

Relationships to Parents, Men, Female Friends and Influence of Culture Groups:
Janie's, Magdalena's and Susannah's Struggles for Self-identification and Personal Freedom
in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Alice Walker's *By the Light of
My Father's Smile*

Term Paper
for the Seminar on
Womanist Writing in North America: Cultural Theory and Literary Practice

Professor Anne Adams

Submitted by
Wendy Stollberg

Summer Semester 2000

CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	2
II.	JANIE'S STEPS TOWARDS SELF-AWARENESS AND SOUL FULFILLMENT IN <i>THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD</i>	3
III.	MAGDALENA'S AND SUSANNAH'S STRUGGLES FOR SELF- IDENTIFICATION IN <i>BY THE LIGHT OF MY FATHER'S SMILE</i>	13
IV.	COMPARISON OF THE FACTORS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED JANIE'S, MAGDALENA'S AND SUSANNAH'S DEVELOPMENTS	18
V.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	25

I. INTRODUCTION

While doing anthropological research, the African American writer Alice Walker discovered works by Zora Neale Hurston, a Black novelist, folklorist and anthropologist who lived in the Harlem Renaissance. During her time, Hurston went unheard by the society in which she lived and worked in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. So it was Alice Walker fifty years later who found Hurston's voice and gave it to a modern-day society. Walker was fascinated by Hurston's works, and finally found what she had been looking for since she started her career as an artist – a model for herself. The artist Zora Neale Hurston has given Alice Walker self-assurance, has enriched and enlarged her view of existence. Walker's tribute to Hurston's works is manifested in *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing*, a Hurston reader edited by Alice Walker. In this reader, Walker states her admiration for Hurston's most famous novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

I am still amazed that Hurston wrote it in seven weeks; that it speaks to me as no novel, past or present has ever done; and that the language of the characters, that “comical nigger ‘dialect’“ that has been laughed at, denied, ignored, or “improved” so that white folks and educated black folks can understand it, is simply beautiful. There is enough self-love in that one book – love of community, culture, traditions - to restore a world. Or create a new one. (Walker, p. 2)

It is not only this self-love that both authors share; Walker and Hurston have a similar background, with both of them coming from rural areas in the south (Hurston from Eatonville, Florida, and Walker from Eatonton, Georgia). Both authors are concerned with empowering the powerless and liberating the oppressed; they write about everyday folks, particularly women - their lives, their struggles, their joys and their culture.

Hurston in her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Walker in *By the Light of My Father's Smile* describe the lives of women who develop the ability to express their own personal selves. Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and the Robinson sisters Magdalena and Susannah regardless of their peculiar burdens, must inevitably struggle with some of the same life problems to find their own personality and personal freedom. Before they can autonomously express their own identity, the personalities of all three women are affected by certain people, incidents and cultural aspects.

In the following, the term paper will accompany the three women on their way to self-awareness, self-respect and self-expression. It will be of interest in what respects the conditions of the women differ and how each individual reacts to the external influences on them. Thus, the women's relationships to their parents, to men and to female friends but also the impact of certain culture groups will be looked at and evaluated whether they are helpful or rather obstacles in the women's claiming their autonomous selves. The first part of the paper will deal with Janie's difficulties of becoming a self-aware woman, the second one with Magdalena's and Susannah's struggles. Finally, the factors that have influenced the developments of the three women will be compared.

II. JANIE'S STEPS TOWARDS SELF-AWARENESS AND SOUL FULFILLMENT IN *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

... woman forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly. (Hurston, p. 9)

Janie, the little Black girl who grows up with her grandmother, has a romantic dream about marriage, love and life. This dream is crucial in the novel because Janie – consciously or unconsciously - judges all of her subsequent experiences by the vision she had at the pear tree:

She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid. (Hurston, p. 24)

Janie wants to act and to do things according to her dream; she feels the need to explore the answers to the life questions symbolized by this lyric encounter with the pear tree. But there are obstacles in her way that make it hard for her. The first person who diminishes Janie's dreams and lets them appear immature and unstable is the woman who has parental authority about her – her grandmother.

As the author would have it, the person who seemingly wrongs Janie the most is her grandmother, Nanny Crawford. Whenever the novel is discussed, Nanny is often hurriedly dismissed as one of those desecrators of the pear tree who spit on Janie's idea of "marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think" by cluttering up her life with

materialism, security, and other stifling trappings supposedly necessary to a happy marriage. While Nanny is guilty of limiting her granddaughter by shackling her to a middle-aged farmer – all in the name of safety and “protection” – her intentions are wholly good, her actions understandable, her advice well-meant. (Howard, p. 403)

From her experience Nanny concluded that “De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see.”¹ As a slave, Nanny was forced to submit to her master’s sexual whims. The result was Leafy, a baby-girl. Shortly after the birth, Nanny was maltreated by her white mistress. Although Nanny had not fully recovered from the birth, she had to flee with her baby. Nanny devoted all her life to her daughter, determined that Leafy should have a better life than she herself had. When this failed (Leafy was raped by the school teacher.), her little granddaughter who Leafy left into her care before she ran off is Nanny’s only hope to fulfill her dreams. As the person who raises her, Nanny feels that it is both her right and her obligation to impose her aims and her ideas of what is important in life on Janie:

“...Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin’ on high, but they wasn’t no pulpit for me... Ah been waitin’ a long time, Janie, but nothin’ Ah been through ain’t too much if you just take a stand on high ground lak Ah dreamed.” (Hurston, pp. 31 and 32)

Now it is Janie’s turn to speak Nanny’s sermon. Nanny is convinced that a position of security in society and “sittin’ on high”, things she herself was denied in life, are necessary to guarantee a satisfactory life. That is why she is so eager to find a respectable husband with property for Janie. But Nanny’s aspirations clearly contradict Janie’s. Nanny is sure that “Oh to be a pear tree – *any* tree in bloom! With kissing bees singing of the beginning of the world!”² will only bring problems. Too much frightened that her granddaughter will be hurt and broken like her, Nanny does not allow Janie to express her own personality, to follow her dreams and to find out about love.

