,

while Missie May betrays her husband. The arrival of Vangie in "Under the Bridge" changes the everyday lives of father and son. But in "Sweat" and "Spunk", internal and external motives awaken female characters to their condition, and make room for their personal transformation. The male character in "Sweat" engages in a battle to get rid of his wife, Delia Jones. Sykes' power disturbs the female character's harmonic and peaceful life. When facing Sykes and the 'rattlesnake', Delia precisely destroys the foundational notion of a fixed and homogenized identity. The play of Sykes' power and the constitutive outside breaks up the closure of the female subject. Delia Jones gradually becomes powerful and is able to confront her husband. Coming to voice in this way means to have space to tell her experience.

But Hurston's characters are strong enough to resist the pressures of the world they live in since they are in an intimate and familiar rural setting. All short-stories, except "Under the Bridge", seem to occur in the same location with some recurrent devices such as people, the community and certain landmarks like the porch. In "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View", Alice Walker (1983: 85) notices there is a sense of black people as complete and complex and undiminished human beings, even if they are oppressed in some way. Black females in Hurston's stories are not marginalized by race and gender. The idea of characters' wholeness is attached to the time configuration in these narratives. Hurston's short-stories seem to me to be set by the spiral time in which characters who are involved in a conflict situation regain or reestablish a new beginning. Drewal's (1992: 47) concerns about existence in time are coherent with Hurston's approach, mainly in "The Gilded Six-Bits" and "Sweat". According to this critic, "time would be more appropriately conceived in spatial terms as spiral, neither cyclical, nor linear." Significantly, nothing is repeated as there is always "change and transformation – of body, of personality, of mission, of destiny." Therefore, in the mentioned stories, when coming back to the initial time of the narrative, characters are able to renew their existence and start again a new cycle of life. More important still, cycles are enacted in a crescendo providing the empowerment of black characters. At the end of "The Gilded Six-Bits", characters replay the ritual of the beginning of their happy married life. The couple, Missie May and Joe have completed a cycle which started and ended on a Saturday. Along seven days of the week, the couple has gone through a process of love and suffering, and in the end their love survives. The timeline of seven days also marks the important

events of the married life of Delia Jones and Joe in "Sweat". The beginning of this narrative is marked by the statement "It was Sunday. Any other night, Delia Jones would have been in bed for hours…" (38) and the resolution takes place on the "night he did not return at all, all the next day being Sunday" (49). From one Sunday to the following one Delia Jones and Joe in "Sweat" are engaged in a process of death and rebirth to a new life. The tragic death of Sykes and, consequently Delia's psychological rebirth or renaissance indicates a new start. By suffering, she has become a better person and has grown as individual. The life cycle moves not in a circular, closed way, but at a deeper level as a consequence of the process of becoming whole and complete. In "Sweat", the spiral time is a vehicle for the female character's liberation from her oppressive condition while in "The Gilded Six-Bits", time seems to fulfill the traditional values of womanhood.

By contrast, confident protagonists do not characterize all of Walker's women characters. Also, the timeline is present not in the same way as in Hurston's narratives, but in a fragmented frame. The non-chronological order of time and the emphasis on the psychological time of the characters' mind reflect the tense conditions within which they exist. Although Walker (1983: XI) with her *womanist* theory attempts to present black women as whole human beings as they are, with "outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior", some of her stories do not achieve that. In the narratives of this thesis Walker's effort to translate her theories into the practice of her fiction fails. Roselily, for instance, in "Roselily" and Myrna in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" find alternatives for their lives by being subjugated to the other, to the male dominance. In the article "Can the Subaltern Speak?", the Indian intellectual Gayatri Spivak asserts (1993: 103) that the female subaltern cannot be heard. Therefore, the fixed subject is a consequence of repression as "there is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak." In these terms, lively adherence to the "cult of true womanhood" does not elevate these women characters in Walker's narratives.

However, Spivak also believes that by ignoring the subaltern today, one keeps alive the imperialist project. When trying to make representable the female voice, Walker creates characters who seek to learn how to speak by questioning the historically voiceless subjects. The black protagonists of Walker's "Coming Apart"

and "Porn", for instance, exhibit a power within the realm of their home and their world. Though these women also suffer from the influences of a society which sees their blackness as a commodity which equates sexuality with negative stereotypes placed upon them by white patriarchy, they are more confident in their own identities. These characters' concerns are found in the private and public worlds. Not ashamed of their sexuality, they struggle for wholeness and autonomy in a racist and sexist society. They are able to construct alternative notions of womanhood in contrast to the traditional ones. And this model, as it is asserted in "The Dialects of Black Womanhood" by Bonnie Dill (1979: 544), is based on images of "female sexuality and intellectual equality, economic autonomy, and legal as well as personal parity with men." In this sense, they are independent, self-reliant, strong and more autonomous.

In contrast with what was expected from a woman in accordance with the parameters of "true womanhood", black women were not dependent on a black partner's judgment. They formulated their own views and expressed them. Black women, Shirley Carlson (1992: 62) notes, were often direct, especially when they fought for the "racial up lift". Even after marriage, a black woman might remain employed in the public domain. But these events/realities do not occur to any of Walker's women characters, and the black female characters Myrna and Roselily are powerless to speak in their own names.

In the context of this work the metaphor of quilting, which is citied in Alice Walker's (1983) important essay: "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: The Creativity of Black Women in the South" as an indication of black women's creativity is coherent with the experience these black female characters have been suffering in America. The variety of black female experience, whether in a southern rural community or in urban places is compared to each piece of cloth of a handmade Afro-American quilt.[42] In "Patches: Quilts and Community in Alice Walker's 'Everyday

[42] In the Afro-American tradition, the quilt, made of several pieces of cloth from the members of one family or a community, tells the story of the family or of that group. In the masterpiece "Everyday Use", inserted in Walker's collection *In Love & Trouble- Stories of Black Women* brings about the importance of the quilts in an Afro-American context. The story centers around the tension between Maggie and her mother against the other daughter called Dee who gave up the tradition of her community to better fit in another place far away from her roots. In assimilating the dominant culture, she distances herself from her heritage. Dee has changed her name, her style, her way of being in

Use', the critics Houston Baker Jr. and Charlotte Pierce-Baker (1993: 309) write about the importance of a quilt in an Afro-American community. According to them: "the quilts of Afro-America offer a *sui generic* context (a weaving together) of experiences and a storied, vernacular representation of lives conducted in the margins (…)". Relying upon their words, I argue that the lives of Myrna, Roselily and the two unnamed protagonists of "Coming Apart" and "Porn" are parts of a quilt which tell, in a fragmented way, the stories of these women characters. The several fragments of the quilt hold the multiplicity of black womanhood through female characters' contingency in face of their experienced circumstances. Though pieced together in this metaphorical quilt, the experience of black women in Carby's (1987: 9-10) terms cannot be reduced to a "common denominator". This critic also condemns the essentialist and ahistorical assumptions which are based on a shared identity and common black female experience.

Unlike Hurston, Alice Walker in her short-fiction seems to be following what Hazel Carby (1987: 32) contends black women, scholars, and intellectuals had to do when defining "a discourse of black womanhood which would not only address their exclusion from the ideology of true womanhood but […] also rescue their bodies from a persistent association with illicit sexuality." Consequently, in her work, Walker introduces new images of black womanhood which deviate from negative stereotypes. The female characters in "Porn" and "Coming Apart" are conscious that the conventions of womanhood require the repression of sexuality and know the implications of their subordination. However, these intelligent and educated characters defy these conventions. Walker's commitment to uplifting the race is linked to the betterment of social, cultural, moral, and material conditions of black women.

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contrast with the ones who stayed at the rural background and kept the tradition of the family alive by making quilts. This narrative shows that everyday objects are as well meaningful as works of art. Nevertheless, art is not found only in institutional places like a museum. See pictures of quilts in illustrations.

Female Agency and The Power of Language

The question of agency is reformulated when the processes of the subject formation and experience are considered. The focus on desire, identification, fantasy and fear are some resources that might be taken into account when characters make their choices or are constrained to act in a certain way. The different types of agency represent aspects of one's subjectivity that are constituted within heterogeneous discursive practices. Agency does not rely upon fixed basis and is located in the interruptive act of enunciation. According to Bhabha (1994), agency as the activity of contingency, is a result of partial closures and is not decontextualized from social practice, since the subject is in a constant process of negotiation. Black female characters, in this sense, are always negotiating their identities as they cannot be defined by an essence or purity. They articulate and change identities interweaving across relations of race, gender, class or sexuality. The moment of identification provides means for the subaltern agency. Within a negotiation space, the subject is constituted as an agent in a moment of displacement, in the time lag of signification. In this context, agency is based on what the critic calls 'time lag' or 'disjunctive temporality':

> Such a disjunctive space of temporality is the locus of symbolic identification that structures the intersubjective realm – the realm of otherness and the social – where we identify ourselves with the other precisely at the point which resemblance. (…) this liminal moment of identification – eluding resemblance – produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority through a process of iterative 'unpicking' and incommensurable, insurgent relinking. It singularizes the 'totality' of authority by suggesting that agency requires a grounding, but it does not require a temporality of continuity or accumulation; it requires direction and contingent closure but not teleology and holism (Bhabha, 1994: 184).

