

**T.C.
İSTANBUL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
KARŞILAŞTIRMALI EDEBİYAT ANABİLİM DALI**

DOKTORA TEZİ

**ALTERNATIVE SPACES, IDENTITY, AND
LANGUAGE IN THE PROTO- AND
AFROFUTURIST WRITING OF ZORA NEALE
HURSTON, RALPH ELLISON, AND OCTAVIA
BUTLER**

**Tuğba AKMAN KAPLAN
2520160154**

**TEZ DANIŞMANI
Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Sinem YAZICIOĞLU**

İSTANBUL – 2020

ABSTRACT

ALTERNATIVE SPACES, IDENTITY, AND LANGUAGE IN THE PROTO- AND AFROFUTURIST WRITING OF ZORA NEALE HURSTON, RALPH ELLISON, AND OCTAVIA BUTLER

Tuğba AKMAN KAPLAN

Although there have been a few scholars that have characterized Ralph Ellison and Zora Neale Hurston as writers who have contributed to the development of early forms of Afrofuturism, these studies are limited with the use of technology and sound, and African-American women's place in society as they are depicted in the novels. Moreover, they do not approach such early Afrofuturistic works in the context of decolonization mainly due to the heavy interest given on technology and future. This study will focus on how Hurston's **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and Ellison's **Invisible Man** can be categorized particularly as proto-Afrofuturist works because of the writers' use of decolonized alternative spaces and technological discourse to generate alternative futures. In addition, Octavia Butler's **Kindred** will be analyzed as an Afrofuturistic novel. More specifically, this study will focus on a discussion on the key aspects that constitute Afrofuturism including the use of settings in the novels as alternative spaces, as well as the depiction of the characters' body and language in terms of alienation and decolonization of the characters within a reading of Afrofuturism.

Key Words: Afrofuturism, proto-Afrofuturism, decolonization, alternative spaces, post-colonial, psychoanalytic theory, African-American literature.

ÖZ

**ZORA NEALE HURSTON, RALPH ELLISON VE OCTAVIA BUTLER’İN
PROTO-AFROFÜTÜRİST VE AFROFÜTÜRİST ESERLERİNDE
ALTERNATİF ALANLAR, KİMLİK VE DİL
Tuğba AKMAN KAPLAN**

Ralph Ellison ve Zora Neale Hurston’ı Afrofütürizmin erken biçimlerinin gelişimine katkıda bulunan yazarlar olarak nitelendiren az sayıda bilim insanı olmasına rağmen, bu çalışmalar teknoloji ve ses kullanımıyla ve romanlarda söz edildiği kadarıyla, Afrikalı-Amerikalı kadınların toplumdaki yeri ile sınırlıdır. Bununla beraber, sözü edilen çalışmalarda, bu tür erken Afrofütüristik eserlere temel olarak teknoloji ve geleceğe gösterilen yoğun ilgi nedeniyle dekolonizasyon bağlamında yaklaşılmamıştır. Bu çalışmada **Their Eyes Were Watching God** ve **Invisible Man** adlı eserlerin, yazarlarının alternatif gelecek üretmek adına kullandıkları alternatif alanlar ve teknolojik söylemlerden dolayı nasıl erken Afrofütüristik eserler olarak değerlendirilebileceği tartışılacaktır. Buna ek olarak, Octavia Butler’ın **Kindred** adlı eseri Afrofütüristik bir roman olarak analiz edilecektir. Daha detaylı açıklamak gerekirse, bu çalışmada Afrofütürizm’in kilit noktaları olan zaman ve yerlerin alternatif alanlar olarak kullanılmasına, yabancılaşma sürecindeki karakterlerin bedenlerine yapılan vurguya ve dil kullanımının tasvirine odaklanılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afrofütürizm, proto-Afrofütürizm, dekolonizasyon, alternatif alanlar, post-kolonyal, psikoanalitik teori, African-American literatür.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to my advisor Dr. Sinem Yazıcıoğlu for the continuous support of my Ph.D research, for her patience and motivation. Her guidance has helped me throughout writing of this dissertation and widen my research from various perspectives. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my Ph.D study.

Besides my advisor, I would like to thank the rest of my thesis committee: Prof. Hasine Şen Karadeniz and Dr. İnci Bilgin for their insightful comments and guidance. I would also like to thank Prof. Hürriyet Özden Sözüalan for her comments and perspective. And I am grateful to get to know Prof. Mohamed Bakari who was always so generous to share his academic knowledge and insights with all his students.

I will forever be thankful to my family for their continuous support, understanding, and tolerance. I owe many thanks to my dear parents Ali R. Akman and Ayşe Akman, my beloved husband Ahmet Kaplan, my lovely sons Buğra and Kayra Kaplan, and my siblings Aygün Akman, Feyza Akman Gülgör and sister-in-law Gönül Akman. Their encouragement and support made it all possible.

I am indebted to all my friends and colleagues who supported me throughout my Ph.D study and provided invaluable comments and suggestions. This dissertation would have never come to an end without the help and encouragement of the precious people I love and care about. I am thankful to everyone who took part on this unforgettable experience.

TUĞBA AKMAN KAPLAN
İSTANBUL, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Afrofuturism has been one of the lesser researched areas that have been exposed to contradictory definitions that the scholars have failed to have a consensus on. This dissertation aims to focus on some of the works that help the development of Afrofuturism and the early examples that shape it into what is generally portrayed as Afrofuturist works by society today. Although there have been a few scholars that have characterized Zora Neale Hurston and Ralph Ellison as writers, who have contributed to the development of early forms of Afrofuturism, these studies do not approach such early Afrofuturistic works in the context of decolonization. While benefiting from Lacan's psychoanalytic theories of subject formation, Frantz Fanon's thoughts on double-voicedness and feminist criticism's focus on the construction of identity and gender along with Edward Soja's and Homi K. Bhabha's ideas of alternative spaces and their connection to the individuals' both material, imagined and social surroundings, this study demonstrates how Zora N. Hurston's **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** can be categorized particularly as proto-Afrofuturistic works because of the authors' use of decolonized alternative spaces and technological discourse to generate alternative futures. Moreover, along with analyzing Octavia Butler's **Kindred**, this study focuses on a discussion on the key aspects that constitutes Afrofuturism, including the use of settings in the novels as alternative spaces, as well as the depiction of the characters' body and language in terms of alienation and activism.

Proto-Afrofuturism, in parallel with Afrofuturism, offers a unique critical framework that enables the scholars to analyze the speculations that support the idea that technological developments will lead to a more egalitarian future. One of the most important aspects that separate Afrofuturism from science fiction is its inclusion of the direct post-colonial roots; the same implementation is also valid for proto-Afrofuturism. The novels in this study question Afrofuturism's focus on future speculations and continued stress on the technology-related developments as instruments for social progress. In especially **Invisible Man** and **Kindred**, the writers suggest that people should be cautious of the terms of technology and the idea of the

“digital divide” (Nelson, 2002: 1) which implies the development of blackness is inversely correlated with technologically driven progress. It is important to note that similar to science fiction, Afrofuturism recognizes that the real goal is not to imagine the future but rather imagine alternative futures that “*serve the quite different function of transforming our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come*” (Jameson, 2005: 288). Afrofuturism emphasizes the risks that follow the erasure of historical contexts related to the past and the repetition of violence against specific groups of people. In the novels, these aspects of the erasure of the past as well as the violence within and towards African-Americans are explored in the plots.

In the analyzed novels, the protagonists are provided with various alternative spaces that enable them to have certain degrees of autonomy along with resistance. In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Homi K. Bhabha asserts that the terms Third Space and hybridity are closely associated and describes hybridity through “*psychoanalytic analogy*” to verify that “*identification is a process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness, at which point [...] the subject—is itself always ambivalent, because of the intervention of that otherness*” (1990: 211). Thus, psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan’s orders of the Imaginary and the Symbolic as well as the concepts of mirror stage, the split, and fragmented self are also examined along with Fanon’s double-voicedness in the study. Bhabha also emphasizes that the concept’s importance does not come from its ability to

trace two original movements from which the third emerges, rather hybridity [...] is the “third space” which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (Ibid.)

He highlights the significance of having an alternative or rather in-between space where hybridity can form. Bhabha does not try to describe Third Space as a place of simplicity, rather he views the space as a more complicated one where more ideas, resistance, and arguments can arise to help people question and take action. Neither Bhabha, nor Soja idealized the Third Space/thirdspace as all positive. In the analyzed novels of this study, the protagonists clearly face oppositions, repressions, and

obstacles in the alternative Third Space/thirdspace but they overcome the difficulties and succeed at embracing their fragmented selves to decolonize their minds.

This study also focuses on Afrofuturists' appropriation of the perception of alternative spaces with gender and language formation to decolonize the African-American mind. Homi K. Bhabha's theories on Third Space of Enunciation and hybridity along with Edward Soja's thirdspace theory have been discussed in each novel. Jacques Lacan's analysis on body and language that include the Imaginary and Symbolic orders are also discussed in great length to support the transformation of the main characters' transition. Frantz Fanon's thoughts on double-voicedness have been also analyzed to further assist Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary and then Symbolic in terms of decolonization. Along with the psychoanalytic theory of Lacan, an analysis on African-American women's body, gender, sexuality, and autonomy have been discussed through feminist theories of mainly Judith Butler, Laura Mulvey and Rosi Braidotti.