From the beginning on, Janie feels that other features, not security and economic advancement, but freedom, love and independence, should be the features to determine her life. Still, at the age of sixteen she must obey her grandma and marry up the social ladder. “The vision of Logan Killicks was desecrating the pear tree, but Janie didn’t know how to tell Nanny that. She merely hunched over and pouted at the floor.”³ Janie already knows that she will

¹ Hurston, p. 29

² Hurston, p. 25

³ Hurston, p. 28

not lead a happy life with Killicks and that he will not match her notion of love, life and freedom, but she nevertheless follows Nanny's demands and marries this old farmer with sixty acres of land.

During her life with Killicks, Janie worries about love and her inability to feel even kind towards him. But Killicks is too set in his ways to treat Janie like a real woman. It seems like he is not really interested in her, but rather measures her worth in terms of how much work she can do and how much time she spends doing it. Despite that, Janie naively hopes in the first few months of their marriage that love to Killicks will still come in time. But after about a year nothing has changed, and Janie becomes more and more dissatisfied with her life and cannot bear her living conditions any more. "She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman."⁴ This point marks Janie's transition from Nanny's child to a woman, not only in the biological and social sense, but also in the sense that Nanny is talking about when she says that the Black women is the "mule of the world". When Killicks demands that Janie besides her housework do more and more of the demeaning work around the farm, Janie, talking back and rebelling, shows that she has not given in to a life like this and does not want to accept the "mule role" of Black women:

"Ah'm just as stiff as you is stout. If you can stand not to chop and tote wood Ah reckon you can stand not to git no dinner. 'Scuse mah freezolity, Mist' Killicks, but Ah don't mean to chop de first chip."(Hurston, p. 45)

Luckily, at this point, Janie meets Jody Starcks, an ambitious young man on his way to make his fortune in the small, all-Black community of Eatonville, Florida. Although Janie has again the feeling that this man just like Killicks does not represent "sun-up and pollen and blooming trees", she still for "change and chance" and in search of that better life beyond the horizon strikes out and goes with him⁵. Janie sees in her leaving with Jody the only opportunity to escape her dull life with Killicks and to start a new one. But she fails to realize or perhaps does not want to realize how much Starcks' values resemble her grandmother's: As Nanny dreamed of an elevated pulpit, Jody aims to become a "big voice" and a "big ruler of things"⁶.

⁴ Hurston, p. 44

⁵ See Hurston, p. 50.

⁶ See Hurston, pp. 48 and 49.

And really, Jody Starcks translates his aims into action. He becomes the mayor of the town as well as a storekeeper and is shown a lot of respect by the townspeople. As a logical result to Jody, Janie's role is reduced to being the "Mayor's wife" and not just another ordinary woman of the town and to make this clear to everybody else. Jody really only uses his wife as a show piece. He enthrones Janie and grants her the "front porch existence" of Nanny's dreams. Janie, however, does not appreciate her role designated by her husband, but wants to participate as "normal woman" in the life in town. Although Janie is surrounded by more than one person now (in contrast to her life with Nanny and with Logan Killicks), she is very unhappy to be forbidden by Jody to deal personally with them and feel as part of their community.

Janie loved the conversation and sometimes she thought up good stories on the mule, but Joe had forbidden her to indulge, He didn't want her talking after such trashy people. "You'se Mrs. Mayor Starcks, Janie. I god, Ah can't see what uh woman uh yo' sability would want tuh be treasurin' all dat gumgrease from folks dat don't even own de house dey sleep in... (Hurstons, p. 85)

When Joe Starcks is elected mayor, the crowd wants to hear a few words from "Mrs. Mayor Starcks" (Janie no longer has her own identity.), but Jody does not allow her to answer, explaining that her place is at home and "speech-makin'" is nothing women are able to. It is very hard for Janie to put her face to a smile after that. She has never thought about making a speech in front of other people, but the way Jody denied it to her showed her that she and Jody have very different views on life and that her position as the mayor's wife only leads to isolation.⁷ Janie's first public utterance, where she praises Jody for having bought the mule, is admired by the men sitting on the porch. ("Yo' wife is uh born orator, Starcks... She put jus' de right words tuh our thoughts.")⁸ This short speech emphasizes the obstacles Janie as a woman faces in her struggle to gain a voice in a culture that places such a premium on speaking.

By now, Janie has realized that during her marriage to Jody she has not lived at all in accordance with her dreams. She did whatever Jody wanted her to do, she hushed whenever he did not want her to say anything. But when he finally slaps her because of a bad-tasting meal she prepared, Janie becomes aware that she has no feelings for him for him anymore.

⁷ See Hurston, pp. 69 and 70.

⁸ See Hurston, pp. 91 and 92.

Janie stood where he left her for unmeasured time and thought. She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her. Then she went inside there to see what it was. It was her image of Jody tumbled down and shattered. But looking at it she saw that it never was the flesh and blood figure of her dreams. Just something she had grabbed up to drape her dreams over. In a way she turned her back upon the image where it lay and looked further. She had no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man, neither any glistening young fruit where the petals used to be. She found that she had a host of thoughts she had never expressed to him, and numerous emotions she had never let Jody know about. Things packed up and put away in parts of her heart where he could never find them. She was saving up feelings for some man she had never seen. She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them. (Hurstun, pp. 112 and 113)

Here, Janie seems to remember the time when Jody asked her to come with him. Although her inner voice told her that Jody was not the man of her dreams she hoped for a good time with him that could take her to the far horizon. Now, she understands that she must trust herself when she wants to make her dreams become real. Therefore, she saves up her feelings and thoughts - her real personality - for a man who will understand her and take her as the woman she really is. Janie does not give up the quest for a suitable companion and a place where she can fulfill her dreams. For her life with Joe, she divides herself now into two parts – the one is the mayor's wife that Jody wants and knows, the other is the person Janie Jody has never known. It seems as though this slap, ironically, has functioned as a new impulse for Janie not to let go of her dreams but to cling to them and work on their realization.

From now on Janie does not hush every time as Jody wants her to, but speaks out what she thinks. And one day she does what she has never done before – she thrusts herself into the conversation of the men sitting on the porch.