Agency is present in a structure of negotiation of meaning that is a 'time lag', a contingent moment in the signification of closure, the temporal break in representation. This 'time lag' is the place of identification which promotes the turning around of ideologies, concepts and metaphors. The totalitarian approach in which a unique hegemonic point of view is provided is completely denied by Homi Bhabha since the contingency of the subject, otherness, alterity are always in question. The fixity of the subject opens up a supplementary space of contingency. In Bhabha's process, described as the return of the subject, there is an agency that seeks revision and reinscription, the (re)/negotiation of the intersubjective realm. The double movement in the chain of utterance, for instance, suggests contingency in a way that the allusion to another's utterance produces a dialogical turn. The need to think "outside the sentence" and the consideration of the context in which meaning is produced, make room for the dialogic reverberations. An act of communication as Bhabha (1994: 26, 36) asserts between the 'I' and the 'You' is never simple since the subject is always determined in relation to the other, and displaced in that act. Into a flux in which contradictory things are dealt with simultaneously, the process of interpretation occurs. Therefore, the construction of discourse functions through the ambivalent relations created in the act of splitting. Thus, displacement opens up the possibility of articulating the different. According to Bhabha (1994):

> Splitting constitutes an intricate strategy of defence and differentiation in the colonial discourse. Two contradictory and independent attitudes inhabit the same place, one takes account of reality, the other is under influence of instincts which detach the egos from reality. This results in the production of multiple and contradictory belief. The enunciatory moment of multiple beliefs is both a defence against the anxiety of difference, and itself productive of differentiations. Splitting is then a form of enunciatory, intellectual uncertainty and anxiety that stems from the fact that disavowal is not merely a principle of negation or elision; it is a strategy for articulating contradictory and coeval statements of belief. It is from such an enunciatory space, where the work of signification voids the act of meaning (132).

The moment of splitting[43] breaks with the notions of fixity and provides the space of supplemental contingency. The split of what has been considered a stable system of reference, a model, or a tradition makes room for the articulation of new cultural meanings and strategies in the present. Consequently, the past is always opened to new kinds of re-interpretations and is not considered as a fixed precedent. Therefore, the notion of repetition and insertion of new elements is at stake. The reconfiguration of the past and the innovation of the present are recalled by Homi Bhabha (1994: 35) who asserts that "in signifying the present something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical moment." In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford (1990: 210), the Indian critic asserts that the original can be "simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum". Thus, if the "original" is never complete in itself and is always open to translation, essentialist meanings will be avoided. Repetition, reproduction, and mimicry are not always finished and ready.

Mimicry as a mode of authority in colonial discourse is not validated by Walker's "signification" on Hurston's narratives. If in the colonial discourse there is an attempt to 'modify', 'regulate' and 'dominate' the other, the same is not applied to Walker's revision of Hurston's texts. The idea of dominating and appropriating the 'other', as a way to erase differences does not come true in black narratives. In colonial discourse the dominant, feeling threatened by the difference, creates a powerful image of himself in order to face the minorities. The terror and insecurity is hidden by the dominant created mask. Thus, the articulation of the dominant double

[43] When commenting on the act of splitting in the colonial context, the contemporary feminist theorist Judith Butler (2000: 37) adds that the master loses originality and priority in the splitting signifier, as it is being taken up by a mimetic double. "Mimesis", in her words, "can effect a displacement of the first term, or indeed, reveal that the term is nothing other than a series of displacements that diminish any claim to primary and authentic meaning." Therefore, repetition and displacement do not keep alive binary oppositions. Butler as well as Bhabha argues that what has been considered original is also a mere reproduction, copy, imitation. In a commentary on Bhabha and Butler's propositions in his article "Disapora and Hybridity", Alan Sinfield (2000: 105) asserts that in the imperfect act of the subaltern imitation of colonial discourse, there is always a critique of the system. However, Butler calls attention to the process by which any political position is established. If the subject is constructed in a continuous process of fragmentation, the political possibilities of agency will be diverse. Butler (1990: 14) defends the coalition of differently positioned subjects as a way of keeping agency, with the acknowledgement of its internal and inevitable contradictions. The agent is constructed by/through the act and is not seen as an a priori guarantee. The political agency of the subject is provided by the several social and cultural interactions among individuals. Nevertheless, the construction of the subject as a political matter is never an individual act as the feminist critic realizes.

vision is a result of what Homi Bhabha (1994: 86) has described as the partial recognition of the colonial subject since it makes present something that in fact is absent.

But this notion of partial recognition does not proceed in Walker-Hurston's narrative relationship. Bhabha's (1994) concerns about "the desire for a reformed other, a form of difference that is almost the same but not quite," may be dangerous, if not untrue when it is related to the black women writers of this work. This idea of fixing, establishing models and strategies of the past in Walker's fiction is not fulfilled. Though the two writers deal with similar themes, their approaches are very distinct from each other. The revision of what is received (Hurston's themes, strategies and narrative structure) through the 'signifying act' changes the way the past is read and redefines the present moment linked to it. Still, it is by modifying the strategies of the past in whatever way, that regulation of the past is accomplished in Walker's texts.

In "Characteristics of Negro Expression" (1934), Zora Neale Hurston asserts that the Negro imitates and revises as an act of love and not from a feeling of inferiority. Every artist reinterprets since revision characterizes modern art of all forms, and the truly original is to be found in 'new art'. Therefore, the art of revision is done for the love of it, and not "because the Negro wishes to be like the one imitated". Consequently, originality and imitation do not provide any distinction, and are fundamental in 'all' art. In Hurston's words:

> to get back to original sources is much too difficult for any group to claim very much as a certainty… The most ardent admirer of the great Shakespeare cannot claim first source even for him. It is his treatment of the borrowed material (43).

If 'originality' is considered a masterful revision, 're-interpretation' is what will be called for the modification of ideas according to Hurston's view. Thus, returning to Bhabha (1994: 131), in other words, "repeatability is always the repetition in the very act of enunciation, something other, a difference that is a little bit uncanny." In his

terms, the statement becomes repeatable, reasonable, an instrument of desire so that elements of a strategy do not require formal analysis, or semantic investigations. In observing the topic of power relations in Walker's "Coming Apart", a new orientation is introduced to Hurston's "Sweat", for instance. Both female characters of "Sweat" and "Coming Apart" are linked to the male dominance in a very different way. In Hurston's story, although economically independent from her husband, Delia is psychologically tied to him. But gradually she becomes 'conscious' of her oppressive condition and gains power to struggle against him. In the very beginning of "Coming Apart", the woman character is resigned to the domestic sphere and, consequently, to the power of her husband's words. But, in the middle of the story, "she feels restored" and "resolves to fight" (5). Although the struggles in which these characters are engaged follow different paths, the male partners' disappointment in relation to the women's reaction recurs in both stories. Neither Joe of "Sweat" nor the husband of "Coming Apart" accepts their wives' acts of rebellion. In "Coming Apart", when the woman character tries to show her husband how he has reproduced the stereotypes of black people created by the dominant society, she hears from him: "You're the only one black woman in the world that worries about any of this stuff" (45). And the narrative voice confirms the male character's disapproval of his wife's attitude when his feelings are revealed: "Though, he feels oppressed by her incipient struggle, and feels somehow as if her struggle to change the pleasure he has enjoyed is a violation of his rights" (46).

In "Sweat", Delia's first step was to verbally express her rage at her husband, after which she becomes more aggressive towards him since the moment "she seized the iron skillet from the stove and struck a defensive pose". This act "surprised him greatly (…) It cowed him and he did not strike her as he usually did" (40). In both stories the male characters feel threatened by the power they did not know their wives possessed. The current pattern of these stories focuses on the awareness of the female's oppressive condition and the reversal of this position. Women's unexpected reaction, based on Bhabha's (1994) concern, may be classified as the "uncanny" element of the process of signification. Silence and subordination might have been the female reaction welcomed by the respective male partners. But, women characters break with the rules of order, and open up spaces for their transformation. The uncanny in "Sweat" as well as in "Coming Apart" is attached to the female

character's regaining of dignity. Nevertheless, in "Coming Apart" the use of ordinary and vulgar language is also seen as an "uncanny" element within the story. The second chapter of this thesis, devoted to the analysis of Walker's narratives, showed that words as "shit", "cock", "fuck" and scientific names as "penis" surround the story and shock the reader in the same way as the degrading power of the pornographic industry.

But what has provided the strangeness in both stories is related to the female characters' agency. Also, language has played a vital role in the process of awareness since women were able to speak up by making their speech heard. A close look at language and linguistic form contributes to the understanding of agency as Laura Ahearn (2001) asserts in "Language and Agency". Following another line of thought different from Bhabha's, Ahearn[44] concludes that in order to understand social transformation, linguistic structures and practices have to be examined. Language and culture are considered integrated systems. Grammatical categories within certain languages construct the roles of Subject, Agent, and Object differently. In this context, Ahearn (2001) asserts that the treatment of language and action is an excellent model for the understanding of the multiple types of agency (oppositional, complicit, agency of power, of intention) which are exercised in any given situation.

In "Under the Bridge", for instance, Vangie's speech is limited as she is the character who promotes the destabilization of the harmonic relationship between father/son. Vangie, most of the time is silent. She does not say many things, but the narrator is responsible for translating her feelings and presenting everything that

[44] In her article "Language and Agency" Laura Ahearn (2001) highlights that meaning is always built by participants, and consequently emerges from social interactions and cultural realities. Scholars, as this theorist states, do not focus on the sentence, the individual, but on speech acts, speech events in order to understand how people think about their own and others' actions. A dialogic view of language does not reflect an already existing reality, but helps to create that reality. According to her, definitive interpretations should be avoided. There is a need to concentrate on the meanings that might emerge from an event such as a song performance or a text such as a love letter. "Meaning", as she reminds the reader "might be infinite in number, but they are tightly bound." Instead of highlighting the theory of reception, she argues for a practice theory. In her terms, the focus relies upon how individuals construct and constrain meanings which are socially mediated and situated within a specific discourse. Also, the starting point of the debate concerning the concept of agency is provided by her provisional definition that refers to "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act." However, she is aware that she has left aside many interrogations that could have been applied to it, such as: "Must all agency be human? Can nonhuman primates, machines, technologies, spirits, or signs exercise agency?, Must agency be human, individual, collective, conscious, intentional, or effective?"

happens throughout the story. However, she expresses her happiness when something is linked to Artie. For instance when they go hunting or when she receives his gifts her contentment is shown by her words to Artie: "Oh, oh, Artie" (…) "You se so good to me." (…) Artie, Artie! … How you know whut may heart wanted so?" (194) The grammatical choices made by the narrator reveal who the female character is. In the beginning of the story, the narrator refers to Vangie's beauty and youth and says: "She is loved by Luke" (190). In this sense, following Ahearn's concerns on language and agency, it seems that the choice of this sentence delineates the character's agency. Each language, as Ahearn asserts has its resources to exercise, attribute or deny agency since it cannot be measured. Nevertheless the grammatical detail in the structure of the sentence emphasizes Luke's love towards Vangie and not the contrary. The statement does not present Vangie in the "Agent Position". Although the focus is on grammar, and not on social definition of agency, these categories overlap in this example. Attention to linguistic forms, as Ahearn states, can shed light on human agency. In "Under the Bridge", the female voice is almost always suppressed within the story as shown in the example of Luke putting his closed gnarled hand upon her brown one. Vangie did not return the caress, but neither did she draw her hand away so that he reinforces Vangie's status as 'his' wife. Despite the fact that the house offers Vangie stability, security and protection, she is not able to construe herself as a voiced subject, and her reality, following hooks' terms (1990: 43), is defined by others and, in this case, by her husband Luke whose voice and gesture silence Vangie's.