In Chapter One, the theoretical background and overview of this study have been established. The chapter is divided into two main sections: Afrofuturism and the theory/method of the study. The second section also focuses on two main concepts: alternative space theories of Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Soja as well as theories of Jacques Lacan and Frantz Fanon on body and language. Before analyzing the literary works, this chapter focuses on the various definitions of Afrofuturism that were presented by different theoreticians to clarify a reference point of its formation. The detailed examination of Afrofuturism's definition, relation to different genres, and development have been provided. The focus then shifts on its use in various different disciplines, on how Afrofuturism came into existence with its current body and who are called Afrofuturists. The chapter includes discussion on the study's theoretical framework. The alternative space theories of Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Soja and how the concept fits into Afrofuturism were highlighted. Frantz Fanon's thoughts on double-voicedness will be incorporated with especially Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories on the subject formation. The chapter also includes discussion on Lacan's and feminist theorists' contribution to the movement of Afrofuturism. Along with the process of ego formation, the importance of surrounding communities, home, interracial relations, and fragmentation are also highlighted. To support the

study's thesis, the chapter focuses on how the authors Zora N. Hurston, Ralph Ellison and Octavia E. Butler fit into the movement in their unique ways. Each author's literary stand and Afrofuturists' evaluation of their stand have been clarified to support the study's aim. Moreover, the chapter refers to the ideas of Afrofuturist scholars including Kodwo Eshun, Mark Dery, Alondra Nelson, Ytasha Womack, and Paul Gilroy in order to help to place Afrofuturism within the postcolonial frame. The movement's postcolonial roots as well as special interest in technology have also been discussed in detail. In the following chapters, the novels are analyzed in chronological order to provide a better understanding of the development of Afrofuturism and the concepts it has included within.

Chapter Two focuses on Zora Neale Hurston's **Their Eyes Were Watching God** (1937). As a character that did not conform to the typical conventions of women at the time, Zora Neale Hurston was most probably familiar with the restrictions enforced on especially the African-American women within and out of the African-American community. In his autobiography on Hurston, Robert E. Hemenway asserts: *"The novel culminates the fifteen-year effort to celebrate her birthright which came through the exploration of a woman's consciousness, accompanied by an assertion of that woman's right to selfhood"* (1977: 232). In **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, each of the communities Hurston portrays exists for a purpose in the main character Janie Mae's self-transformation towards selfhood and autonomy. She conscientiously details the oppressive powers that surround the African-American women at the time. It is not only the white domination but also the male African-American oppression on the women. By not putting Janie Mae in too much white oppression, Hurston allows Janie Mae to portray her own transition for autonomy and voice within a male-dominated African-American community. Her use of imagination along with storytelling and folklore are the most noticeable aspects that interest the Afrofuturist theorists. Through storytelling, she carefully creates alternative spaces that allow African-Americans to use their imagination and move beyond their realities. This movement helps to create alternative narratives that include alternative time continuum as well. Through these concepts, especially the African-American women were able to create spaces that allow them to be who they want to be or simply be themselves. Hurston is among the pioneer African-American women writers who

guided to use these created figurative and physical spaces as a way of resistance. The chapter on Hurston helps to emphasize the technology that is highly underlined in Afrofuturism was not always among the primary focus on the development of the movement.

Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** (1952) is explored in Chapter Three. Ellison rejects the naturalist principals that argue on people being only pawns who are a part of deterministic formations. Rather he believes and defends that humans are capable of creating their own realities including past, present, and future. Ellison refers to the view of seeing African-Americans without a past as home-made meaning it was all invented by white Americans. He indicates that the thought of African-Americans who believed themselves to be without a past or cultural history is no longer valid. To demonstrate their cultural histories more objectively, they have to search and reconsider the past, so that they can have impact on the future, which is also viewed as one of the main aspects of Afrofuturism. Scholar Lisa Yaszek considers **Invisible Man** as an early frame for Afrofuturism because she believes the work examines the significance of African potential. She explains that the novel not only focuses on how Africans are being exploited over who possesses the future, but also describes how *"the African holds within himself the possibility of a new future that is not ready to be born"* (2006: 51). Her perspective externalizes Afrofuturism as disentangling from *"the residual effects of white liberal subjectivity"* (Weheliye, 2002: 30).

In order to create the nonlinearity, Ellison uses underground as an alternative space to enable the unnamed narrator's self-fulfillment. In the novel, with the exception of the underground, **Invisible Man** runs through linear timeline which starts with the narrator's childhood and continues as he gets older. Ellison describes that the novel mirrors a *"three-part division,"* in which the parts reflect the *"narrator's movement from [...] purpose to passion to perception. These three major sections are built up of smaller units of three which mark the course of the action"* (Ellison, 1995b: 218). The pace of time slows and moves in a nonlinear continuum in the underground. In her interview with Priscilla Frank, curator and anthropologist Niama Safia Sandy asserts that time is a *"fluid thing"* (Sandy, 2016) in the essence of Afrofuturism. Analyzing the time concept as nonlinear composes one of the core concepts of Afrofuturism. And, creating an alternative space that facilitates a nonlinear time

continuum is one of the approaches the Afrofuturist or proto-Afrofuturist writers use substantially. Ellison also focuses on technology and its use with African-Americans. Contrary to Afrofuturists, Ellison's African-Americans cannot operate well with technology until the narrator's hibernation period. Afrofuturist Alondra Nelson explains this as the "*digital divide*" which is discussed more in details in the chapter.

Chapter Four dwells upon Octavia Butler's **Kindred** (1979). This chapter of the dissertation focuses more on the diversity of Afrofuturistic tropes of Butler's **Kindred** along with the proto-Afrofuturistic aspects of Hurston's **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and Ellison's **Invisible Man**. Even though Butler does not want to label herself only as an Afrofuturist author, Afrofuturists regard her and her novel **Kindred** as an important part of Afrofuturism. The novel is taught in almost all introduction to Afrofuturism courses at universities in the United States. It includes almost all aspects of Afrofuturism even before the movement's name was coined by Mark Dery. In the chapter, all theoretical approaches, to a certain extent, attest to the directness of discussion of the past on explicitly addressing issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality and the newfound identity through decolonization of the mind. As an addition, Sigmund Freud's concept of the "*unheimlich*," translated to English as "*uncanny*", which is a concept of an entity jointly being both familiar and foreign, is useful in terms of analyzing the section of body in Butler. Octavia Butler believes that one of the solutions to the silencing of African-Americans is through the extension of African-American literature. While exploring the movement's core aspects, Butler also frees the protagonist by enabling her to move beyond the Law that Lacan argues a subject should be under in order to complete his subjecthood. The protagonist in the novel, Dana, plays a crucial role in highlighting the African-American women's endeavor in both the survival of the self and her lineage. The women protagonists such as Dana contribute significantly to the African-American literature as to reflect the silenced or omitted voices of women. The context of alternative and nonlinear time and space transition emphasizes a past that did not occur in reality and thus creating a future that is also nonexistent. As one of the crucial aims of Afrofuturists, the novel's narrative helps to create alternative pasts, presents, and futures for the African-Americans.

The conclusion will discuss how the alternative spaces that are analyzed in each novel present different aspects of the protagonists' autonomy, resistance, and decolonization. **Their Eyes Were Watching God** displays alternative spaces that include different forms of oppression from the African-Americans and the protagonist's fragmentation both from inside and outside to decolonize herself from the oppressive forces and create an individual space for her newly-gained self. In **Invisible Man**, the oppressive forces include mainly technology. Ellison demonstrates the African-American protagonist's inability to cope with the technological developments until his final underground alternative space which he fills with technological devices. It is in this space that the protagonist finds the necessary strength to resist the already established colonized thinking but fails to take direct action. As an Afrofuturistic novel, Butler's **Kindred** presents alternative spaces that enable the protagonist to find her double voice, hybridity, resistance, and autonomy with the help of technology. The presented physical and mental fragmentation enables the protagonist to abandon oppressive forces and form a self that is independent from the surrounding constraints.

CHAPTER I

THEORIES OF AFROFUTURISM, ITS ASSOCIATION WITH POST-COLONIAL STUDIES AND PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Afrofuturism is currently among the least highlighted fields especially in African-American scholarship. One of the reasons may be related to the fact that Afrofuturism has been interpreted and defined differently by the scholars that possess different views. In this study, Afrofuturism will be considered as a movement because of its political aspect and the activism it involves. Its colonial aspects that are derived from Afrodiasporic subjects as well as its focus on creating reality in alternative and imagined spaces and times that were not portrayed in established epistemology related to Africans will be analyzed to have a better understanding on the movement's evolution in the twentieth century. The focus will shift from the proto-Afrofuturistic novels to an Afrofuturistic one. The proto-Afrofuturistic works are more restricted to the boundaries of the period, while the latter novel of Butler eludes the already established restrictions and forms alternative thinking for the future while referring back to the past. Focusing on especially space, body, and language in the mentioned novels, the study will discuss and highlight the decolonization aspect of Afrofuturism that will form a bridge between the movement and postcolonial studies. By forming this bridge, the study will show that Afrofuturism is involved in many areas of African body of literature that needs to be recognized by wider audiences and scholars.