“Sometimes God gits familiar wid us womenfolks too and talks His inside business. He told me how surprised He was ‘bout y’all is goin’ tuh be if you ever find out you don’t know half as much ‘bout us as you think you do. It’s so easy to make yo’self God Almighty when you ain’t got nothin’ tuh strain against but women and chickens.” (Hurstun, p. 117)

Janie attacks the rationale behind Jody's chauvinism. She identifies with another woman and is brave enough to criticize men and their male-centered views. But Janie goes even further: One day in the store, Janie does not cut a plug of tobacco straight. As a result of this, Jody starts to make comments about Janie's age and looks. Because he threatens her selfhood with his words, she does the same to him. In front of people in or around the store she talks right into Jody's face:

“... Ah ain’t no young gal no mo’ but den Ah ain’t no old woman neither. Ah reckon Ah looks mah age too. But Ah’m uh woman every inch of me, and Ah know it. Dat’s uh whole lot more’n *you* kin say. You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but ‘tain’t nothin’ to it but yo’ big voice. Humph! Talkin’ about *me* lookin’ old! When you pull down yo’ britches, you look lak de change uh life.” (Hurston, pp. 122 and 123)

Janie is sick of being quiet and passive when Jody attacks her. Still, she does not do any more than Jody does in criticizing his outward appearance and being realistic about his age. But she completely unmans him. Janie broke her role – she humiliated Jody in front of his peers when it was supposed to be her place to make him look good. With her talking back she demonstrates that women should have the same rights like men and should not accept accusations that could fit men the same way. She does not show consideration for Jody anymore – her husband who has never taken her feelings, views and thoughts into account either. As he lies on his deathbed, Janie confronts Jody with even more painful truths:

“You done lived wid me for twenty years and you don’t half know me atall. And you could have but you was so busy worshipping’ de works of yo’ own hands, and cuffin’ folks around in their minds till you didn’t see uh whole heap uh things yuh could have.” (Hurston, pp. 132 and 133)

“All dis bowin’ down, all dis obedience under yo’ voice – dat ain’t whut Ah rushed off down de road tuh find out about you.” (Hurston, p. 134)

Wall comments on this passage:

“Her attack on her dying husband is not an act of gratuitous cruelty: it is an essential step toward self-reclamation. Moreover, in terms of the narrative, the deathbed episode posits a dramatic break with Janie’s past. She is henceforth a different woman.” (Wall, p. 187).

This step towards self-reclamation follows a mirror scene. Here, Janie discovers that “The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place.”⁹ This represents a dramatic break with her past and a start in a new life governed by herself. All her life, Janie has been interested in love, a life in a community and personal freedom while all the people who have controlled her life thus far – her grandmother, Logan Killicks and Jody Starcks – have been interested only in property and wealth. Janie feels that she has been betrayed by these people in her life, but especially by Nanny.

Here Nanny had taken the biggest thing God ever made, the horizon – for no matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you – and pinched it in to such

⁹ See Hurston, pp. 134 and 135.

a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter's neck tight enough to choke her. She hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love. (Hurstun, p. 138)

Howard argues about Janie's hatred towards her grandmother:

She is able to hate Nanny, then, with a passion that surprises and disappoints the reader, and that does the grandmother a grave injustice. Years later, she conveniently blames her past unhappiness, even her life with her second husband, Jody Starcks, on her grandmother. (Howard, p. 410)

On the one hand, it is a great progression that Janie breaks with her dissatisfying previous life and that she realizes that there have been three people who have ruled her life. None of them asked her about her feelings and thoughts, but all three had suppressed them and forced Janie to live the way of life they had constructed for her. From now on, Janie is determined not to let this ever happen again. On the other hand, as Howard pointed out, Janie does her grandmother wrong, when she blames all her life on her. It is hard to understand why Janie is able to hate Nanny like that. It only shows that Janie has not really understood Nanny's reasons and the fact that she only meant well and had Janie's best interests at heart. Janie is unable to see this, maybe because she is too occupied with beginning a self-focused life.

From Starck's death on, Janie begins to let herself live, with no boundaries holding her back. Janie's third husband is the younger Tea Cake, a wandering laborer and gambler who worries little about money or material possessions. In him, Janie has found the man of her dreams:

He looked like the love thoughts of women. He could be a bee to a blossom – a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps. Crushing aromatic herbs with every step he took. Spices hung about him. He was a glance from God. (Hurstun, p. 161)

Janie does not care that Tea Cake's status is below her own, she does not care about people's objections to their marriage regarding age and class status. She is consequent with her decision to do what she is convinced is the best for her and not listen to what other people tell her. It is love that counts for her: "... Dis ain't no business proposition, and no race after property and titles. Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means tuh live mine."¹⁰ Although the "self-crushing love" felt by an older wealthier woman for a young

¹⁰ See Hurstun, p. 171.

gambler seems unpromising for their relationship, Janie has faith in the “Negro farthest down”.

Their marriage life is characterized by mutual respect and equality. Unlike her former husbands, Tea Cake does not aim at keeping Janie in a submissive role. Because he gives of himself generously and shares life equally with Janie, he makes her ecstatically happy. Although they have a good partnership, even with Tea Cake “Janie gains her autonomy only when she insists upon it.”¹¹ When Tea Cake throws a party for his friends without telling Janie, she makes very clear afterward that she is not willing to accept something like this again. She is not satisfied with the role of a tolerant wife but demands the same rights like her husband in their marriage. And Tea Cake, unlike Janie’s other husbands, accepts her wish and acts according to it.¹²

Janie now has room to live; she is reaching for her goals and is finally beginning to achieve them. The best period of her life Janie spends with Tea Cake “on the muck” (in the Everglades) where they do hard work side by side in the field. The work strengthens the bond between the two of them but also between Janie and the group of workers. For the first time Janie can participate in a community life, the life of the larger community of the migrant camp, and share their games and “lying sessions” – the same kind of ritual that took place on the store porch in Eatonville but never included herself.