The same happens to Lena in Hurston's "Spunk" when she does not answer 'properly' her husband's question: "ain't I yo' husband?" (3) and she looks disgusted at him. In another moment, her eyes become full of love when she listens to her lover Spunk saying that she is his. Lena's adjustment to the immediate situation shows a passive rather than an active attitude. Therefore, her response does not provide any alteration of behavior patterns. Thus, the picture the reader constructs of Lena in this moment of narrative, and also when she is sent home by her lover, makes the reader certain that her reality, her history, as well as Vangie's is determined by the male power. At Spunk's funeral, the women's communal rumour of Lena's next partner is evidence of that. In this story, agency of complicity is what characterizes the protagonist.

In “Under the Bridge” and “Spunk”, a quiet form of violence, not involving physical assault, is inflicted upon black female protagonists. Psychological violence, perpetrated on Vangie as well as Lena and Delia’s “Sweat”, violate their autonomy, dignity and the right to determine things for themselves when they are denied options. In this context, female characters have been deprived of choices by being threatened and manipulated. The philosopher Newton Gaver (1972: 48) states that when suppressing options, a person is deprived of the opportunity to be somebody. Therefore, violence is much more closely connected with the idea of violation than it is with the idea of force. Any kind of aggression is caused by frustration or learned by imitation. Sykes in “Sweat”, for instance, finds his way to eliminate the obstacle of his wife to achieve his goal. He feels frustrated when his hopes are violated and his expectations of living with Bertha do not come true. By behaving aggressively, he tries to solve the problem. In his alienation, he imitates the violent acts of the white oppressor by following the ways prescribed by the dominant. But when attacking the oppressed (Delia), Sykes is indirectly attacking himself, in other words, the oppressor within both himself and the other. The violent acts and behavior characterize the condition of oppression which surrounds both of them. Violence, as Paulo Freire (2007: 47), asserts is perpetrated by those who explore, oppress, and are not able to see or recognize themselves in the other.

Motivated by her husband’s cruelty, inertia at the end of “Sweat” is Delia’s choice. She was motivated by her husband’s cruelty (reaction). When singing the song: “Jurden water, black an’col/ Chills de body, not de soul/An’Ah wantah cross Jurden in uh calm time” (49), Delia metaphorically demonstrates her wish to really cross ‘Jurden water’ in a calm way which means to live peacefully in her own home. Therefore, the lyrics of the spiritual song do not come true since the last part of the story provides the idea of crossing, and consequently transformation. By the end of the story, a new type of woman emerges and Sykes is aware of his wife’s choice of not warning him about the snake.

In “The Gilded-Six Bits”, agency is portrayed in a different way by Missie May, who fits happily into the traditional role of a married woman by being responsible for the domestic activities and also by exercising her healthy sexual life.

But Missie May's 'unexpected' betrayal changes the course of her life. There is no longer a need to live as she questions: "So why get up?" (63) Feeling regret, she says nothing to change that situation and regain the love of her husband Joe. Nevertheless, she keeps on crying and being sad around the house as if she is waiting for some providential force to help her in the retrieval of her husband's love. In this context, she waits for his forgiveness and swims with the tide. Indeed, when experiencing her husband's rejection, she re-signifies the present in the same way Joe does. There is power to heal the wounds of both. Nevertheless, happiness and power are also achieved by Hurston's women characters who transgress social conventions. Hurston in this story does not seem to be questioning the debate in which wives, for instance, are submissive to patriarchal practices. Indeed, she allows Missie May her sexual identity and also her freedom to follow it.

But things are dealt with very differently in Walker's short-stories. Myrna in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" writes in her diary; Roselily in "Roselily", dreams; the female protagonist of "Porn" asserts her sexual identity; and the female protagonist in "Coming Apart" speaks through the fragmented texts she reads to her husband. Some black female protagonists have asserted their claims, but they have never been recognized. Walker's characters never or very seldom accept who they are, instead choosing who they want to be, what to do, and also with whom they will be engaged. In several ways they do not conform the social demands of black womanhood. Despite their aspirations being silenced by the male power, there is an attempt to change this positioning. Bhabha's (1994) view of the voice of the margins, in opposition to Spivak (1993)[45], argues that the 'subaltern', the marginalized, and the colonized can speak. The subaltern voice displaces the theories and narratives of the western world. The subaltern agency in his terms emerges as relocation and re-inscription and is found in the ambivalence of speech. The symbols which have been constructed by hegemony, which are present in the selected stories through the male

[45] Later on, in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak (1999: 308-309) confesses that her declaration "the subaltern cannot speak" was an "inadvisable remark". She is aware that the subaltern woman is marked by the "epistemic violence" which silences her by narrating and inscribing a normative and essentialist reality. The problem of complicity in the muting of the subject is also at stake. Contrary to this oppressive panorama, Spivak expresses her interest in the construction of a "counternarrative of woman's consciousness" as well as the questioning of the "fabrication of repression". She also insists on her reading of subaltern speech into a collective arena. Thus, the subaltern as a woman speaks in some way.

dominance, are transformed into signs which are reviewed and re-inscribed by the subaltern, who are oppressed according to their "locus of enunciation". Defining and representing a subaltern group, as Carby (1999: 170) asserts, is always a "contentious issue".

The society provides means for the subject's agency, even if the subject is not able to react against the impositions of the system, as in the cases of Myrna and Roselily. In Aschcroft's (1989) words, they will "articulate their experiences in the language of their oppressors." This postcolonial critic also reminds us that when trying to construct a language of their own, the only tools women had available were those of the colonizer. In this sense, the experience of the politics of oppression and repression is shared not only with the colonized races, but also with women.

Although unhappy, "feeling *wrong*" (9), Roselily assumes the role of woman as a mother and wife. In this narrative, the reader understands the nature of Roselily's reasons or intentions when marrying a black Muslim and the irony of her 'freedom' linked to the veil, the embodiment of a new way of life. Agency focuses exclusively on human activity, which is based on a "rational point of view". The fact that the story mainly takes place in the protagonist's mind reinforces the assumption of an unmediated conception of agency, located inside the mental processes of particular individuals. Agency as "free will", according to action theorists and philosophers mentioned in Ahearn's text, requires "intention", "motivation, responsibility, and expectations of recognition or reward", or "presence of the self". Agency in this sense is located inside mental processes of individuals. Following this line of thinking, some scholars state that certain individuals have agency, while others have none. As 'free will', agency ignores social change related to power relations and conflicts in society. It seems that human intentions, beliefs, and actions are not influenced by culture. Historian Lalu, as Ahearn (2001: 115) notes, criticizes this approach of agency centered on terms of autonomous or authorial subject. Agency in another direction is constituted by the norms, practices, institutions, and discourses through which it is made available.

Agency has also been demonstrated by the capacity of a person to resist the patriarchal status quo. Actions that resisted domination were enacted. In her overview

on agency, Ahearn considers the multiplicity of motivations behind human actions. In Walker's "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", for instance, Myrna's agency[46] is equated with resistance when the protagonist goes against domination and the patriarchal status quo by avoiding motherhood, and also by writing stories. Her actions do not fit the norms of black womanhood. However, a subordinate form of gender identity is enhanced when she allows the use of her body by both her husband and lover. Her lover has also abused her mind. The end of the story as well as its beginning demonstrates a character who has accepted the preconceived notion of a passive wife. She is released from the mental hospital (after trying to kill her husband) and is sat down near the window in their new brick home. Also, the interrogation in the title of the story "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" suggests the idea that in committing a crime, one gains a 'reward'. Ironically, hers is the failure of her personal struggle which denied her psychological freedom and wholeness, as her hands "stilled by cowardice" and her heart, "the heart of a slave" (16) demonstrate. Although not enjoying her status as a non-liberated woman, she makes herself complicit in her own exploitation.

Black women represented by Roselily and Myrna, in Walker's terms (1983: 318) "are more loyal to black men than they are to themselves" and this "dangerous" choice leads them to a "self destructive behavior", as it happens in these two short-stories. Roselily and Myrna's subjectivities are shaped in order to constitute specific fixed identities. Critic Avtar Brah (1996: 125) states that subjectivities are not unitary and are constituted as the product of, among other things, a variety of discourses. And this is precisely why the reader wishes Roselily and Myrna could have done better than marrying. Neither of them finds love with their partners. The husbands of "Roselily" and "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" seem to want their partners to embody the codes of ethics of "the true womanhood" given to the white counterpart. Though submissive and committed to the domestic sphere, neither of them is considered "virtuous".

[46] Agency as a synonym for 'resistance' characterizes the work of scholars in subaltern studies, and feminist theories. Nevertheless, as Ahearn (2001) asserts agency in feminist studies has been a problem, first because there is an attempt to establish the seriousness of women's struggle by pointing out the pervasiveness of male dominance. Second, the constraining power of gender structures and norms has been emphasized in opposition to the resisting capacities of individuals and groups. Traditions of resistance in the past as well as in the present inspired women's activism.