According to Mark Dery, who coined the term Afrofuturism for the first time, Afrofuturism is “*signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future*” related to the subjects of African diaspora (1994: 136). He generated the term to explain the collection of speculative fiction and assorted media that is created from the African point of view. By presenting the term, Dery helps to provide a reference point to analyze debatable topics including race, technology, and science in contemporary Afro-American literature, music, and art. Lisa Yaszek interprets this definition as Afrofuturism “*explore[s] how people of color negotiate life in a technology intensive world*” (2006: 42). As one of the cofounders of Afrofuturism.net, Alondra Nelson clarifies the common definition that is accepted as

voices of the victims of African diaspora “*with other stories to tell about culture, technology and things to come*” along with “*sci-fi imagery, futurist themes, and technological innovation in the African diaspora*” (Nelson, 2002: 9). Nelson and the other cofounder of the website, Paul D. Miller, specify the outlines of the Afrofuturist artists and scholars as channeling “*futurist themes in black cultural production and the ways in which technological innovation is changing the face of black art and culture*” (2011). Likewise, in their book **Technicolor: Race, Technology and Everyday Life** (2001), Nelson, Tu, and Hines emphasize that the Afrofuturists tend to focus on the produced science fiction and its connection with technology.

In her 2017 Ted Talk, Afrofuturist author Nnedi Okarafor explains the difference between classic science fiction and Afrofuturism with an octopus analogy. She believes, similar to human beings, octopuses are very intelligent creatures but their intelligence evolves from a different evolutionary line so their roots differ. The same description can be applied to the foundations of science fiction’s different forms. She believes basic science fiction has ancestral roots in Western ideology which is white and male. According to her, Afrofuturism’s foundation lies within colonialism/decolonialism. Moreover, in **Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture**, Ytasha L. Womack asserts: “*Both an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs*” (2013: 9). Yet, many people—including scholars—seem to categorize Afrofuturism as a subgenre of science fiction or fantasy.

The main issue of categorizing Afrofuturism under such genres seems to be related to definitions being inadequate to explain, especially, the political aspect of Afrofuturism. In “Race in Science Fiction: The Case of Afrofuturism and New Hollywood,” Lisa Yaszek asserts that in the early 20th century, Afrofuturist writers have published their writings in political magazines such as “The Crisis” and/or “Pittsburgh Courier” contrary to their white colleagues who were publishing their works in magazines that are more related to science fiction and fantasy genres. These political magazines were important since they were mainly focusing on seeking black modernism that mainly tried to revive not only cultural but also aesthetic vision of the Harlem Renaissance (2013: 4-5). While science fiction and fantasy are generally

associated with more Western thinking of technology, science, and plot formation, Afrofuturists place Afrofuturism on the opposite of the spectrum. With the help of technology and science, Afrofuturists generally tend to focus on androids and cyborgs to break free from the discriminatory practices and critique of essentialism. By creating alternative spaces and times as well as African bodies and language to insert black individuality, Afrofuturism portrays liberation from Western ideology as well as African agency in a world that is driven by technology.

Apart from science fiction and fantasy, black speculative fiction also forms the basis of Afrofuturism. Mark Dery defines the movement as:

Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth century technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future. (1994: 736)

While Afrofuturists focus more on the aesthetic and cultural practices, black speculative fiction explores “*the historical scope of Afrofuturism*” (Jones, 2016). Even though the term has become popular around 1960s-1970s, early examples of black speculative fiction can be seen even in 1850s. **Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction**, edited by Sheree R. Thomas is helpful to provide examples from a wide spectrum. This anthology is significant since it constitutes the basics of Afrofuturistic writings as well. The anthology includes writings of Afrofuturist authors including Octavia E. Butler, Nalo Hopkinson, Ishmael Reed, Samuel R. Delany, Paul D. Miller, Amiri Baraka and more. The common denominator of all the stories and essays provided in the anthology is about going beyond the established acclamation of white manhood being viewed as the universal representation of humanness especially in the Western mind. These writers possess a goal to exceed over the history of Africans that has been implemented by the Europeans and Americans with strong political components. As their narratives become more unrealistic, the historical foundation begins to create its reality. For instance, Samuel R. Delany’s “Aye, and Gomorrah” (1967) describes genetically altered post-humans while making references to minorities—especially African-Americans—that were discriminated due to their

colors. Although Delany uses “*spacers*” who do not exist in reality, the desire to alter “*deformed ones*” (2000: 129) in the name of greater good has always been used by Euro-American ideology. The alternative history that is created in the writings, questions the core of humanity, its existence, and their active roles in the environmental ecosystem. The writers become advocates of posthumanism in this sense.

Since it is believed that speculative fiction forms the basis for Afrofuturism, the writings in this anthology provide guidance for proto-Afrofuturistic writings as well. One of the featured writers in the anthology is Octavia Butler who has come into prominence with black speculative fiction and Afrofuturism. In the afterword of “The Evening and the Morning and the Night” (1987) that was published in the anthology, Butler says: “*I began the story wondering how much of what we do is encouraged, discouraged, or otherwise guided by what we are genetically*” (2000: 195), questioning the core of humanism. In **Kindred** (1979), the same themes of genetics and ancestry are used to question the individuality of African-Americans. This study analyzes how the novel takes place in various alternative spaces and times to uncover the reality of Dana’s heritage and its effect on Dana’s decolonization of the mind with the use of her body and language abilities. Butler creates an entirely new antebellum South with the use of alternative spaces and time travelling in **Kindred**. Through an African-American woman protagonist and her time travels, Butler alters the geopolitical space and time in antebellum United States. It can be interpreted that Butler tries to find alternative time/space continuum in the past to create alternative futures similar to what many Afrofuturists and science fiction authors aim in their works.

Afrofuturism includes science fiction devices as well as themes of alienation, displacement, and abduction to describe the past African experience in Western countries and recreate possible alternative futures. African-Americans’ effects on technology and technology’s effect on them are within the specific focus of Afrofuturists. Africans have been used as human machines and can be counted as part of the labor-based technology. The mechanization of the Africans in slavery caused the dehumanization of the race. In an interview with Mark Dery, Samuel R. Delany describes that “*systematic, conscientious, and massive destruction of African cultural*

remnants” took place with the process of this dehumanization (1993: 746). Ben Williams even argues:

[T]he mechanical metaphors [...] extend beyond signifying post-humanity to embody a history that began with slavery; indeed, slavery, the original unit of capitalist labor, is here considered the originary form of the post-human [...] history of African Americans as subhuman, unworthy of the rights and responsibilities. (2001: 169-170)

Through this process of mechanization in slavery, Afrofuturists argue that they become the figures of cyborgs in white dominated worlds. This beyond-the-human-condition declaration also enables Afrofuturists to avoid essentialism and have more freedom on their argument.

In **More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction** (1999), Kodwo Eshun proposes that Afrofuturism gives a new perspective that can help to rewrite reality to separate the linkage of modernity with the notion of utopia. By producing an alternative history that connects modernity with the dehumanization of Africans—through colonialism and imperialism—Eshun emphasizes the relationship between modern enthusiasm for new technologies and trauma. He evaluates Afrofuturism as a critical connection point of race, future, technology, and power-relations which were created in order to satisfy the ideologies of white domination created and continued to develop since the sixteenth century. He also asserts the fact that Afrofuturism has a political agenda since the works of the movement challenge white domination in the past, present, and future.

Lisa Yaszek follows Eshun’s proposition of the function of Afrofuturism. In “Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, and the History of the Future,” she defines the movement as an aesthetic mode which includes various branches and forms of media forming a unity because of their shared connection of presenting Afrodiasporic futures that were originated from Africans’ experiences. She asserts that many authors from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the present have engaged in Afrofuturistic perspective. According to her, Afrofuturism is a political project that aims to reform the epistemological area away from the domination of white supremacy. She identifies the basis of Afrofuturism with African history and indicates the authors including

W.E.B. Du Bois, George Schulyer, and Samuel R. Delany laid the foundation stones for the movement.

It is not feasible to define a strict definition of who is an Afrofuturist due to the diversity the Afrofuturists present. For instance, the interviewees in Ytasha Womack's book in 2013 define Afrofuturism as a reactive stimulant that spreads the area of African thought and imagination. The book, **Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture**, is significant in terms of projecting the present state of the movement in the United States. Contrary to Mark Dery's belief that suggests Africans alter technological images developed by whites, Womack demonstrates how Africans use different forms including art, literature, music, philosophy to exhibit their own conceptualization of future. Just like the artists' works that she follows, Womack seems to travel across time and space in order to record Afrofuturist artists, activists, and academics. She accumulates that these Afrofuturists regard the movement as a reply to dystopian futures for Africans, a break from African stereotypes that restrict black creativity, a means of resistance to oppressive powers, an overview of African life's technological function, restoration of Africans' scientific inquiries, and an agency that builds self-esteem and community structures. After interviewing all sorts of artists that are connected to Afrofuturism, her final result is that Afrofuturism is a way that guides imagination in terms of self-evolution and communal growth. According to Yaszek:

Afrofuturism is not only a subgenre of science fiction. Instead, it is a larger aesthetic mode that encompasses a diverse range of artists working in different genres and media who are united by their shared interest in projecting black futures derived from Afrodiasporic experiences. (2006: 42)

Thus, the diversity of Afrofuturists in the current popular culture is immense. Afrofuturist Alondra Nelson also agrees on the diversity of the artists. In "Afrofuturism: Past-Future Visions," she asserts that Afrofuturism views popular culture "*to find models of expression that transform spaces of alienation into novel forms of creative potential*" (2000b: 35). In the article, Nelson names many artists who she considers to be Afrofuturists and highlights that all these names have reflected the history of Afrodiasporic culture but also pushed its traditions further. She believes

these artists “*garner text, sound and image in the service of reimagining black life*” (Ibid.). The most important aspect of their work is that they create reflections of the past and exhibit possible alternative futures.