Sometimes Janie would think of the old days in the big white house and the store and laugh to herself. What if Eatonville could see her now in her blue denim overalls and heavy shoes? The crowd of people around her and a dice game on her floor! She was sorry for her friends back there and scornful of the others. The men held big arguments here like they used to do on the store porch. Only here, she could listen and laugh and even talk some herself if she wanted to. (Hurstun, p. 200)

This place provides Janie with a community that she needs so desperately to be her own self.

These storytelling sessions are crucial to community unity and self-definition, since they generate and develop communal tradition. Participation in this process is also crucial for the individual’s self-definition, since communal traditions define available roles. (Kubitschek, p. 27)

¹¹ Wall, p. 189

¹² See Hurstun, pp. 186 and 187.

On the muck, Janie comes into her own, at home with herself, her husband, and her world. She sees and explores that horizon that had beckoned her years before. Janie has done what she wanted; she has trusted her feeling which proved to be the right decision. That Janie is content with herself and her life becomes even more obvious in the event of a hurricane. Janie is unafraid to die because: “If you kin see de light at daybreak, you don’t keer if you die at dusk. It’s so many people never seen de light at all.”¹³ She has come to that far horizon she always wanted to reach, she has made her dreams come true.

Janie does everything to save Tea Cake from the rabies he has contracted. But when he threatens her life in his insanity, trying to shoot her, Janie must decide what is more import to her: Either she sacrifices her life to the man she loves or defends herself and shoots him. The latter is what she eventually does. Janie meets the challenge that requires her to kill the man she loves in order to save her selfhood. “The impulse of her own vitalism compels Janie to kill him in self-defense, thus ending necessarily life and love in the name of the possibility of more life again.”¹⁴ Janie is determined to continue her life her own way even if it means to kill her beloved husband.¹⁵ Or as hooks puts it:

No longer victimized by passivity and fearful inability to exercise autonomous resistance in the face of male domination. She reveals a decisive mindset. It is this climactic moment in the novel more so than any act of story-telling that indicates that Janie has constructed an autonomous self. (hooks, p. 185)

Her autonomy and self-definition Janie expresses also when she returns to Eatonville in overalls and with her hair open, despite the disapproval of the women and under the gaze of the men. Janie is violating social expectations. She neither looks nor feel sad and tells nobody, except her “kissin’-friend” Phoeby, her business. The people of the town disapprove of it, but some – and Phoeby certainly belongs to them – probably envy her for what she has done. Janie has shed the emptiness she felt before her time with Tea Cake; she has discovered for herself what love should be and has embarked on a life of freedom - Janie is content. She tells her friend Phoeby, “Ah been a delegate to de big ‘ssociation of life. Yessuh! De Grand Lodge, de big convention of livin’ is just where Ah been dis year and a half y’all ain’t seen me.”¹⁶ Janie has lived her dream and can now live on her experiences with Tea Cake.

¹³ Hurston, p. 236

¹⁴ Bloom, p. 4

¹⁵ See Hurston, pp. 272 to 274.

¹⁶ Hurston, p. 18

“So Ah’m back home agin and Ah’m satisfied tuh be heah. Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons. Dis house ain’t so absent of things lak it used tuh be befo’ Tea Cake come along. It’s full uh thoughts, ‘specially dat bedroom.” (Hurstun, p. 284)

Out of her experience, Janie explains to Phoeby her conviction:

“It’s uh known fact, Phoeby, you got tuh *go* there tuh *know* there. Yo’ papa and yo’ mama and nobody else can’t tell yuh and show yuh. Two things everybody’s got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go thu God, and they got tuh find out about livin’ fuh theyselves.” (Hurstun, p. 285)

During her life, Janie has become an articulate heroine. While she was silent and passive at the beginning and obeying her grandmother and her husbands, she has come to express her views and feelings. Through the development of a voice she achieved maturity, identity and independence. Janie’s emancipation is not only connected to the male-female relationship but also to taking part actively in the oral communication. Janie returns to the community for reintegration – she achieves wholeness while enriching the community with her newfound insights. While telling her tale to Phoeby she summons that her journey is available to others.

In the end, Janie has fulfilled her dreams. She has wiped out the things she does not want to remember and remembers all the things valuable to her. From the point on where she broke with her past she has acted according to her dream which then became the truth.¹⁷ But what Janie cannot deny is the fact that Nanny’s aspirations cannot be banned all together from her life. With the money she inherited from her second husband, Janie does not have to worry about the future in terms of financial security. And a secure place (something Nanny found very important) provides Eatonville where Janie returns to.

By returning to Eatonville and the security it offers after her brief fling with the horizon, Janie is in essence returning to her grandmother’s way of thinking, or at least tempering her own romanticism with some much-needed realism. Significantly, she has a house to return to and money in the bank – both provided by her materialistic, security-oriented second husband, Jody Starcks. (Howard, pp. 412 and 413)

¹⁷ Compare the first quote on p. 3 in the term paper.

III. MAGDALENA'S AND SUSANNAH'S STRUGGLES FOR SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN *BY THE LIGHT OF MY FATHER'S SMILE*

When they are very young children (Magdalena is six and Susannah four years old.), the sisters go with their parents to the Sierra Madre in Mexico. For ten years, the family lives with the endangered Mundo, a group of mixed Indians and Blacks. Posing as missionaries (to get funding from the church), the girls' parents who are anthropologists want to study the culture and the life of the Mundo tribe.

The two sisters have very different characters. While Susannah is a quiet and docile girl interested in "women's and girls' things", finds for example pleasure in learning how to make Mundo pottery, Magdalena is quite the opposite: wild, wayward, headstrong and curious.

Maggie was six. Not a six, however, of innocent cheerfulness. Not a six of languid indolence. Not a six driven merely by the dictates of a playful curiosity. No. She was a six that already stared boldly at anything that interested her. And what interested her, it seemed to me, even at that early age, was men, and what was concealed by their trousers. (Walker, p. 16)

Susannah has a very intimate relationship to her father, she is adored by him. She likes to spend time with him, sitting in his lap. Magdalena is rather "off in the arroyos with the wild Indian boys"¹⁸. When Magdalena is not fooling around with the boys, she either spends her time with the grown-up Mundos, running errands for them or listening to their stories or riding her black stallion Vado. It seems as though she is more integrated into the Mundo life than the rest of the family. Mr. Robinson, her father, is content with the way Susannah is but cannot comprehend Magdalena's behavior. "I did not understand her spirit. I yearned for guidance. It seemed to be necessary to tame her, though no one among the Indians or in my own family showed any signs of thinking so."¹⁹ He thinks Maggie's behavior is not appropriate to a girl her age. It is hard for him to accept that one of his daughters loves to be running around while the other always stays in his proximity.