In both stories which dealt with the theme of pornography, female characters' agency is seen in different forms. However, there is an interest in replacing the center, in a reversal of positions. 'Free will' characterizes the black protagonist's agency in "Porn" as well as the one in "Coming Apart". Sexual agency in "Porn" is equated with the female character's motivation for having a healthy relationship with her partner. The stories of the collection *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* provide characters who celebrate the joy of sexual freedom. In "Coming Apart", the female character, first of all does not assume this role of an independent woman as she accepts her husband's limiting perceptions of black women. She makes the choice to 'adjust' and her attitude implies agency of complicity. Nonetheless, the reversal of the position of female characters in both stories is given by the insertion of pornographic material within these narratives. Women become aware that their partners make love to the fantasized women of those magazines. Thus, in "Porn", agency of free will turns into agency of opposition (resistance) when she denies her sexual identity defined by these means. Her reaction is full of resentment, and in light of Frantz Fanon's concern (1952: 222) that there is always resentment in reaction, reaction may not be the best way for her to behave in order to achieve her goals. The confrontation does not always signal conciliation. Accordingly, bell hooks (1990: 15) argues that opposition is not enough. "After one has resisted", as the Afro-American theorist points out, "there is still the necessity to become – to make oneself anew." However, in the first moment, after being in touch with her partner's collection, the female character of "Porn" wishes she could live that "long-term accommodation that protects marriage" (81), which means to forget what she has just seen. But forgetfulness is not an easy resource for this assertive woman.

In "Coming Apart", female agency is also linked to an outcome of social practice. Agency, in the second part of this narrative is associated with neither "free will" nor "resistance", but is instead shaped by social structures. Agency and structure are mutually constitutive. In this sense, language practices are resources for socializing social and cultural competence. The forces of hegemonic authority, a solidarity founded in victimization and suffering may become bound against oppression. The subaltern agency in this short-story may question and also rearticulate the values of society that excludes them.

As the examples of Hurston's and Walker's stories demonstrate, opposition and contingency are the key words to those who conduct their lives at the margins. The interaction of the non-homogeneized subject with the others makes room for the ruptures of binarisms. Polarities should be replaced with partial, limited and unstable truths, so that the notion of 'truth' is fantasy. The linear temporality of cause and effect does not provide negotiation, on the other hand, temporal indeterminacy and metonymy reinforce the notion of partiality. In a liberating approach, as hooks (1990: 28) notes, the colonizing responses should not determine the legitimacy of the subjects in the process of de-centering the oppressive other, and claiming the right to subjectivity. In this sense, the authority of both the colonial discourse and, in the context of this work, the dominant discourse, has to be subverted, questioned or destabilized. In the same vein, Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark* (1990: 90) is conscious of her commitment to promote moving the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject, from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers. Therefore, there can be no way of silencing the omnipresent influence of blackness in the American imagination.

Female characters of Walker's short-stories from both collections exist within multiple contexts, so that the contingent conditions of agency performed by them take us to the debate of the process of identity construction and consequently the destabilization of the defined roles of womanhood. Although forms of essentialism deny difference and erase the practices of domination, new sites are always being opened up. Differences should not be homogeneized. Fragmented subjects reflect different voices and identities within different contexts. The ever 'becoming' subjects are articulated with several positions of identities. The agency/identity relationship encompasses possibilities of activities and interventions at the processes in which reality is constantly transformed by negotiation and establishment of shifting parameters of womanhood. The quest, as hooks (1990: 28) posits, is to find ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory in order to critique essentialism. Agency as related to identity makes room for the creation of new strategies to transform the hierarchical spaces in spaces of productive action and intervention.

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Although contemporary women's fiction is linked to what has been written by women writers during the Harlem Renaissance, several differences are observed in their development of black female characters. In Hurston's and Walker's stories, womanhood is differently constructed within patriarchal, racial and gender relations of power. During the Harlem Renaissance sexual oppression, for instance, was not developed as a theme. In respect to the Afro-American short-story of the 1920s, Bone (1975) remembers that black writers of the local color phase celebrated their differences in being black by abandoning the assimilationist patterns. In this sense, black speech became an expression of ethnicity. Hurston, as Hemenway (1977) states, chose: "to write of the positive effects of black experience because she did not believe that white injustice had created pathology in black behavior". The focus was on the positive aspects of blackness and the rejection of the failure of blacks to fit into American society.

On the other hand, in contemporary times, "it is now possible and necessary", as Toni Morrison (1992: XXX) argues, "to speak about matters of race and gender without the barriers, silences, the embarrassing, grasps in discourse." In the same vein, Alice Walker, in her attempt to deconstruct stereotypes, creates characters such as Roselily, Myrna and the unnamed ones in "Coming Apart" and "Porn", who have their personal experiences mediated by sexual and/or racial oppression. Some of them are able to achieve self-affirmation within the oppressive society. Others like Myrna and Roselily have few conditions to remove their physical and/or psychological boundaries. Their attachment to community, men – lovers or husbands, and children leads them to a world full of responsibilities. The personal experiences of black women characters are circumscribed within certain social positions.

In concluding, however, the literary chain which has been formed by black women's writings does not allow a monolithic whole of black experience. Therefore it is argued that Walker in Gates' sense signifies upon Hurston's texts, themes, and narrative strategies. Although using other strategies and treating similar themes in different ways, the contemporary writer does not negate the past. By extension, the themes dealt with in the past are (re) read through contemporary lenses.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Black women writers speak from distinct social, cultural and historical positionality. As racial and gendered subjects black women speak and write in multiple voices, however not always with the same weight (Henderson 1990: 137). Therefore, the way Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker depict their female characters is directly related to the political position these writers assume within American society. Nevertheless, this approach might lead to the problem of classifying the experience of black women on a basis of fixed and essentializing terms.

Although the conventions of society make an attempt to impose a fixed way of black womanhood, female characters' subjectivity does not conform to identical parameters in Hurston and Walker's short fiction. There is no model to be followed in the depiction of black women characters, so Hurston and Walker embody very distinct counter discourses within their texts. The revisionary and intertextual relationship of Hurston – Walker's narratives, enhances the variety of black women's portrayals in the short-story genre. Differences are accommodated within a universalist framework of womanhood. The question of womanhood takes into account the multifaceted nature of female identity. Therefore, I believe the constructions of womanhood are inter-related to the concepts of identity as well as agency. Consequently, in black literature, the constructions of womanhood are redefined through the multiplicity of representations of black characters. Multiple differences constitute the black female characters. The parameters of womanhood are questioned within the marital relationships in Chapter One, which was dedicated to Hurston's stories: "Under The Bridge", "Sweat", "Spunk" and "The Gilded Six-Bits", and also in Chapter Two with Walker's "Roselily", "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", "Coming Apart" and "Porn".

Hurston, in reproducing the "pure negro town" with characters embedded in their folk tradition, and the black dialect, has focused exclusively on the problems raised within the black community. All Hurston's characters are involved in an internal search for personal freedom. Interestingly, in none of Hurston's narratives, do

Vangie, Delia Jones, Lena and Missie May seem to be affected by racial bounds. The struggle is limited to the constraints of the inner-world conflict. In addition, the domestic space is the site of oppression and repression of female characters' inner feelings and thoughts. At times the home space functions as the catalyst for the characters liberation from the narrow bounds of society. Despite the fact that Vangie, Lena, Delia Jones are married, neither of them accepts the role of having and raising children. Nevertheless, their personal achievement is mirrored by natural forces, elements of nature that are in direct relation to the characters' cycle of life and transformation. Every element in the analyzed short-stories - the narrative construction, the well defined plot with its sequence of events, the use of "showing" technique rather than "telling", the black vernacular English as a vehicle for self-reassurance, a place of struggle in contrast to the standard narrative voice - these elements recur and converge to describe the female character and its growth. Nevertheless, in this female character unit, diversity of characters' portrayals is found. Furthermore, without nature's interventions, female characters are not able to understand the extent of their oppression.

In Signifyin(g) Hurston's texts Walker recognizes the need for a tradition of black women writers. By establishing Zora Neale Hurston as her literary foremother, Walker makes room for the resignification and reconfiguration of the contingencies dealt with by the past writers in the present moment. Repetition with revision determines the dialogical relationship between writers and disrupts the boundaries of the past. There is also an attempt to produce an alternative discourse of black womanhood in which women characters are seen as subjects. In Henderson's view (1990), the dialogic and interlocutory approach of writing reflects not only the relationship with the other, the different, but also an internal dialogue with the plural aspects of each subject, the multiple voices within the subject. The process of becoming visible starts when black subjects express multiple aspects of their identities coming from different locations.