There are many Afrofuturist artists that create art combined with African elements, cultures, and myths. They believe that an individual’s past and experiences are essential in determining what they may become. Afrofuturist writers do not restrict themselves by tags so that they feel comfortable by being referred to as science fiction, fantasy, or speculative fiction writers depending on their focus areas. Almost all Afrofuturists’ works combine technological and science-fiction tropes with African culture, colonial roots, mythology, and tradition to revisit the past while creating alternative futures. In literature, Nnedi Okorafor comes into prominence as an Afrofuturist writer. She has produced many works that include the themes of Afrofuturism including **Binti** trilogy and **Shadow Speaker**. Instead of calling the movement Afrofuturism, she calls herself writing in Africanfuturism. In a radio broadcast, Okorafor says Africanfuturism or Afrofuturism is “*deeply rooted in Africa, it grows out of Africa to the rest of the world and beyond. It imagines a future, it imagines what is and what can be*” through the involvement of technological developments (2019: 1:12-1:26). Influenced by Octavia Butler, Okorafor questions gender and identity issues in highly imaginative settings with African women protagonists with heavy African cultural content.

In other disciplines such as music, Sun Ra and the Omniverse Arkestra are among the pioneers that started incorporating Afrofuturistic elements into music in 1930s. Currently, Janelle Monáe is among the most popular ones with her on-stage Android persona that enables her to engage in gender roles, technology, and sexuality at the same time. In “Vessels of Transfer: Allegories of Afrofuturism in Jeff Mills and Janelle Monáe” (2003), Tobias C. Van Veen describes how the use of allegories enable such artists to touch upon much more serious and important colonial aspects of Africans’ pasts and at the same time provide the artists such ambiguities that free them from the restrictions that were imposed by the dominant cultures and beliefs. He emphasizes on the movement’s multiple strategies. One of the strategies includes the study of narrative structure and fictive agency illustrated to categorize African-American subjects in futurist chronologies. In another, he exposes that Afrofuturism

exercises with alternative worlds, realities as well as timelines as allegories that do not only represent but may also alter the present conditions. Afrofuturism does not only implement the recurring themes of the engagement with the aliens, cyborgs, androids or other extraterrestrial figures or a simple time and space traveling; it also has the potential to promote the Afrodiasporic existence in various forms.

Referring back, Kodwo Eshun asserts his thoughts on the use of allegory in Afrofuturism in his book as well. Eshun realizes the incompetency of interpreting Afrofuturist art as allegory through the Afrofuturist artist Sun Ra's example while also focusing on its essentiality. On one hand, he defends the aspect that guides us to accept the movement's claims of giving concrete form to concepts such as extraterrestrial creatures. Eshun believes this allows the audience to understand the figure that stands for the extraterrestrial creatures is nothing but an allegory for the historical exposure of slavery, discrimination, and racism. This aspect leads the audience to imagine about Afrofuturism's impermanent effects on how it questions the reality of some sections of the past and vice versa. This questioning also helps to interpret its agenda as autonomous. On the other hand, moving on Sun Ra's example, Eshun rejects Sun Ra's allegorical stand because he believes that the racist conditions African-Americans went through were inhuman in reality. Therefore, this condition of being treated as non-human puts them in a paradox because this non-existing condition cannot place them in reality. So, the fiction that was and will continue to be produced with the same mindset also belongs to this non-existing state. Yet, even when Eshun denies Sun Ra's use of allegory, he still continues to originate his criticism on individuals from the African-Americans' past colonial experiences.

According to Womack's survey in her book, the concept of Afrofuturism enables artists to get organized, and reconstruct its meaning and engagement by reinterpreting its history. In a constitutive manner, she assesses, this history is interlaced with modernity and modernity's progress narratives that have futuristic components in which the purpose was to form a world or reality without any non-humans. In **Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race**, Paul Gilroy reveals that modernity, or the Enlightenment, was inevitably engaged with the study

of human races. He asserts that “*the consolidation of modern raciology*¹ *required enlightenment and myth to be intertwined*” (2004: 59). He explains how the Enlightenment created new opportunities for man while excluding women and, especially, African-American slaves. According to Gilroy, the only way to move forward is “*planetary humanism*” (Ibid., 2) which is about revoking race in a recreated multiracial society. Just paying attention to humans can easily lead to another confirmation of the language of race in which the human race is being held superior to the other species on the planet. Afrofuturism’s argument on this is to become universally alien or post-humans. The indicated universality is not related with the land but rather it is about being alien to the Earth through species’ cosmopolitanism and moving beyond the state of human.

Prior to moving beyond the state of humans, it is important to embrace the past and path the Afrofuturists have experienced or argued towards. In an interview in January 2018, Caribbean-Canadian writer Nalo Hopkinson states that currently the term “*Afrofuturist*” is being used to refer to activists or scholar activists because “*it is a radical act for black people to imagine having a future*” (2010: 01:35). Therefore, she believes there is “*now a confluence of Afrofuturism and black activism*” and the reason for this activism is to get recognition “*as a human because [blacks] know [they] already are*” (Ibid., 01:40). Hopkinson’s perspective of relating Afrofuturism with protesting also connects Afrofuturism with decolonizing resistance. This act of protesting is visible all through **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, **Invisible Man** and **Kindred**.

Apart from being categorized as a science fiction, **Kindred** is also evaluated as a slave narrative and speculative fiction as well. However, most of the genres seem to be inadequate in fully describing the novel. Many scholars, for instance, argue that labelling the novel as solely a science-fiction would demote its strong political aspect. In her article, Sherryl Vint explains that Butler does not use time travelling out of its concept:

[S]he is not interested in a Jonbar point upon which to erect some counterfactual, in shaping or adjusting history, but in the affective and embodied connections

¹ Raciology is the term used by Paul Gilroy to describe the language of race.

that exist in and across time. Her concern is not with grandfather paradoxes, with securing the past, but rather with ensuring that the past is actually heard. Her time travel is used not to change the past (and thereby the future) but to change our understanding of it, which changes the present and opens up fresh possible outcomes for our future. (Vint, 2007: 255)

Even though there is no question of time travelling having impact on the past, the future, or the present, Vint's comment helps to question the traditional use of time travelling as well. The novel does not possess any scientific technology used in time travelling, nor are the episodes done voluntarily by the protagonist. According to Hannah Rehak, Butler combines different genres in her novel: "*Through her original take on a slave narrative, Butler creates a fantastical and non-linear storyline that re-centers an authentic history, comments on a traumatized present, and provides material for a better future*" (2015: 2). In an interview, Butler also denies the labeling of her novel as a science-fiction and asserts that she believes the novel to be a part of "fantasy" genre because "*time travel is just a device for getting the character back to confront where she came from*" (1991: 495-496). In the interview, Butler emphasizes time traveling as a tool to help the protagonist confront her past which in this case involves a visit to the antebellum south. By confronting an alternative past, Butler enables her protagonist to create alternative presents as well as futures. It is this aspect that Butler highlights places the novel within the Afrofuturistic genre.

As mentioned earlier, Afrofuturists emphasize the need to look at the past to create alternative futures. In her book **Playing in the Dark**, for example, Toni Morrison asserts: "*Black slavery enriched the country's creative possibilities*" (1992: 38). The oppressive approach from the white Americans enabled African-Americans to create a networked consciousness which also helped African-American artistry. Through Afrofuturism, African descended artists can produce alternative futures that are more African-culture, -heritage and -body oriented. Proto-Afrofuturists as well as Afrofuturists try to exceed the racial limits in the hopes of better future alternatives for African descendants. As Mark Dery points out in **Flame Wars**, "*African-American voices have other stories to tell about culture, technology and things to come. If there is an Afrofuturism, it must be sought in unlikely places, constellated from far-flung points*" (1994: 182). As proto-Afrofuturist works, Hurston's **Their Eyes Were**

Watching God and Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** seem to be fitting Dery's description since both novels present parallels to reality while proposing social changes that bring hopes for African-Americans' future. Hurston and Ellison are the two of the most prominent writers that help the development of this movement even before its name was coined. In her 1937 novel, **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, Hurston describes an all-African-American town that is "*lak every other [white American] town*" of the time (2000: 50). Similarly in **Invisible Man** (1952), Ellison creates an entirely unique underground world that is free of any prejudices and fuels it with technology. These are the main focus of attention for these writers to be selected for this study. As proto-Afrofuturists, they will be analyzed in terms of their contribution to the development of the movement by their use of alternative spaces, body, and language.

In **Their Eyes Were Watching God** by Hurston, the root of Octavia Butler's ideology is very much visible. The novel presents a version of proto-Afrofuturistic writing without the use of science-fiction or technological tropes. Before the naming of Afrofuturism, Zora Neale Hurston was among the female African-American writers to use the characteristics of the movement including the use of imagination, storytelling/myth, and art to restate how womanness and Africanness are expressed. However, it was not until Afrofuturism appeared that African-American women writers were given credit for their use of imagination and part in being the designers for the future. This is the reason why Afrofuturist theorists, such as Ytasha L. Womack, honor Hurston for her use of imagination on creating alternative spaces for resistance and feel related to her works as including Afrofuturism's earlier form.

Hurston's "*rhetorical virtuosity and folkloric imagination*" (Leitch et. al., 2001: 2317) were not in line with the other realist texts that were written on African-Americans at the time. She, rather, engages in distortion of geopolitical history of the United States through an imagining of African-American woman protagonist's self-journey to her individuality. In her writings, Hurston often uses dialect or "*the folk voice, an orality that captures the essence of the African-American folk experience*" (Anokye, 1996: 152). Hurston believes the folk voice is one of the ways to portray the African-American individuality. The portrayed folk voices in her works also undergo changes over time just like African-American individuality.