When Maggie is a teenager, she shares her adventures with her Indian boy-friend Manuelito. With him, she also has her first sexual experiences. When her father finds out about it, the worst scenario happens: Rather than talking to his daughter about what is going on in her life,

¹⁸ Walker, p. 19

¹⁹ Walker, p. 19

Mr. Robinson brutally beats Magdalena with a silver-studded belt that her lover Manuelito has made for her. This is a crucial, if very sad spectacle which will be responsible for the further development of the relationship between father and daughters.

Magdalena:

I knew I was wild. Disobedient. Wayward and headstrong. But I did not understand his violence after I had just experienced so much pleasure. So much sweetness. If he had known, if I could have told him, I felt he should have been happy for me. If in fact he loved me, as he often said he did. But no, he thrashed me in silence. (Walker, p. 29)

Magdalena feels betrayed and misunderstood by her own father. She is broken in body and spirit by her father's violence. She has experienced the love to a sweet Mundo boy, she has felt loved like never before in her life. She wanted her family to feel happy with her. But her dad does not even want to know about her feelings and punishes Magdalena for something that has been wonderful for her. Magdalena cannot understand this contradiction. In her opinion and in what she has learned from the Mundo culture, everything she has done was right and wonderful and should to be cherished by her parents. "Por la luz ... - By the light of my father's smile" is a traditional Mundo song Magdalena has learned. It means that parents welcome the love their child is about to experience.

Yet, there is another illogicality that Magdalena cannot comprehend:

I knew I had disobeyed him, but he was after all a minister, or at least putting up a mighty show of being one. ... His profession, as he explained it to me and Susannah, was based on the forgiveness of other people's sins. (Walker, p. 25)

But her father, the pretend priest who actually more and more slips into this role, preaches about forgiveness and is the one who does not forgive his daughter for having run away and having done something he disapproves of.

Magdalena's free and sensuous spirit has been broken. Magdalena must struggle for her own identity which is reflected in a myriad of names she either gives herself or gets from others.

Multiple names attest to her scattered and disunified self. The novel's monologues refer to Magdalena by listing several or all of these names, conveying the weighty and complicated burden of her disparate identities. (Bruckner, p. 4)

For her mother Langley it is clear that with changing her names, Magdalena wants to express herself the way she really is. Langley must explain this to her husband:

Don't you understand there is no more Magdalena? There is no Maggie either. Both Magdalena and Maggie are finished. But that is what we named her, I said. Yes, said Langley, and obviously before we knew who she was. (Walker, p. 20)

Here, Maggie carries the name „Mad Dog“ which is given to her by the Mundos, meaning “wise dog”. Again, her father, not understanding the meaning of the name, cannot accept it and insists that she be called MacDoc. And shortly before the family leaves for Long Island, Magdalena chooses another name for herself: June. June expresses the femininity and softness that she has gained. She is less active, calmer and loves to read. June is also the last month the family spends in the Sierra Madre. By giving herself the name of this month which introduces the summer, Magdalena expresses her strong bond to the Mundos and the warmth and beauty of life she has experienced in their community. With the help of this name, Magdalena stores up all of her memories she has gained during her life in Mexico.

Later in life, Magdalena, very much overweight, becomes a university teacher. She describes herself as looking like “Aunt Jemina disguised as Punk Dyke with my thrice-pierced nose, green hair, and jelly-plump arms”²⁰. “She doubts her own worth, discounts her need for intimacy and becomes a celibate, friendless, lonely woman.”²¹ Magdalena has no partner, her home is all messy and she slips more and more into a downward spiral of suicidal gluttony. Magdalena has not been able and willing to rebuild a stable relationship to her father although he sometimes comes and visits her after lectures. Then he usually takes her out to a restaurant where he orders for her whatever and how much she wants.

Whatever I did want, I wanted lots of it. And I ate and ate and ate, as he watched the plates and platters pile up on the table in front of us in an embarrassing heap. Watching me eat always seemed to take his own appetite away. And I came to believe that each time he visited me, he actually lost weight. (Walker, p. 77)

The latter seems to be symbolic for Magdalena sucking out the strength of her father with her unforgiving behavior towards him. Whenever they meet, they never talk about the vicious beating in Magdalena's youth. “We never talked about his distrust of me. His hawk-like spy-

²⁰ Walker, p. 76

²¹ Bruckner, p. 4

ing into my child's personality."²² But it is Magdalena herself who avoids a conversation about these subjects. When her dad asks her if he is responsible for her current situation, she pretends not to know what he is talking about. Magdalena cannot forget and overcome the events of her youth but neither is she willing to do that. Magdalena is mistaken in the belief that storing up her memories of this horrible incident will protect her from being hurt too much. She does not give her father a chance to make it up to her, because she is so much into her role as the suffering child which she does not want to give up. She rather leads an unsatisfactory and unhappy life, pretending to be satisfied and happy, but in reality is not. She cannot overcome the feeling that Susannah was loved by her father and she was not. She thinks that he has never really tried to understand her and take her the person she is. But now that her father is exactly trying to do that, Magdalena either does not want to see it or does not want to accept and reciprocate his attempts on reconciliation.

But Magdalena is not only unforgiving to her father but also to her sister Susannah. Both as girls and as women, the sisters have never bonded very well. They have accepted each other's presence but never really cared for each other. When Susannah wants to help her sister to lose weight, Magdalena is not interested in that and stops all the efforts when her sister has left. The only one, Magdalena thinks who would take her the way she is, is Manuelito. As youngsters, he appreciated her whole personality and he does it also when she is the older fat woman.