Thus by asserting the relationship between art and activism, Walker in her short-fiction focuses on the ongoing process of discovery and recovery. Female characters live in an outer/inner world conflict, so that they are affected by the racist and sexist conventions of society. As the 'tricksters' in the Afro-American culture,

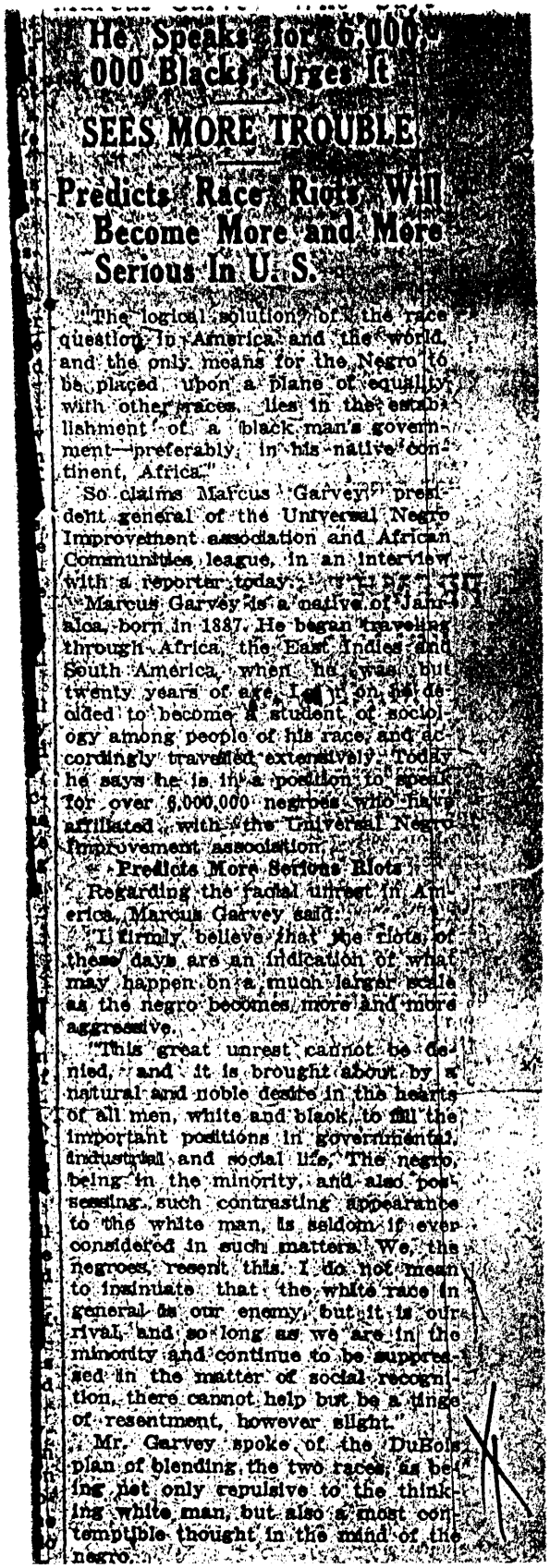
these women characters have a crucial role when breaking up the social conventions and the stereotypes perpetuated through history. Sexual ideologies are interrogated within the racial specificity. Although her characters are more conscious of their oppression and can narrate their experiences by writing or dreaming as Myrna and Roselily, they are not able to become free from the fixed constructions conceived by them. The domestic space does not promote the articulation of differences. These female characters follow the dominant prescriptions, and thus believe in their 'false' constructions which alienate them by their being reduced to the status of things rather than human beings. In this sense, when internalizing these theories of the oppressor, they are not able to constitute the theory of their own liberation. But when dealing with the repressed and overt representations of sexuality in "Coming Apart" and "Porn" through her female protagonists, Walker is concerned with the struggle against the negative parameters of black womanhood. In Freire's sense (2007) the process of characters' liberation occurs in communion with the other.

Walker's narrative structure, the fragmented time in a non-chronological order, the blend of genres within a story, the technique of 'telling' rather 'showing' reflect a fragmented society which urges change. In this sense, Walker's characters of "Coming Apart" and "Porn" are engaged in a process of becoming rather than the fixed notion of being. They speak up about the experience of oppression and condemn pornographic means, so that they are committed not only to the uplift of the group of women, but also to the male awareness of the oppressive tools within American society. The wider condition of womanhood prefigures the confrontation of the circumscriptions of race and gender as constraints to their growth. Nevertheless, Roselily, Myrna and the unnamed characters of "Coming Apart" and "Porn" are aware of the chains which imprison them. But, not all of them reach self-assertion.

Finally, I borrow the words of the Afro-American writer mentioned in the introduction to this work, Toni Cade Bambara (1970: 101) who asserts that the struggle against racism (oppression from external forces) and sexism (generated by both external and internal forces) promotes revolutionary consciousness such that male-female relationships are restructured. In her proposal for construction of Selfhood/Blackhood, gender differentiation has to be displaced. As seen in this work, differentiation in roles is an obstacle to characters' development and growth.

Furthermore, certainty and authority of the dominant have to be subverted, questioned, and destabilized. Following this line of thought, I see Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker as having succeeded in bringing women into the mainstream of life and literature. By extension, both writers in life and art have subverted the notions established about women in their time by writing stories as a means for transforming the dominant misrepresentation of what is considered the ideal of a black woman.

APPENDIX 1



He Speaks for 6,000,000 Blacks, Urges It

SEES MORE TROUBLE

Predicts Race Riots Will Become More and More Serious In U. S.

The logical solution of the race question in America and the world, and the only means for the Negro to be placed upon a plane of equality with other races, lies in the establishment of a black man's government—preferably in his native continent, Africa."

So claims Marcus Garvey, president general of the Universal Negro Improvement association and African Communities league, in an interview with a reporter today.

Marcus Garvey is a native of Jamaica, born in 1887. He began traveling through Africa, the East Indies and South America, when he was but twenty years of age. Later on he decided to become a student of sociology among people of his race, and accordingly travelled extensively. Today he says he is in a position to speak for over 6,000,000 negroes who have affiliated with the Universal Negro Improvement association.

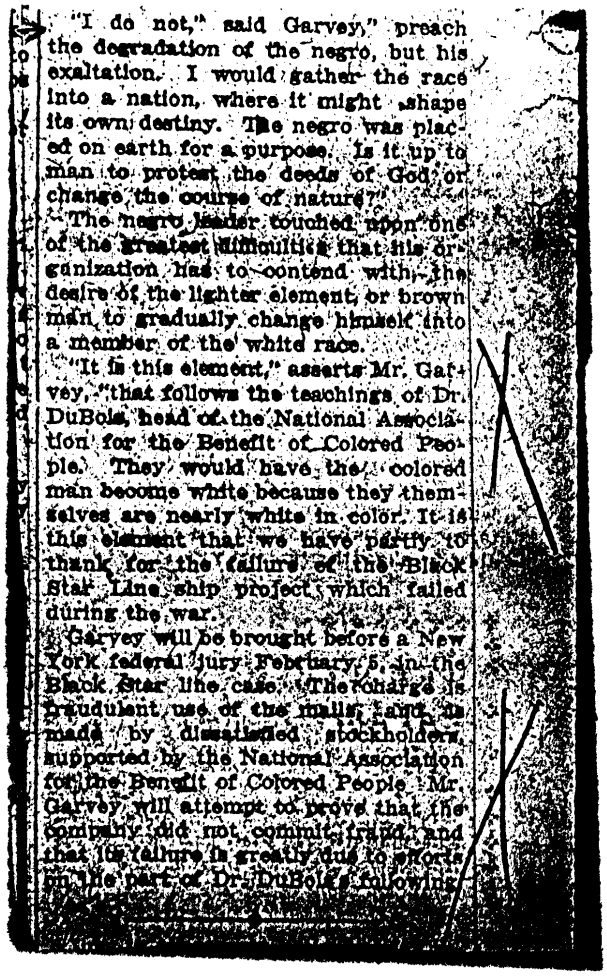
Predicts More Serious Riots

Regarding the racial unrest in America, Marcus Garvey said:

"I firmly believe that the riots of these days are an indication of what may happen on a much larger scale as the negro becomes more and more aggressive.

"This great unrest cannot be denied, and it is brought about by a natural and noble desire in the hearts of all men, white and black, to fill the important positions in governmental, industrial and social life. The negro, being in the minority, and also possessing such contrasting appearance to the white man, is seldom if ever considered in such matters. We, the negroes, resent this. I do not mean to insinuate that the white race in general is our enemy, but it is our rival, and so long as we are in the minority and continue to be suppressed in the matter of social recognition, there cannot help but be a tinge of resentment, however slight."

Mr. Garvey spoke of the DuBois plan of blending the two races, as being not only repulsive to the thinking white man, but also a most contemptible thought in the mind of the negro.



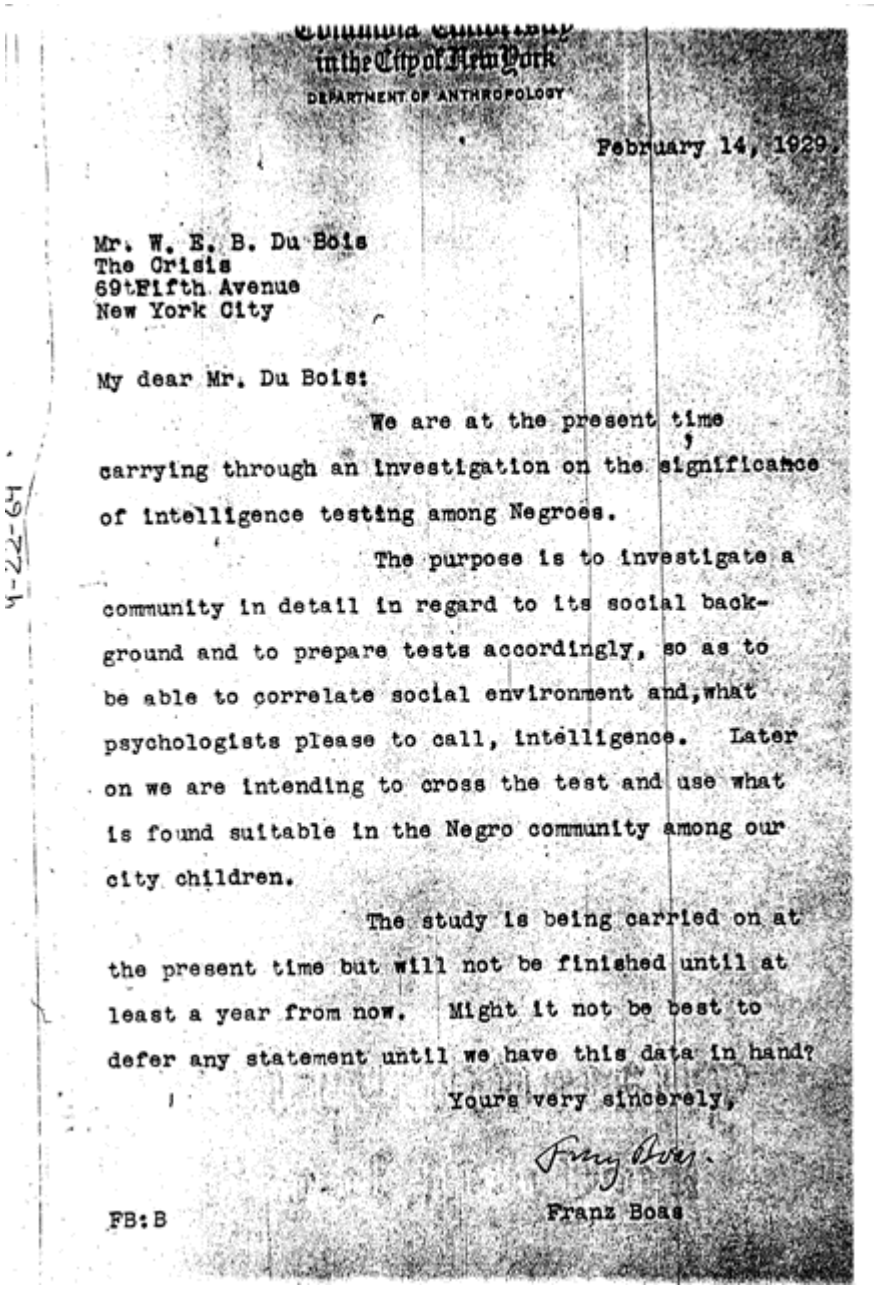
"I do not," said Garvey," preach the degradation of the negro, but his exaltation. I would gather the race into a nation, where it might shape its own destiny. The negro was placed on earth for a purpose. Is it up to man to protest the deeds of God, or change the course of nature?"