Similarly, Ralph Ellison is keen on the African-American folk voice. In **Invisible Man**, Ellison uses dialects to present a general overview of America through the African-Americans. He asserts:

[M]y task was one of revealing the human universals hidden within the plight of one who was both black and American, and not only as a means of conveying my personal vision of possibility, but as a way of dealing with the sheer rhetorical challenge involved in communicating across our barriers of race and religion, class, color, and region [...] And to defeat this national tendency to deny the common humanity shared by my character and those who might happen to read of his experience, I would have to provide him with something of a worldview, give him a consciousness in which serious philosophical questions could be raised, provide him with a range of diction that could play upon the richness of our readily shared vernacular speech and construct a plot that would bring him in contact with a variety of American types as they operated on various levels of society. (1982: xxii)

By including such characters as Trueblood, the Provos, Peter Wheatstraw, and Mary as crucial components of the narrative, Ellison tries to equate them with the other characters such as Mr. Norton, Mr. Emerson, and his son, that are thought to possess a value due to their white heritage. By doing so, Ellison aims to implement his vision to challenge the color barrier in between.

Some of the themes of Ralph Ellison's novel include the African Americans' social invisibility and the white denial of blacks' individuality (Johnson, 1999: 99). Today, these themes are well processed and commonly thought of but in his time, the novel changed the social spectrum on how people viewed racism and black literature of the 1940s and 1950s (Miralles, 2017: 59). Of course, it should be emphasized that by invisibility, it is referred to Todd Lieber's definition of "*the situation of men whose individual identity is denied*" (1972: 86). As for the denial, it is defined in the context of the ones who deny African-Americans as individuals. Ellison's portrayal on how African-Americans see themselves as well as the whites put a new perspective on the general idea that the only valuable perspective was how whites portrayed blacks. The fact that feelings were mutual was exactly what Fanon describes in his works, especially in **Black Skin, White Masks**.

For the "Introduction" of **Invisible Man**'s special publication, Ellison describes the book as "*a piece of science fiction*" (1982: xv). Lisa Yazsek announces

Ralph Ellison as one of the “*proto-Afrofuturist*” writers since **Invisible Man** is an affirmation of the description for the argument it presents for an alternative to the empirical experience of African-Americans. To support the claim, it should be emphasized that many Afrofuturist scholars and authors, including Mark Dery, Alondra Nelson and Sheree R. Thomas accept his efforts and contributions to the development of the early forms of Afrofuturism as well.

The proto-Afrofuturist aspect of the novels allows to question the positive assumptions on the advancement of technology’s influence especially on the lives of African-Americans. Imre Szeman calls this positivism as “*techno-utopianism*” and states it as part of a notion of politics that people generate “*only such disasters as technology can solve; the disaster arises only when the conditions in which to repair it are already in the process of formation*” (2007: 814). Science fiction is interested in such utopianism since it dwells around the idea that advancement in science and progress in technology is going to lead to the universal development. Moreover, early science fiction actually exhibits how colonial ideology of advancement constructs the base for the scientific practices². Both science fiction and Afrofuturist writers are interested in the idea of reconstructing a world where there is significant amount of economic growth and technological advancement which possess a breaking point from the past and histories. Proto-Afrofuturistic works, such as **Invisible Man**, challenge the ideology of advancement which exists as a result of “*techno-utopianism*.” In the novel, technology is reflected as a means for submission and intimidation. Alondra Nelson also describes the issue of “*digital divide*” which is basically the general prejudiced belief of African-Americans’ inability to work with technology to nourish their self-growth. Ellison suggests that careful attention must be provided to the social, material, and moral interests offered by the techno-scientific progress and this digital divide can be overcome with the isolation from the restrictions and repressions from the dominant white culture.

A shared characteristic of proto-Afrofuturist texts advocates that the history of African-Americans has always been subjected to racialization in terms of space and

²John Rieder, **Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction**. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

time. Within Hurston's or Ellison's protagonists' journeys, the post-slavery economy of the U.S. is described in separation from the neutralized state. Similarly, even though the slavery has been long abolished in Butler's **Kindred**, race consciousness that prevents the color-line to disappear still continues to colonize African-Americans. While describing the cognitive map to colonize and enslave the African-Americans, Ellison also provides an alternative space and time concept beyond conventional perceptions. With the use of imagination, Hurston also joins Ellison to help dive into a world of African-American speculation of imagining. These proto-Afrofuturistic novels allow to have an outlook for the possible African-American alternative histories and futures through creating alternative spaces.

This dissertation benefits from Edward Soja's thirdspace theory as well as Homi Bhabha's hybridity and "*Third Space of Enunciation*" theories when examining the alternative space use within the novels. Edward Soja uses Henri Lefebvre's theory on three-dimensional dialectic space, which he refers as the physical, the mental, and the social spaces, as a basis to formulate a theory that emphasizes "*the inherent spatiality of human life*" (1996: 1). Soja associates space with social, geographical, and even political aspects of life. He interprets the physically felt space of Lefebvre as the firstspace that is connected with the "*real material world*" (Ibid., 6). Soja associates the firstspace with the material world as well as the social aspect of individuals' environments. In "*more exogenous mode of Firstspatial analysis*," he asserts, "*human spatiality continues to be defined primarily by and in its material configurations, but explanation shifts away from these surface plottings themselves to an inquiry into how they are socially produced*" (Ibid., 76-77). This materiality and the shifts in ways to experience it underline the impact of authority, ideology, and awareness in the construction of social spaces. Thus, firstspace has a restrictive sense. In contrast, analysis of secondspace focuses on "*explanatory concentration on conceived rather than perceived space and their implicit assumption that spatial knowledge is primarily produced through discursively devised representations of space, through the spatial workings of the mind*" (Ibid., 79). The mental space is the secondspace in where the interpretation of "*reality through 'imagined' representations of spatiality*" (Ibid., 6) takes place. Soja does not distinguish the secondspace entirely from the material world or the firstspace. Rather, he focuses on the comprehension of this material reality

mainly on the mind through subjective thoughts of individuals. The secondspace is more individualistic, composed of the individual's personal and imagined thoughts.

In his previous work, Soja accentuates: “[T]he organization and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation and experience” (1989: 79-80). The definition of the thirdspace, hence, includes the space in which all binarisms/oppositions contradict and compared with other alternatives. According to Soja thirdspace is:

an efficient invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable. It is a space where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other. (1996: 5)

Social constructions in society include geographical space, as well as individuals who usually come from different backgrounds and their different interpretations related to those backgrounds and mindsets. Individuals do not have a static state of mind about neither of the social constructions nor about the physical spaces. Soja's theory focuses on how individuals cannot view the different dimensions of such spaces in isolation. By developing Lefebvre's theory further, Edward Soja supports the importance of the “*inherent spatiality of human life*” (Ibid., 1). Individuals construct their spaces through their physical reality, past experiences as well as personal interpretations of their surroundings. That is why their personal background, experiences, social, and political perspectives possess importance in their construction and reconstruction of their spaces. Edward Soja also focuses on how the colonizing powers have an effect on the concept of space. He believes the “*hegemonic power*” who possesses authority “*does not merely manipulate naively given differences between individuals and social groups, it actively produces and reproduces difference as a key strategy to create and maintain modes of social and spatial division*” that is to the authority's favor (Ibid., 87). The individuals have to make a choice to follow the established rules or separate themselves from the others. This strategy to produce difference is also closely associated with postcolonial theory.

As one of the main figures in subaltern studies, Homi K. Bhabha in **The Location of Culture** (1994) explores the question of how to understand postcolonial culture in his book. He discusses how a person's identity should be perceived and its contribution to the postcolonial studies. He opposes the belief of a fixed identity and argues that culture has great impact on the identity and its formation. He focuses on binary oppositions and their effects on Western thinking. He is against these oppositions since he believes these kinds of separations restrict any culture as homogenous, fixated, and static. Since the emphasis of double-voicedness is mainly on the identity and social structure, Bhabha asserts that it is psycho-cultural rather than psycho-political. This is important because when the mimicry and imitation exist, people who are being mimicked may feel destabilized. And for Bhabha that means the beginning of change, power, and political resistance. According to him, all social constructions are indeterminate and include "*hybridity*." Bhabha argues that "*cultural hybridity*" is result of various types of colonization that eventually lead to alteration and encounter. In his article, "The Commitment to Theory," he defines hybridity as "*where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the Other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes [...] the very forms of our recognition of the 'moment' of politics*" and it emerges from "*Third Space of enunciation*" (1994: 37).

Bhabha discusses two of the important aspects of contemporary postcolonial theory: the effects of colonialism and the need for fluid representations of race. Bhabha's theories analyze the hybridity's portrayal within the colonized in order to emphasize their being and the impact on the colonizer culture. He argues that this helps the colonized groups to be considered a united homogeneous mixture which are either assimilated or invisible—meaning, absent. By highlighting the effects of the colonized cultures on the colonizer, Bhabha saves them from passivity by giving them an agency and activity. Also by referring to liminal space, he generates a need to go further than the simple assumption of fixed identification. From another perspective, Anjali Prabhu evaluates in **Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects** (2007) that hybridity can form an alternative exit to avoid binary thinking. In addition, it can allow the subaltern's caption of agency and form a reestablishment by causing instability of power of the dominant culture. Since the binaries within a society, especially within

the colonizer cultures, serve as a tool to administer racial awareness of the dominant group, Prabhu believes that the heterogeneity of the subaltern group can help to alter such tools.