Susannah visits Magdalena when she is in the hospital. For the first time, they speak about the past, particularly about their father. Magdalena vents her anger toward him:

I wanted to be made whole again, goddammit! He'd taken the moment in my life when I was most secure in its meaning. The moment my life opened, not just to my family and friends, but to me myself. The moment when I knew my life was given to me for me to own. He took that moment and he broke it into a million bits. He made it dirty and evil. (Hurstun, p. 127)

She deals with the bygone time; thinks about past events. Magdalena becomes aware of the roots of her unhappiness which drives her so mad that she starts to scream, bites her sister in the arm and finally becomes unconscious. While this is clearly a step towards coming to terms with herself, it is too late for her: Not very much later, Magdalena dies with a beer can in one and a piece of chocolate cake in the other hand. She dies from the rage she has savored

²² Walker, p. 77

and the mounds of food she has consumed trying to satisfy herself. During her life she has not been able to find back to her personality she had as a young girl. Her father has broken her spirit and she has not been able to recover from that. Magdalena has hidden away herself under her fat body which has worked as a protection shield from all of the hurts and pains she has not been able to bear. “Yet she takes pride in the physical enormity that disguises her emotional frailty and hunger.”²³ “If I lost weight perhaps my memories of Manuelito and my anger at my father would fade away. I felt so abandoned already, I did not want them to go.”²⁴ These are the two things Magdalena has stored up: the memories of the wonderful time she spent with Manuelito and the anger against her father. But if she were able to forgive her father she would not need the positive images of her former lover to hold the balance. Magdalena is so stuck to these two images that she cannot get away from them and start a new life. Perhaps she is afraid to lose these images which, she thinks, somehow give her stability. It is only after her death that she can come to terms with herself and her family.

“The abuse their father inflicts on one daughter affects both girls.”²⁵ For Susannah, a world is shattered. Disillusioned, she witnesses the violent act through the keyhole in the bedroom door. How could it be possible that her beloved gentle dad turns into such a brutal monster?

But something had happened to precious little Susannah at the keyhole. It was as if she'd peered into our simple, girlish bedroom through the keyhole and witnessed her gentle, compassionate father turn into Godzilla. She would never be loved back to her daddy again. With time, as I understood how severely the twig was bent in that moment of her horror and disbelief, my revenge against my father, a revenge so subtle Susannah would not realize its damage to her for another thirty years, was born. As for my father, he would never again be permitted to really know or enjoy his favorite little tree. (Walker, pp. 29 and 30)

And it is Magdalena who makes sure that Susannah will never forget about this event and never regard her dad as her favorite anymore. This is marked especially by one incident that is taken up several times in the novel: When Mr. Robinson offers Susannah fresh green jelly beans, the other colors carefully sorted out because the green ones are Susannah's favorite ones, Magdalena – although she was asked – replies that she does not care for any. After this harsh refusal, Susannah cannot accept the jelly beans any more. Because of her sister, Susannah has not only rejected her favorite sweets but also the love to her dad. It takes many years

²³ Bruckner, p. 3

²⁴ Walker, p. 138

²⁵ Bruckner, p. 3

until she can understand that she has betrayed herself during such a long time, betrayed herself for the love of her father who has meant very much for her. Although it may not have been obvious to herself for a long time, she suffers because she has denied her father and not listened to her heart.

She was not even aware at the time of my death that she missed me. Poor child. She did not cry at my funeral. She was a stoic spectator. Her heart, she thought, was closed. I watched her looking down at me, the father who gave her life, with the passivity of one who has borne all she intends to bear. (Walker, pp. 3 and 4)

During her life, Susannah has many different lovers – male and female. She spends her life searching for a partner, travels through a marriage and a lesbian liaison. She finds plenty of lust (Her sexual activities are described in detail by Walker.) but little precious love. In search for her authentic sexual self, Susannah has become promiscuous.

Susannah finds her youth envied by her sister as well as her lover Lily Pauline. Magdalena is jealous because Susannah got more attention from her dad than she and because he seemed to understand and be willing to understand her better. Lily Pauline does because - very different from Susannah - she had a hard youth. This leads Susannah to the belief that all the other people around her have suffered much more than she herself. It is the Greek woman Irene who opens her eyes to her own suffering. Although outcast from society, Irene has not spent her time in seclusion feeling sorry for herself. She turns her passion on Susannah and helps her to understand her life and find back to her personality. Through this fruitful friendship of cross-cultural and cross-generational exchange with Irene, Susannah can become a whole person again after all those years.

IV. COMPARISON OF THE FACTORS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED JANIE'S, MAGDALENA'S AND SUSANNAH'S DEVELOPMENTS

Since parents usually are the first persons to whom children relate most closely, parents' actions have a great impact on shaping children's developments. And so it is with Janie and with Maggie. Since Nanny is the person who raises Janie, Nanny feels that she must do everything she can to give Janie a good life. This, she thinks, means security offered by a husband with money and property. Her ideas differ very much from Janie's but Nanny fails to realize that. She only takes her own experiences into account when thinking of how Janie's

life should be. In this, Mr. Robinson resembles Nanny. He is satisfied with the way his daughter Susannah develops because she embodies his understanding of a young girl. His other daughter Magdalena, though, is a very different character and likes to frolic with boys out in the nature. He wants to tame her wild and truculent behavior but is unable to do that. Although he and his wife have sworn long before their children were born that they would never physically hurt their children, this is what Mr. Robinson does when he wants to gain control over Magdalena and remake her in her sister's more demure image. Nanny also uses physical punishment to make Janie obedient and do what she wants her to. Like Señor Robinson, she does not know what exactly Janie thinks and wants and does not even try to listen to her granddaughter.