The negro leader touched upon one of the greatest difficulties that his organization has to contend with, the desire of the lighter element, or brown man, to gradually change himself into a member of the white race.

"It is this element," asserts Mr. Garvey, "that follows the teachings of Dr. DuBois, head of the National Association for the Benefit of Colored People. They would have the colored man become white because they themselves are nearly white in color. It is this element that we have partly to thank for the failure of the Black Star Line ship project which failed during the war.

Garvey will be brought before a New York federal jury February 5, in the Black Star line case. The charge is fraudulent use of the mails, and is made by dissatisfied stockholders, supported by the National Association for the Benefit of Colored People. Mr. Garvey will attempt to prove that the company did not commit fraud, and that its failure is greatly due to efforts on the part of Dr. DuBois' following.

APPENDIX 2



Columbia University
in the City of New York
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

February 14, 1929.

Mr. W. E. B. Du Bois
The Crisis
69 Fifth Avenue
New York City

My dear Mr. Du Bois:

We are at the present time carrying through an investigation on the significance of intelligence testing among Negroes.

The purpose is to investigate a community in detail in regard to its social background and to prepare tests accordingly, so as to be able to correlate social environment and, what psychologists please to call, intelligence. Later on we are intending to cross the test and use what is found suitable in the Negro community among our city children.

The study is being carried on at the present time but will not be finished until at least a year from now. Might it not be best to defer any statement until we have this data in hand?

Yours very sincerely,

Franz Boas

FB:B

4-22-64

APPENDIX 3

Dr. W.E.B. DuBois
Atlanta University
Atlanta, Ga.

My dear Dr. DuBois:

As Dean of American Negro Artists, I think that it is about time that you take steps towards an important project which you have neglectaed up to this time.

Why do you not propose a cemetery for the illustrious Negro dead? Something like Pere la Chaise in Paris. If you like the idea, may I make a few suggestions to you?

1. That you secure about one hundred acres for the site in Florida. I am not saying this because this is my birth-state, but because it lends itself to decoration easier than any other part of the United States. I think that that was why Edward S. Bok chose Florida for that world famous Bok Tower. I hope that you have seen it, for it is a thing of wondrous beauty. And the thing I want you to note is that two-thirds of the beauty is not in the Tower itself, but in the surroundings. You see, Dr. DuBois, the very woods of Florida afford trees and shrubs free that would cost a fortune north of here, even provided that they could be made to grow. Magnolias, bay, oaks, palms, pines, all free for the taking. Beautiful shrubs while not wild, so plentiful that you could get thousands of cuttings of hibiscus, cretons, oleanders and the like for the mere asking. And dont forget the beautiful, disease and insect repelling campher tree which grows here so free and quickly. By the time that each wellknown Negro contrbuted a tree or two, you would have a place of ravishing beauty. Ceremonies of tree-setting, of course. You would, like Bok, select a site in the lake country of Florida, where thousands of acres are available and as cheap as five to ten dollars an acre on lakes.

2. That there be no regular chapel, unless a tremendous amount of money be secured. Let there be a hall of meeting, and let the Negro sculptors and painters decorate it with scenes from our own literature and life. Mythology and all. Funerals can be held from there as well.

Addition to first suggestion: In Florida, the vegetation would be green the year round, so that visitors during the winter months would not see a desolate looking place. For you must know that the place would attract visiters from all over the world.

3. As far as possible, remove the bones of our dead celebrities to this spot.

4. Let no Negro celebrity, no matter what financial condition they might be in at death, lie in inconspicious forgetfulness. We

must assume the responsibility of their graves being known and honored. You must see what a rallying spot that would be for all that we want to accomplish and do. There one ought also to see the tomb of Nat Turner. Naturally, his bones have long since gone to dust, but that should not prevent his tomb being among us. Fred Douglas and all the rest.

You will naturally ask me why I do not approach Mary McLeod Bethune, since she is right here in town with me. But my objection is that she has never uttered nor written a quotable line, never created any art form, nor even originated an educational idea. She has not even improved on any that have been originated. So I think that she should come into the thing later on. In fact, having made the suggestion to you, I shall do nothing more if you like the idea and take it up. I mean, nothing that is not asked of me. I am no organizer, and I know it. That is why I have never accepted any political appointment, though three have been offered to me since the War began. I like to sit and meditate and go my own way without strings, so that I can say what I want to. That is precious little at present, because the publishers seem frightened, and cut every thing out that seems strong. I have come to the conclusion that for the most part, there is an agreement among them to clamp on the li. But I promise you, that if you like the idea and go ahead, I will fall in behind you and do all that I can.

I feel strongly that the thing should be done. I think that the lack of such a tangible thing allows our people to forget, and their spirits evaporate. But I shall not mention the matter to any one else until you accept or refuse. If you accept, there is no need for me to say anything more, as that will be your province. If you refuse, then maybe Walter White and the N.A.A.C.P. might take it up.

Oh yes, the reason that I suggested so much as 100 acres was because it would prevent white encroachment, and besides, it would afford space for an artist colony if ever the need arose. You can call on me for the first contribution. If you came down to look over sites, I could save you a lot of trouble by driving you around to look, since I know the State pretty well. I think that I know where to get some mahogany from Central America for the inside woodwork of the building.

Your own mind can furnish you plenty of details, so there is nothing more for me to say except congratulations on your stand at San Francisco, and many good wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston

APPENDIX 4

UNDER THE BRIDGE

Zora Neale Hurston

May-May in the Florida outdoors; May in the open house of Luke Mimms and May in the hearts of the three occupants of the house.

Luke, the father-husband, was glowing. He was 58 and God has granted him a pretty wife one summer less 20. His son, Artie the beloved, 22, ha accepted her at last and was at peace with Luke. The world was bright. Fifty-eight is young after all with love.

Vangie was radiating ecstasy from her black eyes and brown skin. She, the homeless waif, was loved by Luke. She was the mistress of his comfortable household and her big stepson had said he was glad she was there. For three weeks he had sulked in sullen silence. But now-since morning- he had not only permitted her to make up to him, he spent his leisure doing errands for her, or displaying his huge strength for her entertainment.

Artie laughed his deep baritone. He was at peace again with his beloved father; his new step-mother was not the ogre he had pictured her before he looked at her. She was pretty. She was obliging and after all she was only a kid, grateful for any little kindness shown her.

"See, Dumplin'", Luke gloried, "didn't Ah say Artie'd be all right t'reckly? Yas, mah boy is awful 'fectionate. He wouldn't hurt a flea- he kain't stay 'way f'um his pappy."

Vangie patted Luke's hand and scolded him prettily.

"It's yo' fault, Honey. You kept callin' Artie 'yo' baby' an'Ah thought he wuz a lil teeny baby chile. Ah never knowed he wuz bigger'n a house. No grown body don't want no stepmama. If he wua a lil boy, Ah figgered Ah'd teach him to love me like he wuz mine."

"Don't mind him," Artie said. "He always calls me 'baby''. Heah Ah is de stronges' man in de country- ain't let nobody th'ow me in a rassle since Ah wuz 16- but Ah'm all he's got- Ah mean till you came."

"Kah! Kah!" Luke laughed boisterously. "Ef Ah had a son 22, you would a' though Ah wuz ole. Dat Artie boy, he's jealous uh me, dat's whut- we been heah by ourselves since he wuz 9."

"Yeah," Artie added- "It sho' made me good and mad to think we been getting' 'long all dese years, den w'en Pop gets 'round 60 he got out to jump up and get married."

"Ain't but 58", Luke threw in hastily.

"Whut's the diff'rence? But Ah ain't mad uh nothing' no mo'. If

youse happy, Ah is. Vangie is a good girl an'Ah'll do all Ah kin to make it nice for her. Ah'm glad not to be foolin'wid the cookin'. Ah got mo' appetite already."

Artie did make things nice for Vangie. There was always plenty of stove wood in the wood box and water in the two brass-bound pails. Her 'grubbed' potatoes for, churned for her, took her fishing with him and even let her go hunting with him when he discovered her enthusiasm for dogs in general, and his pair of 'redbone' hounds in particular.

May was burned to June beneath the Florida sun. Berries hung plump and green in clusters among the lacy chinaberry trees. The woods were full of colors and odors. June for Luke, for Artie, for Vangie- June in the world.

But Luke was not so happy as he had been. Not that he was jealous- he hated himself at the very thought of such a passion-but Artie and Vangie did seem to have a great deal to talk about in which he had no part. They could enjoy themselves for hours together and did not remember he was alone. Artie never seemed to go out 'sparking' on girls anymore- he was forever calling Vangie and she was forever calling him.