Bhabha and many of the scholars on the same research area try to stress on the complexity of the contemporary and emphasize on a needed space that allows various—confirming and contradicting—ethnic and racial identifications. Thus, Afrofuturism presents the artists with the needed and desired space for hybrid representation which enables them to challenge fixed racial and ethno-racial views. By using interspecies, for example, Afrofuturist artists can demonstrate the colonial thinking's ideologies on racism. The audiences can explore the chaotic and complex illustration of ethnicity and race and also question the essentialized social norms through freedom of form and expression. The artists can build on Bhabha's cultural hybridity theory by often presenting hybrid characters that disturb the firm lines of hierarchy within society. With the use of liminal space, the Afrofuturists in the United States, for instance, can depict the relationship between the represented racial rhetoric and the hands-on experience of African-Americans.

Bhabha argues that *“all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity”* (Bhabha, 1990: 211). Bhabha's Third Space is a space where production of new possibilities can take place. It is *“the interruptive, interrogative, tragic experience of blackness, of discrimination, of despair. It is the apprehension of the social and psychic question of ‘origin’”* (Bhabha: 1994: 238). In this space, the already established values, opinions, and limitations related to culture become vague and allow new alternatives to be produced without any fixed wholeness. A hybrid identity already possesses transculturation and Third Space helps the healthy division of identity within individuals occur while enabling them to create meaning from their surroundings. Bhabha's ideas on identity and its formation draw parallelism with Fanon's colonialism model and Lacan's conceptualization of the individual's split state and ability for mimicry. Both the split and mimicry of the African-Americans enable them to create hybrid identities as colonized subjects. However, Bhabha's concept has been found to be troubling to some scholars for neglecting some of the basics of historical and essential terms. On the other hand, Bhabha's Third Space model, along with Soja's theory, help to decolonize the identity of the African body

through the use of alternative spaces. When considered the social, cultural as well as political overtone of Afrofuturistic works, the produced works present significant sources that change the way of thinking. Afrofuturists believe individuals need to acknowledge one's own body and mind in order to exist further in technologically driven world.

Studies of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability focus on how identity relates directly to the body. These studies draw on a wide selection of especially the twentieth century sources for theoretical background. They include studies in psychoanalysis, feminism, culture, and body—Michel Foucault's works on the body's significance became central and led to the formation of it as a separate category. Contrary to Sigmund Freud's understanding of women's body being castrated and men's being in fear of castration, Jacques Lacan argues that all living subjects are castrated and deprived of phallus. This castration invokes the moment of loss that triggers the fragmentation of subjects.

In **The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis**, Lacan highlights the significance of the loss which leads to the beginning of submission and the occurrence of symbolization in order for the subject to appear: "*the subject is born in so far as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other*" (1978: 199). The Other, or the "*big Other*," is not only another subject with its radical diversity and inadaptability through identification but also the Symbolic order that moderate the connection with that other subject. The Other is inscribed in the Symbolic order because Lacan associates radical diversity with language and law. He says: "[T]he Other must first of all be considered a locus, the locus in which speech is constituted" (1993: 274). According to him, women are also regarded as the Other. He says: "*Man here acts as the relay whereby the woman becomes this Other for herself as she is this Other for him*" (2005: 732). Thus, it is natural that Lacan describes the mother as the first person to occupy the position of the Other for the child as well because aside from being the Other for both men and women, mothers are the ones who read the child's earliest needs as messages and take action accordingly. When the child realizes the flaws with

the Other that signify her lack of certain things, such as the phallus, and is incomplete, then she tries to possess the missing things.³

In the Symbolic order, the subjects move beyond their bodily functions into the world of words and “*The Law*”⁴ that are more related to the representations through language. Lacan associates language mainly with the Symbolic order while including the dimensions of the Imaginary and the Real relating to the language. Symbolic order includes the culture as opposed to the Imaginary states’ nature. Similar to language, this stage is autonomous without any effects of biology and genetics, and it is associated with the unconscious since Lacan regards the unconscious as a concept that connects the signification to the subject as a function of the Symbolic order. In *Écrits*, he asserts that the unconscious is “*neither primordial nor instinctual*” (2005: 129). He views the unconscious as an entity that opens and closes within intervals and helps with the subject processing by the Symbolic (Ibid., 143). He further argues that it is related with linguistics: “*The unconscious is structured like a language*” because the only way to capture the unconscious is through its detailed analysis with the use of words (1993: 167) and emphasizes it as a discourse: “*One should see in the unconscious the effects of speech on the subject*” (1977: 126).

While Jacques Lacan’s Imaginary is limited to the comprehensibility of the images, the Symbolic order involves the interpretation of reality’s meaning and importance of the use of language. The Symbolic order includes the subject to become both autonomous as well as under the influence of the greater Law. This law includes the law of the father, the authority, the language, culture, and etc. For Lacan, the Imaginary and Symbolic orders do not occur chronologically. Both orders are interchangeable and constitute the subject’s continuous experiences. The two orders involving images as well as words help to make sense of the world and reality that include the subjects’ subjectivity as well as the social interactions. Even in the very first connection formed between the mother and infant, Lacan emphasizes the aspect of mother’s desire. This question of her desire disrupts the infant since he believes he is the desire of his mother. The notion leads to the thinking of the mother as not being

³ See Jacques Lacan’s and Sigmund Freud’s ideas on the “*castration complex*” that are related with “*the Oedipus complex*”.

⁴ The Law is “*revealed clearly enough as identical with an order of language*” (Lacan, 2005: 66).

a whole which eventually evolves around the argument that the Imaginary order's phallic mother is already the Symbolic order's castrated mother. And the ego of the Imaginary contradicts the symbolic affiliation of difference. This order also highlights the concept of drive since it indicates that the body's experience can find meaning only in the medium of language that includes other subjects.

In Lacan's theorization of the Oedipal Complex, a subject gains sexual position when they become castrated. So, Lacan argues that there is no sexual difference prior to castration. He asserts the phallus places the signifier into the subjects without differentiating the "*anatomical difference of the sexes*" (Lacan, 2005: 216). So, the phallus helps the infant's passage into the representational realm of the Symbolic. Lacan stresses that phallus is not an image or an organ but a mere signifier. He asserts that every subject lacks phallus in one way or another and the reason is: "*the deviation of man's needs due to the fact that he speaks*" (Ibid., 575).

According to Lacan, the identifier of sexual identity does not depend on biological gender or any other innate factors, in that manner. He argues that sexual identity is learned through the interactions between language and identification of the subject. In **Book I**, Lacan views sex as relating to identity instead of gender of the subject. As the writer of **Jacques Lacan**, Anika Lemaire asserts that:

For Lacan, the relative form of the Oedipus complex or of the family does not exclude the essentials of what they represent for humanization in structural terms: the obligation every child is under to submit his or her sexuality to certain restrictions and laws; the laws of organization and exchange within a sexually differentiated group. (1981: 81)

Lacan believes that this is the way the child finds its own place among the surrounding society. Thus, the Oedipal crisis occurs not when the child desires the mother sexually, but rather when the child begins to conceive society's established sexual measure. Overcoming this crisis is related to accepting and following the rules of the surrounding society. These rules are transmitted by the Symbolic order which involves both verbal and non-verbal communication. Symbolic order includes the articulation, universalization, and interpretation that are derived from experience and perception.

In **Book XI**, Jacques Lacan asserts that the ideal method to understand sexual differences is through the state of active-passive (1977: 192). This is the only way since the male-female differences can be demonstrated within the psyche of the subject (since Lacan believes the reproduction's biological function is not represented). Thus, Lacan asserts that the role of women or men within society is a dramatic act which is completely dependent on the field of the Other (Ibid., 204). This leads to the sexual awareness being initiated at the Imaginary order but the true realization of the subject's awareness of his or her sexuality taking place in the Symbolic order (Ibid., 170). He says: *"It is insofar as the function of man and woman is symbolized, it is insofar as it's literally uprooted from the domain of the imaginary and situated in the domain of the symbolic, that any normal, completed sexual position is realized"* (Ibid., 177). Although Lacan signifies phallus' representational state instead of its material being, it is still associated with masculinity in his works. So, it is also important to focus on ego formation prior to the infant's passage to the representational realm.

Prior to the development of the Symbolic order, ego is formed in the Imaginary. In "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," Lacan focuses on the ego and the Imaginary order. Lacan's "*Imaginary order*" is referred to as the illusionary state that the connection between the ego and the specular image occur. Lacan explains the specular image as the absorption of the individual's own body in the mirror, the "*little other*" (Lacan, 1988: 321). In the mirror stage that Lacan depicts, the infant does not regard herself as a separate entity from her parents or the world. By the early 1950s, Lacan begins to view the mirror stage as a permanent structure of subjectivity which connects it to the Imaginary order. By connecting with the specular image, the baby starts to constitute an ego in the mirror stage which is:

a phenomenon to which I assign a twofold value. In the first place, it has historical value as it marks a decisive turning-point in the mental development of the child. In the second place, it typifies an essential libidinal relationship with the body-image. For these two reasons the phenomenon demonstrates clearly the passing of the individual to a stage where the earliest formation of the ego can be observed. (Lacan, 1953: 14)

The individual sees his behaviors reflected in the imitative gestures of the other individuals. Through these gestures, the imitated person begins to employ the position of a specular image. While men identify with the parents of the same sex, women are “*required to take the image of the other sex as the basis of [their] identification*” (Lacan, 1988: 176). For women to realize “*her sex is not accomplished in the Oedipus complex in a way symmetrical to that of the man’s, not by identification with the mother, but on the contrary by identification with the paternal object, which assigns her an extra detour*” (Ibid., 172).