She slapped the girl's face violently, and forced her head back so that their eyes met in struggle. With her hand uplifted for the second blow she saw the huge tear that welled up from Janie's heart and stood in each eye. She saw the terrible agony and the lips tightened down to hold back the cry and desisted. (Hurstun, pp. 28 and 29)

In both cases the girls suffer silently, not understanding what mistakes they have made. Both wanted to share their experiences and thoughts with their grandmother or dad but both were rejected. "If he had known, if I could have told him, I felt he should have been happy for me."²⁶ Freedom stems from within Magdalena and Janie but is prompted by parental outside forces. Neither Janie nor Magdalena change according to the wishes of Nanny or Mr. Robinson but rather become estranged from them. Janie and Magdalena carry these incidents to their adulthood – Janie is able to even hate her grandmother for having tied her to her dreams and punished Janie for her own ones. Also Magdalena is never able to forgive her father his behavior. His later attempts to make it up to her, Magdalena vehemently shoots down. The violence in Magdalena's youth has affected her so much that she can never be happy with herself in life anymore. Also Janie, when living the life Nanny wanted her to, feels forlorn and unhappy. Hurstun and Walker demonstrate with clarity how oppression of women, specifically parents oppression, effects women emotionally and spiritually.

What are influential also on the development of the women are their relationships to men other than their father. Janie was married to three husbands; all of them treated her differently. Her first husband, Logan Killicks, is a boring old farmer who has no idea about love and only values Janie's capacity for work. Jody Starcks, Janie's second husband only needs her as "Mrs. Mayor Starcks" to represent his high position. In both cases, Janie first tries to make

²⁶ Magdalena's voice in Walker, p. 29

the best out of her situation before finally rebelling. For long periods, these men had the power to make Janie a silent, suffering and unhappy woman. Jody “took the bloom off of things”²⁷ for Janie. She is not given the chance to live her life according to her dreams. Only with her third husband Tea Cake, Janie can enjoy herself and everything around her. The relationship between the two is comparable with Magdalena’s relationship to her first and only love Manuelito. Both, Tea Cake and Manuelito, regard their partners as equal and cherish them as the persons they are. Manuelito loves Magdalena when she is the young wild girl and he still loves her when she is the unkempt and fat woman. What counts for Tea Cake is also only his love to Janie and nothing else. Manuelito and Tea Cake do not attempt to change the women’s characters because they are the women they have fallen in love with. Tea Cake not only takes care of Janie but fosters her self-respect by making her aware of her beauty, especially of her long hair which she was forced to conceal by Jody:

“...Ah betcha you don’t never go tuh de lookin’ glass and enjoy yo’ eyes yo’self. You lets other folks git all de enjoyment out of ‘em ‘thout takin’ in any of it yo’self.”
 “...You’s got de world in uh jug and make out you don’t know it. But Ah’m glad tuh be de one tuh tell yuh.” (Hurstun, p. 157)

The time with Tea Cake is the happiest and most fulfilling in Janie’s life. Tea Cake makes Janie’s dreams come true. She experiences such a wonderful time that she can live from her memories after Tea Cake died and still be happy. Magdalena acts in a similar way when she has to leave Mexico with her family. She stores up her memory with the wonderful things and love she had experienced with Manuelito. She lives from the memory of her caring boy-friend all through her life; it helps her to compensate the bad memory she has of her dad. Tea Cake and Manuelito who give love to Janie and Magdalena make them enjoy their husband or lover, themselves and the lives they lead.

Susannah’s marriage to her Greek husband is not of much importance to her further development. Both are very different characters and cannot quite find to each other. When they are in Greece, Susannah is caught in her own thoughts which she cannot share with her husband. What is of more importance in Susannah’s life are her relationships to women, especially to her lover Lily Pauline and her friend Irene. Although Susannah and Lily Pauline are very different persons, they share a very intensive love life. Very much like Janie’s relationship to Tea Cake and Magdalena’s relationship to Manuelito, Susannah and her lover live in respect and equality with each other. Irene is the woman who even plays a bigger role in Susannah’s

²⁷ Hurstun, p. 70

life. As a person standing outside of her family and her love relationships, Irene independently looks at her American friend's life. Irene is a very good listener to Susannah, just like Pheoby is to Janie. Irene analyzes Susannah's past, explaining Susannah her own suffering and how much her sister has controlled her life. The person who is always there for Janie is her loyal girl-friend Pheoby. Even when the town dwellers disapprove of Janie's marriage to the younger and financially unstable Tea Cake, Pheoby remains non-judgemental and stands by Janie. Pheoby not always holds the same opinion as Janie but remains her best friend nevertheless. When Janie returns to her old home in Eatonville, for instance, Pheoby is the only one to offer Janie a welcome by giving her food. Like the other people in the town, Pheoby is also wondering about Janie's looks but does not participate in the spread of rumors but wants to find out about her friend in a personal conversation. For both Pheoby and Janie it is substantial to have such a good friend to rely on in good and in bad times. In the loving company of her closest friend, Janie is free to speak.

... Janie tells her story to a black woman, Pheoby, inviting her to share the tale with others. Expressing confidence in Pheoby's ability to convey the truth of her experience, Janie offers a provocative metaphor for sisterhood, declaring, "Mah tongue is in mah friend's mouf." (hooks, p. 177)

Both profit from their friendship when Janie returns – Pheoby gives Janie the feeling to be welcome again in their community, and Janie shares her insights with Pheoby who can gain out of them much for her own life:

"Lawd!" Pheoby breathed out heavily, "Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus' listenin' tuh you, Janie. Ah ain't satisfied wid mahself no mo'. Ah means tuh make Sam take me fishin' wid him after this. Nobody better not criticize yuh in mah hearin'." (Hurstun, p. 284)

Pheoby refuses to be relegated to "women's work" and in her statement of solidarity with Janie, she demonstrates that she has taken a tremendous leap in consciousness.