Sometimes his great love for the two 'young 'uns' would overflow and wash all baser passions from his soul. Then he would assure himself that all was well. He had prayed for peace and harmony between these two, and God had heard him.

"Youse mah wife", Luke said to her one day at the table and closed his gnarled black hand upon her brown one. This was as near as he ever came to betraying the sore on his heart. Artie looked quickly at his father, searchingly. Vangie did not return the caress, but neither did she draw her hand away. So Luke was satisfied.

"Artie, Baby, don't think 'cause Ah married, dat you kain't git yo' shear. Youse haff an'- you kin take over yo' 20 acres whenever you gits ready an' git married when so evah you please. Pinkie Turk wuz jes' axin' 'bout you."

"Thank you, Pop, but Ah reckon the place can stay together lak it is. No hurry a-tall- Ah ain't in no hurry to jump over the broomstick wid nobody."

During supper that night the dogs were rather noisy- moonless black night with the alligators booming from the Lake Belle and whippoorwill crying in the orange grove-

"Past- Ned, old boy, put 'im up!" Artie called out to his 'tree' hound. "Go git 'im, Beulah!" to his 'strike'. To Vangie he explained: "Them dogs knows it's a good hunting night- b'leeve Ah'll air 'em out if Ah kin git Pop go 'long."

"Nope. Son. Pop's too tired. Git Dan Carter to go wid you."

Oh, lemme go wid you, Artie," Vangie begged. "Ah ain't never been mah life."

Sure you kin, Vangie."

"Naw, Dumplin', you better not," Luke objected quickly. "You mought git snake-bit."

"Shucks, she kin wear yo' boots," Artie put in.

"Oh, Ah wants to go!" wailed the girl.

"But Honey," Luke contended, "dey mought flush a catamount."

"Aw, we ain't going' in a hammock," Artie retorted. So Luke,

having offered every objection but the real one, gave in.

"You reckon any boogers goin' ter git me, Artie? You sho you kin take keer uh me?' she appealed.

"Sho' Ah kin take keer uh you, Vangie, and Ah wouldn't leave you go if Ah couldn't."

So Vangie drew on her husband's boots and followed Artie into the black woods.

Luke crept to bed alone with the dishrag under his pillow- for that is a powerful charm to keep the marriage bed inviolate.

He heard the deep voices of the hounds 'treeing' far away. The late moon hung low and red when the two others returned, tired but happy. But Luke could never hear a baying hound again or look at a low, full moon without that painful heart contraction he had felt that night in the vastness of his bed alone while his wife strode thru the dark woods, depending upon, looking to someone other than himself for protection.

By eight o'clock next morning he trod the village road to End-Or. He hurried to the gate of Ned Bickerstaff to get a 'hand'.

"Does you want dis han' for hate, for to make money come to yuh, for to put yo'enemy on his back, or to keep trouble f'um yo'do'?" the old male witch asked.

"Ah-Ah jes'wants to fix it so's nobody kain't git 'tween me and Vangie."

"Does you want him daid, or crippled up fuh life, uh jes' fixed so he kain't stay heah?"

"None of 'em. There ain't no man- now. Ah jes' wants to sure there never been one."

Bickerstaff made him a small parcel sewed up in red flannel and received $10 in return.

"Take dis, Luke Mimms. Long as you got dis, nobody can't never cross you. Wait till sundown, sprinkle it wid a drop or two of water and nobody kin git twixt you 'thout water gitting' him. But don't sprinkle it tell youse sho' you want something'done, cause it's bound to come after the sprinklin'. And don't never take it off once you put it, else it will work the other way."

Luke hurried home to his fields and toiled vigorously all day beside his big brown boy. Like the roots, his hands were gnarled, like the soil, his skin was brownish black. Dirt of the dirt, he appeared to the observer. But like the moist black earth he worked, he held within everything of good and evil. He watched Artie from the corner of his wrinkled eyelids. How he hated that big form that threw its shadow between Vangie and him! How he loved his dear boy, his baby now grown to such splendid manhood! Aha! In his pocket was the little red bag that by its magic made their years equal and enlarged his shrunken old form of that of Artie, the brute magnificent. The dull brown earth clod was alive and warm with the fire of love and hate. So he sang in his quavering old voice:

"There's a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole,
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sinsick soul."

He trusted to his 'hand' and grew cheerful again.

"Artie, le's we all knock off now. Hit's mighty hot an' de bear's bout to git me. Le's put some 'millions tuh cool and drive in to town."

"What fur? Oh, all right, Pop, Ah'll go feed de hauses and change up a bit. You g' wan git dressed- Ah'll hitch up whilst you puts de melons in springhouse."

Vangie waved them off

cheerfully and went on with her work.

On the road they laughed, told jokes, commented on timber and crops, fertilizers and stock, laughed, and joked some more and finally arrive at Orlando.

Then Luke revealed the object of his trip. He wanted to but things for Vangie, “Artie, she kin have everything to make a ‘oman proud.” He stopped, embarrassed, for a moment. “You an’ her is the same in mah heart. You know Ah allus tried to give you what yo’ lil heart wanted. Ah allus ast Gawd to fut it so’s Ah could. To yo’ dyin’ day Ah wants it to be so. An’ now, wid her it’s the same. You- You doan’ mind, do you, Artie boy?”

There was a childish, almost pathetic look in his eyes as he looked up into his son’s face, and Artie felt a disturbance in his breast. He put one arm quickly about his father’s shoulder, then drew it away and roughly tied the horse to the great oak tree.

“Oh, course, Papa, Ah wants you to do for Vangie whutever you so desired. You been a good papa to me. Ah wants you to be jes’ as happy as a king. Whut you got in yo’ mind to buy her?”

They advanced to the door of the store.

“Well, Ah thought Ah’d buy her a new churn, a store broom, and bolt uh new calliker.”

“You reckon she wants dat? Artie asked skeptically.

“Sho! All womenfolks do. Ah useter give yo’ ma a bolt uh calliker ev’ry Chris-mas.”

He shopped eagerly, giggling like a school-girl. Artie shopped also, but his purchase was made without any flourish, in another part of the store, and Luke in his excitement asked no questions.

They drove away homeward, but at the last store before leaving town Luke dismounted and bought a large stock of peppermint candy- red and white striped.

“She’ll be tickled to death to git dis candy,” Luke jubiliated.

“You ought to’ ve got dat box kind of candy fuh her,” Artie commented gently.

“Whut! Spen’ a whole dollah fuh a teeny lil box when Ah kin git dis great big stick fuh uh dime?”

At home, Vangie had supper ready, and as soon as the horses were unhitched and fed, they gathered about the table. Then the old lover slyly arose and presented his gifts. First the churn, a big brown earthen affair- and Vangie exclaimed happily over it, but there was a little disappointment in her voice which Luke would have noticed had he not been so consumed by the joy of giving. Then the calico, which she received a little happier, and last the broom and candy, upon which he bumped her mouth awkwardly with his own.

“Oh, youse mighty good to me, Honey,” she told him. “Ah reckon Ah got de bestest husband’ in Floridy.”

Luke went beaming back to his seat.

Artie nonchalantly tossed a parcel in Vangie’s lap.

“Thass a lil somethin’ f ‘um me, too, Vangie. You been waitin’ on me and doin’ fuh me ever since you been heah, an’ Ah ain’t never give you a cent. Ah’ll be buyin’ you something’ all along if you keep on lookin’ after me.”

It turned out to be a white wool skirt and a pink silk blouse. Poor Vangie was delighted and could not keep the ectasy out of her eyes and voice.

“Oh, oh, Artie!” she cried, grasping his hand. “Youse so good to me!”

She held the two garments you to measure and hugged them gleefully.

“Artie, Artie!” she all but wept. “How you know whut mah heart wanted so?”

“Ah, Ah would a bought it fuh you, Vangie, if Ah had knowed,” said Luke miserably and remained silent for the rest of the meal.

That night Luke sprinkle his ‘hand’ and put it on.

The old sun, so careless of human woes, shone brightly every day. If Luke wept in his hell of misgivings, the sun came up and sped across the blue, glorying hotly in its strength and power, just the same. Old trees rotted at the heart, and the sun nourished young saplings that quickly buried the struggling old forest monarch in their shadows. The sun went on and on to his sky bed at night, pulling the gray and purple hangings of his couch about him and slept, indifferent to human tears.

Artie and Vangie did nothing that Luke could put his finger upon as unfaithful. It was just their lowered eyes, their happy gazes that hurt him. He did not believe that they had desecrated his hearth, but he could feel their love like a presence occupying the house. It pricked his old skin painfully as soon as he entered. He could not rage, he could not kill. He loved them both till it all but suffocated him. In this great love he saw they suffered too- that Artie loved him greatly, for he laid down his love for his father’s sake. But for how much longer? Luke asked himself.

The sun flung August hotly down upon him.

Vangie dressed every Sunday in the skirt and blouse that Artie had bought her. Luke could not only explain this by the fact that Artie had given them. He, of the calico age, could not understand the tastes of the age of silk.

Oh, the house was unbearable! His suspicious had filled every chink and cranny. He began to approach sheltered places stealthily and creep thru the orange grove. Then he would hastily retreat lest surprise them.

“Tell you whut”, he began one evening. “We kain’t do nothing’to de crops fuh a week uh moe- le’s we all shut up de houde, turn de stock on de pashcher an’ go on a fishing’ trip up de riavah!”

“Ooh! Le’s we all!” Vangie echoed.

“Ah kin stan’ a whole heap uh dat, Papa.”Artie laughed and stretched hi mighty limbs. “Le’s start t’ morrer.”

The awakening sun threw a flaming sword upon the St. John’s River the next morning as they embarked.

The camping necessities were piled high in the center of the large rowboat before Artie, who rowed. Vangie was perched in the low stern, facing him with Luke at his back in the high prow seat.

Downriver they flew under Artie’s mighty strokes. The sun lost its redness as it climbed. The hounds, with forepaws on the gunwale, barked defiances to river alligators, woods and would not be stilled in their freedom.