In order to overcome the insufficiencies, the infant in Lacan’s psychoanalysis needs the help of the main Other who is generally the mother. This is why the mothers play a central role in the infant’s identity formation by serving as the mirror that the infant identifies with. When the infant becomes aware that the third person prohibits the infant’s merging with the mother, he begins to feel separated from the mother. This awareness is caused by the phallic signifier. Lacan’s “*signifier*” is used in a different sense than Saussure’s use of the term. According to Lacan, the signified—concept—is superior to the signifier—sound/form—when determining meaning. Lacan argues that the signified is associated with the unconscious, while the signifier is associated with language. He views the unconscious meaning system above and beyond linguistic meaning—at this point Lacan reverses Saussure’s order. In Lacan’s works, the signified occurs due to the effects of the signifiers within the unconscious. The signified also constitutes the fixed part of the individual’s identity. The phallic signifier sets limitations and inner boundaries on the mirror stage’s illusion of wholeness which eventually lead the subject to feel fragmented. However, Lacan argues that by viewing his reflection as a whole in front of a mirror, the subject perceives his body as fragmented as opposed to general assumption since the body of the subject does not possess motor coordination skills at this point.

According to Lacan, consciousness takes place when “*there’s a surface such that it can produce what is called an image*” (1991: 49). The infant who is fragmented in body⁵ needs to identify itself with an image that seems to be unified. The illusion

⁵ Overall, the fragmented body associates not only with the physical images but also with any kinds of fragmentation and lack of unity: “*He [the subject] is originally an inchoate collection of desires—there*

that is created by the identification with a coherent image enables the infant to go through its own developmental stages. It also causes the ego of the infant to become more narcissistic and aggressive. This phase is crucial for the development of self-consciousness which brings the self-fragmentation and the feeling of alienation along. The complexity of representing oneself in a coherent image causes the self to become split and serve unconsciousness to its own.

The split of the self can have different outcomes for individuals. In “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” for instance, Laura Mulvey focuses beyond literature and describes how in mainstream Hollywood movies, women are portrayed as passive objects that are subordinated to male gaze while using psychoanalysis framework. She asserts two pleasures that are visible in the movies. The first one is Freud’s scopophilia, which is the pleasure in looking. By using scopophilia the gazer objectifies the subject with a controlling gaze. And the second pleasure Mulvey describes is related to Lacan’s mirror stage. In this stage the subject identifies with the ideal image that is portrayed on the screen. While Mulvey realizes that psychoanalysis does not provide a solution to the inequalities between the genders, she argues that it can be used as a political apparatus. Psychoanalytic theory helps to further understand the use of body, gender issues, voice, and language in Afrofuturism. In the dissertation, the psychoanalytic focus on especially the Imaginary and the Symbolic helps to highlight the identity of the African-Americans through processes of identity and gender formation.

Besides the individual’s developmental orders, the communal aspect is highly important to be considered in the study. The emphasis on communal growth and unity is present within the objectives of Afrofuturism along with some criticism. The fact that cultures and humans are at constant change locates unity and shared values at risk for some scholars. However, Afrofuturism regards the aspect of artists’ sharing a similar historical colonial experience to form a common ground. In order not to stray away from the main focus on decolonization, the analysis also includes Frantz Fanon’s thoughts on colonialism and emphasis on double-voicedness of African-Americans. In

you have the true sense of the expression fragmented body” (Lacan, 1993: 39). Any similar sense that lacks cohesion jeopardizes the constitution of the ego.

Black Skin, White Masks, he uses psychoanalysis to form his arguments and readings on the impact of eagerness towards anti-African-American racism as well as stressing on the gender aspect of how power and individualism is generated within colonialism. In the book, Fanon circles around the quote: “*Look, a Negro!*” (2008: 82) and how it is an insult as a part of anti-African-American racism. He regards the word as an insult and the gaze that comes with this declaration as locking one’s identity within an anti-African-American racist perspective. He believes when the recognition of African-Americanness comes, the subjectivity and therefore the humanity of African-Americans can also occur.

Fanon argues that the Africans should not depend on the culture to live. He believes no abolished culture can form the base for a new one because culture should be associated with the present not with the past. Afrofuturist scholars and artists agree with Fanon in terms of the culture’s function in black national consciousness. Afrofuturists believe in a more universalized world where people are not being categorized according to their skin colors, ethnicities or cultures. In **Nationalism and Identity** (1996), Stefano Harvey commented that Fanon desired a community where intellectuals were living among the common people and taking new wisdom from them. Since Afrofuturists reflect their common historical colonial experiences in the works they produced, it is possible to comment that Fanon’s desire came into being within Afrofuturist artists and intellectuals.

Parallel to Fanon’s assertions, some elements of Afrocentrism can be important to the African literature and the Afrodiasporic studies if those elements are viewed within the realm of invented traditions. In describing the practice of invented tradition, Eric Hobsbawm (1983) point out that new symbols and devices are formed as part of national movements and states. Symbols such as flags, national anthems and images that personify nationhood come into being. Africans located in Africa and the African diaspora have invented traditions in the search of self-determination. The use of some Afrocentric ideas can be seen in the same vein. Afrofuturistic elements also form invented traditions that suit the definition of Hobsbawm and support Fanon’s ideas.

W.E.B Du Bois evaluates double-consciousness as the portrayal of the self-acknowledged “*through the eyes of others*” and “*measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity*” (2007: 8). In **The Souls of Black**

Folks, Du Bois asserts the whites place Africans under a representational veil without differentiating their social status. Analyzing Africans this way allows whites to evaluate them as negative reflections of themselves. The use of the veil metaphor allows whites to deprive Africans of their rights and thus, enable the wealthy portion of the white society to elevate and preserve their granted status. He believes because they are veiled, they have a sense of double consciousness which simply means measuring the self through the eyes of other people. Producing stereotypes and myths, especially on African women, are among the most common ways to veil Africans. The case of African women is even more difficult since they are veiled not only by the whites but also the African men. Thus, African women's identity can demonstrate double or even multi-faceted consciousness. The double-consciousness that Du Bois diagnosed as fundamental to modern black psyches is remixed and recomplicated in Afrofuturism.

By pointing out the incompetence of social and experimental terms related to human identity, difference in sexuality, and the connection built on them, Lacan and Fanon focus on the basis of both social and historical conditions related to the central structures of subjects. Some feminists benefit from Lacan's idea that people's attainment of self as well as nature and nurture is only an illusion. Lacan's notion draws parallelism with Bhabha's hybrid identity as well as feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldua's "*mestiza*"⁶. Anzaldua asserts that all humans are mixed, hybrid or what she calls "*mestiza*." She focuses on multicultural identities and the difficulties of the authors, who use the language of the colonizer, reflecting similar concerns in the postcolonial theory. Her research mainly focuses on confusions related to space and boundaries within geographical spaces and identity related to race.

Ytasha Womack, Alondra Nelson and Sheree R. Thomas especially focus on Afrofuturism's use by African women to find their own bodies, identities, and voices. These authors focus on how the African women writers are not faced with any racial or sexist boundaries within the movement. Afrofuturism enables the African-American female writers to have an alternative discourse on their bodies, womanhood, and self-image where they could challenge the hegemonic expectations of white or

⁶ It is translated as mestizo in English.

African-American masculinities. The authors especially focus on the African-American women's liberation in every aspect of life. That is why some of the criticism on this movement is pointed to the uncategorizable and indefinable aspect it presents. Also, the question of "*Can it not bring sexual thoughts when the center holds a female who is in charge of her body and ideas?*" comes to mind. However, according to Womack's book on Afrofuturism, valuing femininity is one of the ways that distinguishes Afrofuturism from other movements such as science fiction and futurist movements that were developed in the past (2013: 103). According to Womack, what separates them is the fact that they can make their own decisions on their artistic voice. They are the ones who produce the art and the frame to the world to see and to be seen. Another essential point that is emphasized by the Afrofuturist authors is that the voices, which are created by the Afrofuturist female artists, are not created to oppose discriminatory or male-dominated mindsets. Along with the contemporary issues—mainly about sex differences—restrictions appear on their behalf. However, it was the individual self and thinking that united them under this movement. Their aim is to replace the audiences' already established ways of thinking about the world in general (Ibid., 104). Similarly, feminist Donna Haraway is interested in boundaries within spaces that enable the construction of identities. In her famous "A Manifesto for Cyborgs", she introduces cyborg which is a hybrid creation of human and machine. By using cyborg as a political metaphor, Haraway is able to engage in political arguments without being subjected to essentialism. She often emphasizes the importance of writing and language. She says:

Cyborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man. Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other. (1987: 30)

She argues against the idea of the wholeness of the self and dualism that are subjected by Western thinking. She asserts that cyborg identity is neither innocent nor a whole. It does not seek a unified identity and thus cannot create dualistic thoughts. In **Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity**, Judith Butler also focuses on the restrictive sense of identity that is imposed on the individuals by society and/or

culture. She analyzes the ways a gendered identity is produced in social contexts through repetitions of usual everyday activities. In her research, she tries to shed light on the assumptions that repress what gender is according to the established notions for women and men. She agrees with Donna Haraway that nothing, including sexual identity, is natural and follows Lacan in accounts of subject formation. Lacan asserts that only after passing into the Law, the subjects can gain an identity. This process also creates the unconscious and forms a split within the subject. Butler, like Lacan, believes that through this process alienation—within a subject and its self—occurs. Analyzing the chapters from feminist point of view when it is needed allows an insight into the complicated factors that lead to the systematic colonization of the African-American women's body and voice. A feminist approach does not only reveal the oppression and exploitation of the African-American women by the whites but also the oppression within African men as well. To a large extent, feminist approach in Afrofuturism helps to improve the effects of patriarchal colonialism while enabling many of the colored women to reclaim their heritage and traditions along with imagining more egalitarian and even towards post-humanist societies with the inclusion of Cyborgs and Androids.