The importance of female friendship becomes clear when looking at Magdalena. She is in the unfortunate situation of not having such a girl-friend to share happiness and sadness with. Magdalena has nobody to help her along when she does not know anymore what to do. Magdalena pretends not to need anybody which is obviously not true. She rejects her sister, probably the female person she has the closest relationship to, when Susannah tries to help her to get over her weight problems. Magdalena even attempts to punish her sister for still loving

and respecting their father. The lack of a “kissin’ friend” might be one reason why Magdalena dies unhappy quite in contrast to Susannah and Janie.²⁸

Not only individuals have an impact on the women but also different culture groups. Janie grows up with other African-American people without having much contact to white folks. With Jody she goes to the all-Black town of Eatonville where she will spend most of her time. Janie loves the “lying sessions” on the store porch and the other community activities like the burial of the stubborn mule. But Jody has forbidden her to take part in any of these. It is a great loss for Janie. She is not happy as a person who is not a member of this community but wants it so badly. She suffers very much because of that. When she is on the muck, her situation is different. Here, she is surrounded by migrant workers, many of them Black, but this time she actually lives with them, meaning, she works side by side with them in the field, she plays games with them, she even participates in their conversation. The time on the muck is the happiest in Janie’s life not only because she is with her beloved husband but also because she enjoys her life with the community. Janie does not care that the field workers have less money than she, that they are below her in terms of class. She does not worry about Tea Cake’s status, and her decision to spend her life with this happy-go-lucky character has proved to be the best for her. Janie does not care about the color of people’s skins either and cannot understand how it can be of importance to others. Mrs. Turner, the light-skinned restaurant proprietor, wants to convince Janie that Tea Cake is “too dark” and therefore not appropriate for Janie.

“... Ah don’t see how uh lady like Mis’ Woods can stand all them common niggers round her place all de time.”

“They don’t worry me atall, Mis’ Turner. Fact about de thing is, they tickles me wid they talk.” (Hurstun, p. 209)

Janie does not listen to what other people think is important – like to be of financially higher status or to have lighter skin. In fact, she does not understand how in the world anyone can think like this if he or she has not experienced the life they criticize. Only here on the muck, she can enjoy the company of people she likes to be with. Other people’s principles just do not apply to her. It is in this community atmosphere that she not only increases her appreciation for Black culture but also her self-confidence.

²⁸ Although the novel ends before Janie dies, it can be concluded from the last sequence of the book that she is satisfied with her life and also will be until her death.

It is again Magdalena who finds herself in a similar situation when she shares most of her time as child and teenager with the Mundos. It is their culture that she first got in contact with. Unlike the rest of her family, Maggie knows much about the Mundo traditions, their songs, their way of thinking. She carries the name “Mad dog” which the elders have given her in awe. Her father acts in one way similar to Jody Starcks. Although he does not completely forbid his daughter to participate in the Mundo culture, he at least wants her to grow up according to his principles. Maggie lives in between two cultures – the Mundo culture and the culture of a middle class American Black family. It is not very difficult for Magdalena which one to give the priority. The culture of the Mundos is based upon honesty, equality of men and women and respect for every person. The life of the Robinsons itself is based upon a lie – of being a priest family instead of anthropologists. Even as a little girl, Magdalena is aware of her dad’s false behavior so that she can only find her place among the Mundos. Like Janie knows that her place is among a Black community, Magdalena feels that the Mundos can offer her everything she needs for life. It is problematic though because her father does not learn from the Indians like Maggie. So he does not accept Maggie’s relationship to Manuelito, saying that he is afraid of his daughter getting pregnant. Many people of Eatonville say that the much younger and poor Tea Cake - without knowing him - could never make Janie happy, but they were completely wrong. So it is with Señor Robinson – he does not know very much about the Mundo traditions, particularly not that fathers teach their sons how not to impregnate women. Janie can just avoid the other people but for Magdalena it is more difficult. She cannot escape that easily, she is still a young teenager and needs her family. The conflict occurs - Magdalena gets punished by her father for something that is cherished in the Mundo culture. Magdalena can never get over the loss of the Indian culture, when the family leaves the Sierra Madre. She needs her memories of this wonderful culture in her later life where she cannot identify herself with any other culture anymore.

Susannah is not very attached to the Mundo culture, maybe because she has never spent so much time in the company of the Indians like her sister. Susannah gets in touch with many different cultures during her life though, and it seems as though she takes something out of each one. Susannah does not have a place like Janie or Magdalena where she knows she belongs to but is steadily on the search. The most she gets out of the Greek culture where she finally is laid to rest.

All three women have struggled to move from victimization toward self-acceptance and strength. Their situations differed. Two of them – Janie and Susannah – have regained their personal selves in the end. Both had help from other persons – Janie from her husband Tea Cake and Susannah mainly from her Greek friend Irene. These supporting characters helped to bring out the inner freedom of the women and to empower that freedom. It took Janie a long time to free herself from living according to other people’s wishes. It also lasted many years before Irene analyzed Susannah’s past, and Susannah started to comprehend what had happened to her. It is only then when she can find back the way to her own self and gain happiness. Susannah and Janie – having found their self-identity became happy, satisfied and relieved women.

Magdalena, unfortunately, takes a development in the other direction. She is happy and satisfied as child and teenager in the Sierra Madre. After her dad punishes her, and the family leaves Mexico, she could never really find back to herself. Having been whipped mercilessly by her own father for no reason, engenders in Magdalena “self-destructive madness and alienation from her own body, her self-trust, and her community”²⁹. Magdalena’s denied sexuality leads to the loss of the much prized and necessary original self. She has nobody really to help her and the help offered by her sister and her dad she rejects. Magdalena is glued to her past life in Mexico. When she dies, she is very unhappy. But since Magdalena culturally identifies with the Mundos, this sad end on earth does not mean the final end. Even Magdalena can get back to her own self and be happy after her death. And be again reconciled with the persons and culture she loves.

²⁹ Bruckner, p. 1

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bloom, Harold. "Introduction". *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- Bruckner, Natascha. *The Wound As World: Sexual Abuse and Healing in Alice Walker's Fiction*. <http://www.naropa.edu/misc/nataschasthesis.htm>, 1999.
- hooks, bell. *Remembered Capture: The Writer at Work*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999.
- Howard, Lillie P. "Nanny and Janie: Will the Twain Ever Meet? (A Look at Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*)." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 403 to 414: Sage Publications, 1982.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. London: Virago Press, 1986.
- Kubitschek, Missy Dehn. "'Tuh de Horizon and Back": The Female Quest in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*". *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- Walker, Alice. *By the Light of My Father's Smile*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1999.
- Walker, Alice (ed.). *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing....* Old Westbury: Feminist Press, 1979.
- Wall, Cheryl A. *Women of the Harlem Renaissance*. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995.