“How fur we goin’, Artie?”, Vangie asked.

"Oh, way past de 'Coast Line' bridge," he answered. "Thass all right, ain't it, Pop?"

"Ah, sho', sho'," the old man answered.

"We been down there heaps uh times on account game," Artie went on. "Dere's panthers, catamounts, deers and bears in dem woods 'bout 20 miles off."

"Ooh, Ah'll be skeered," vangie shuddered.

"No need to be- Ah'm heah," Artie answered quickly. "Ole wile cat 'bout me when Ah wuz a lil shaver but Papa kilt him- fought him wid his pocketknife- Ain't he never tole you?"

"Naw, indeedy, please- Luke, tell me."

"Oh, tain't much to tell, Vangie. Hit wuz in dese same woods we gwine to now. Artie allus did love to follow me 'round traipsin' 'long, holdin' on to mah finger wid his lil fat han's. His ma useter cry an'ay he loved me better'n he done her … Well, Ah had some traps set 'round in dem swamps an'he cried to go, so Ah took him. Way down in dat hammock we flushed a wile cat an' she leaped right at mah boy, but Ah wuz too quick fur her. Ah got in betwixt an' she landed on me. An' Ah had to fight wid mah han's an' a pocketknife. Ah kilt her, but she clawed me up so's de doctah had to take a whole heap up stitches."

He displayed his arms and chest.

Vangie eyes grew misty.

"An' fuh dat," Artie said flippantly, but with a husky voice, "Ah'm goin' ter let him be mah papa till Ah die."

They all laughed excessively to hide their feelings.

The sun quieted the dogs, sweated the people, and fried the paint on the boat.

Artie rowed on, his tremendous muscles bunching, stretching, bunching, stretching, as he bent to the oar. As he rowed, he sang. The Negro melodies rolled out his chest in deep baritone and rumbled over the river to be lost among the trees. Deep vibrating tones, high quavering minors. He sang on and on, filling Vangie's ears with music, her eyes with his body and her heart with love of him.

Luke saw it all. His son's back was toward him, huge, till it swelled and swelled until it blotted out the boat, the river, the woods, the earth, the sun for Luke. The universe held nothing but Artie singing to Vangie and caressing her with his eyes. His old skin pricked and crept uncomfortably.

But, he gloated, the 'hand' would hold. They could but bruise themselves against the bars.

Hell? Yes. Fire? No. Just one woman, two men in a boat- two men who love her-two men who love her- two men who love each other.

They suffer from the heat- Artie, rowing, most of all. Vangie wets her handkerchief in the river and spreads it over Artie's head under his hat. His arteries swell, her hand trembles. Their faces are close- their lips nearly meet. Involuntarily Luke grasps for his 'hand' and all but faints. It was gone. God knows where. String must have worn in two.

The two hours for Luke crawled on up the river and over him with hot brassy feet. The sun was arching toward his bed.

"Ah' m tired," Vangie gasped.

Not much longer now," Artie comforted her. "Wese goin' ter

camp jes' beyond' de bridge - 'bout three miles mo.'"

"Luke's sleep," Vangie observed.

Artie glanced over his shoulder – "Guess 'tis pretty hahd on de ole man. We'll camp soon."

But Luke was not asleep. He slumped there with closed eyes lest they see his tears. His first wife had been merely a good worker- he had never loved any woman but Vangie. His whole life had been lived for his boy, so that Artie might know nothing but happiness. And now, that which would give Artie happiness would at one stroke rob him of both wife and son! His heart contracted so painfully that he gasped and opened his eyes.

The bitterness of life struck him afresh. He blamed them. He didn't. Poor creatures! Designing devils! He closed his eyes again.

The bridge was in sight. And now he noticed the sun was setting. The sky darkened: the fleecy clouds soaked up more color and yet more- magenta, purple, blush, rose with light shafts hurled across the heavens from the west as if the sky monarch on retiring would disperse his train.

With every pull on the oars, Artie leaned nearer to Vangie and she, forgetting, was leaning toward him. He, with the rebirth of the world in his eyes- the eternal torch lighter. She inclining her taper to his light with closed eyes and all-consuming love. All who ran might read.

The bridge was at hand. Wide, stone pillared, crouching low over the river. As they shot under, a train rushed screeching overhead.

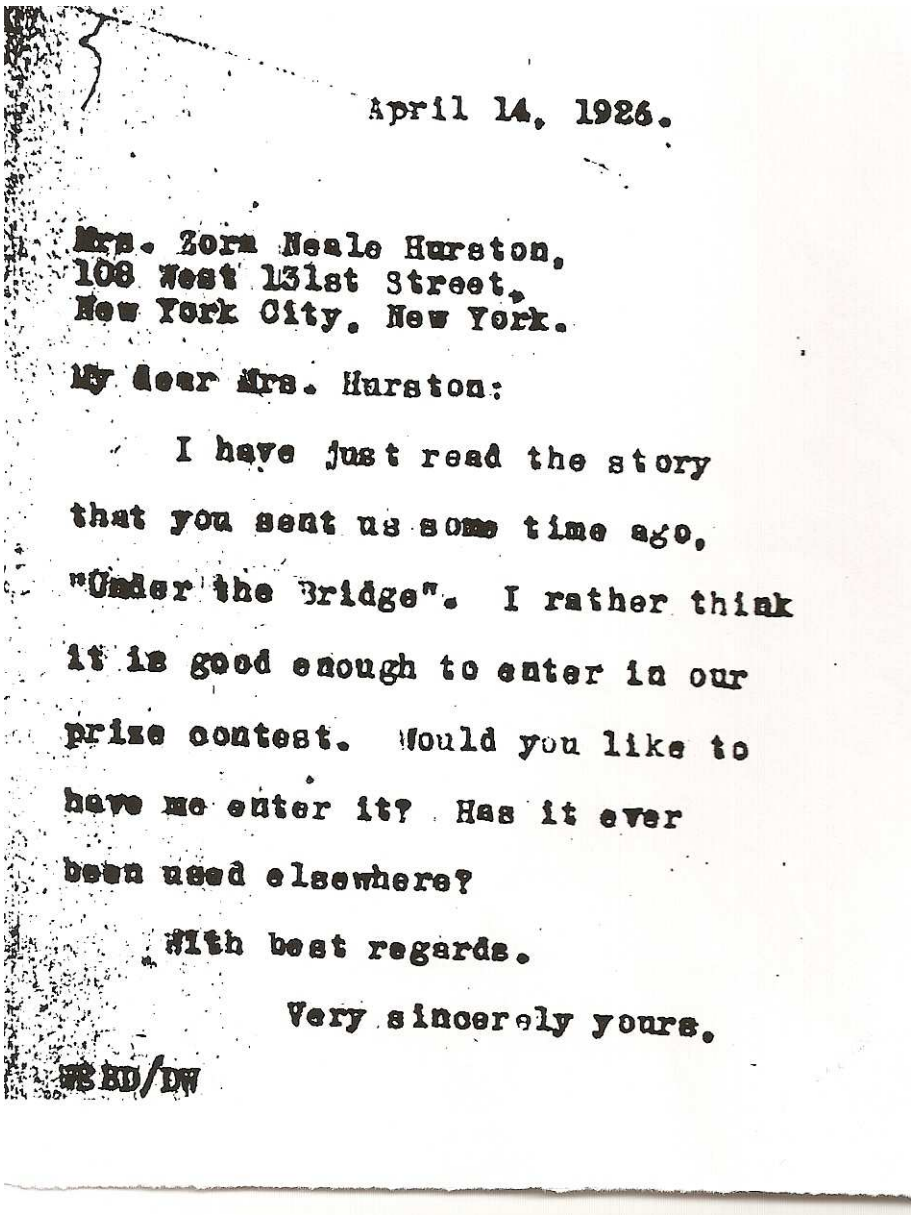
Here in the darkness, Artie drew in the oars and let the boat drift slowly. His hand touched Vangie's, his feverish lips touched her hungry ones, and lazily, slowly the boat was wafted out again into the light.

They saw at once that Luke was not- and both fell a-weeping. Artie forgot his oars and the boat floated where it would upon the stream.

The indifferent sun, in bed, drew round his purple curtain and slept.

On the river they wept on. The boat drifted on, for Destiny, the grim steersman, had seized the rudder and they were bound – whither?

APPENDIX 5



April 14, 1926.

Mrs. Zora Neale Hurston,
108 West 131st Street,
New York City, New York.

My dear Mrs. Hurston:

I have just read the story that you sent us some time ago, "Under the Bridge". I rather think it is good enough to enter in our prize contest. Would you like to have me enter it? Has it ever been used elsewhere?

With best regards.

Very sincerely yours,

WSBD/DW

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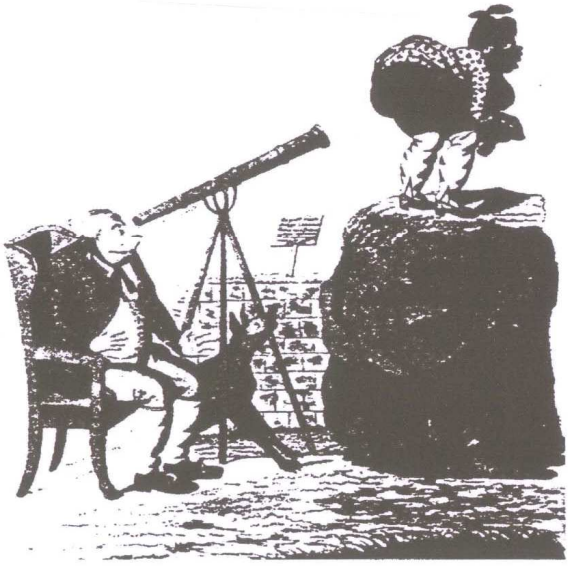
ILLUSTRATION 3



German caricature of man viewing the Hottentot Venus through a telescope, early nineteenth century.

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ILLUSTRATION 4

In: HALL, Stuart. *Representation – Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage, 1997, p. 264.

ILLUSTRATION 5