To summarize, Afrofuturism is a movement that challenges any fixed definitions due to its multilayered evolution over time. While in proto-Afrofuturism reimagining of the reality is favored while focusing on the figurative changes of the characters instead of literal, Afrofuturism focuses more on literal changes that often result in the fragmentation of the characters which result in their realization of the alienated stand and decolonization of the mind. Apart from Octavia Butler's pioneer stance in Afrofuturism and her involvement in movement's development, the study tries to demonstrate how Hurston's **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and Ellison's **Invisible Man** can be categorized particularly as proto-Afrofuturist works because of the writers' use of decolonizing alternative spaces and technological discourse to generate alternative futures. More specifically, the discussion on Hurston and Ellison's chapters focus on the key aspects that constitute Afrofuturism including the use of settings in the novels as alternative spaces, as well as the depiction of the characters' body and language in terms of alienation and fragmentation. The direct

correlation/distinction between proto-Afrofuturism and Afrofuturism is discussed specifically in the Butler's chapter.



CHAPTER II

DECOLONIZATION THROUGH IMAGINATION: *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

In **Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture**, Ytasha Womack acknowledges that before the Afrofuturists, writers like Zora N. Hurston have achieved a “*literal and figurative space for black women to be themselves*” where African-American women can “*dig behind the societal reminder of blackness and womanhood to express a deeper identity and then use this discovery to define blackness, womanhood, or any other identifier*” (2013: 100) in any way that their imagination permits. Writers at the time used their imagination, art, and, in some cases, even technology to redefine the African-American and female entities. She further asserts that Afrofuturists celebrate writers like Hurston because they have used “*imagination as a space of resistance and establishe[d] a lineage of this history of thought*” (Ibid., 101). As a proto-Afrofuturist work, **Their Eyes Were Watching God** portrays African-American women’s identity, figure, voice, and imagination away from the restrictions and the assumptions of the surrounding communities. In the novel, an African-American woman protagonist develops a character, theory, autonomy and beauty apart from the societal—including both male and female—pressures, approvals, and status quo.

The novel begins with the narrator’s reference to the horizon and Janie Mae Crawford Killicks Starks Woods’ return to Eatonville. While narrating her story to her “*kissin’-friend*” Pheoby (Hurston, 2000: 9), Janie Mae includes the early years that she experiences with her grandmother, Nanny, who is a former slave with a controlling nature that eventually forces Janie Mae into a loveless union with Logan Killicks, a relatively wealthy farmer in a town of West Florida. Contrary to her and Nanny’s wishes, Janie Mae is met with abuse in her relationship. Hopeful Janie Mae elopes with Joe Starks, who is an ambitious African-American travelling to an all-African-American town to settle down. Joe Starks’ constant desire for control and power leads to their figurative separation, but Janie Mae does not leave him until Joe passes away. Following Tea Cake’s inclusion in her life, Janie Mae undergoes a complete mental

and psychological alteration. Although Vergible “*Tea Cake*” Woods is twelve years younger and has a lower social status than Janie Mae, their marriage is built on mutual love and respect. Soon enough, their ideal life is disturbed by a massive hurricane. While trying to save Janie Mae, Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog which eventually leads him to lose himself and attack her. Janie Mae is forced to kill her loved one to save her own life. She finally decides to move back to Eatonville and the novel returns to the beginning where she begins to narrate her story to her friend Pheoby.

In ***Their Eyes Were Watching God***, Hurston focuses on the African-American women and the act of veiling that disenfranchises them. According to Du Bois, this disenfranchisement allows, especially, the white men to manage and control their advantageous status. Du Bois asserts that this notion of being veiled brings along the sense of double consciousness which is “*a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.*” (2007: 8). Hurston emphasizes on how African-American women are misunderstood as complex humans within the American society. It can be said that they are double veiled since they have to deal with sexism as well as racism. They possess double consciousness when they try to assert their identity among the community. Janie Mae’s journey between alternative spaces, her African-American female body’s quest for individuality and autonomy enables her to find a voice and eventually access to speech which eventually completes her transformation to decolonize herself from the oppressive communities of whites and African-Americans.

2.1 Significance of Alternative Spaces in Immersion and Ascent Narratives

The plot of the novel begins with the portrayal of Janie Mae’s final state of being. From the beginning, Janie Mae is portrayed as an African-American woman who has been to the horizon and back and slowly witnesses the incidents that have caused her to arrive at her final fragmented but accepted self. The concept of the “*third space*” as an alternative space, both defined by Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Soja, is a space that is significant in terms of “examining the articulation, transgression and subversion of dualistic categories; indeed, in a metaphorical and material sense” (Law,

1997: 109). With the help of third space the declaration, violation, and destruction of dualistic categories of colonial binary thinking which constitutes the novel's proto-Afrofuturistic feature can be analyzed. The similar method of the plot is also used in Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** and Octavia Butler's **Kindred**. In all three novels, the elements that lead the main characters to become who they are through their use of alternative spaces are unfold.

In **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, alternative spaces are portrayed in two levels. The South is presented as an alternative space beyond the narrative of the novel. Hurston's South is an alternative choice to the North which was a favored place for the African-Americans to avoid the effects of slavery, racism, poverty, and segregation, at least to a certain degree. In the years the novel is written (1930s), the North was still a preferable choice for the settlement of African-Americans even though many failed to succeed in acquiring prosperity and equal social terms. The failure led African-Americans to turn their route to the South. In the novel, the South is presented as a safe alternative that enables African-Americans to reconstruct the racial and self-image as well as identity through the established African-American folk culture. In this sense, Hurston is a pioneer in reflecting the South as a final destination for African-Americans to settle in⁷. The protagonist Janie Mae's transition from a conventional African-American woman to an untraditional figure necessitates alternative spaces in order for her to survive and complete her transformation. Janie Mae's narration includes a quest of an African-American woman with an aim to define her way through spaces as well as the female self.

Understanding life and self involves a journey going back to the past and coming forward to the present, and thus realizing that the ending is only the actual beginning. This enables life to process in a cyclic movement, and without this cyclic motion, the brief instances that individuals experience in time would not be able to possess any meaning. This is the proto-Afrofuturistic structure that is employed in the novel. Hurston uses this cyclic motion to provide meaning to Janie Mae's experiences.

⁷ Many prominent writers, including W. E. B. DuBois and Ralph Ellison, assert that though the "*journey of immersion to the South [was] a necessary stop for the African-American intellectual; it [was] not, however, his ultimate destiny*" (Griffin, 1995: 146). It was not until the 1970s and 80s that writers such as Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Ernest Gainer begin to regard the South as a possible alternative space for the African-Americans (Morrison, 1984: 345).

According to Evora Jones: “*Janie moves from a bound selfhood shaped by tradition, circumstance, and materialism to a free selfhood born out of individuality, experience, and love*” (1996: 369). The third person narrative technique used in the novel provides a distinct exposure of Janie Mae and her journey between the alternative spaces that are portrayed as the geographical settings in the South. Similar to an ascent narrative form, there is a portrayal of the positive difference between the self who narrates the story at the present and the self who is the main subject of the story (Scott, 1997: 36). In his book, **From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative**, scholar Robert B. Stepto describes the narrative style in the novel as a “*narrative strategy in a continuum of narrative strategies*” (1979: 166). His description of the mixed narrative strategies that include the degrees of ascent and immersion narratives helps to understand Janie Mae’s symbolic, material, or mental progress in terms of literacy, individuality, and autonomy among the created alternative spaces.

As one of the few leading figures who systematize the concepts of ascent and immersion in accordance with African-American literature, Stepto defines a part of ascent narrative as:

The enslaved and semi-literate figure is launched on a ritualized journey to a symbolic North. The journey is charted through spatial expressions of social structure—systems of signs that the questing figure must read in order to be increasingly literate and increasingly free. (Ibid., 167)

Since the earliest of ascent narratives are considered the slave narratives that include a movement from the South to the North towards freedom, the protagonist’s self-growth constitutes the main element of the narrative (Scott, 1997: 35). Janie Mae’s journey begins with her marriage and imagining various alternative spaces subsequent to her inner desire for experience, self-growth, and autonomy as an African-American woman. The more her journey continues, the more development in her self occurs.

The ascent narrative aspect of the novel recalls traditional migration narratives. In her book, “**Who set you flowin’?: The African-American Migration Narrative**,” Farah Jasmine Griffin discusses the urban southern migrants and focuses mainly on the significance of ancestors and safe spaces, which are two of the important elements Hurston applies in her novel, in order to build strong bonds with the migrants and their

surroundings. Griffin asserts that, at least at the beginning, the migrant status for urban southern migrants reflects an alienated condition. This assertion can be generalized to all migrants. Thus, the significance of lineage and alternative spaces to feel safe within the African-American context forms important aspects of any migrant character whether this migration takes place to another country or a geographical place within the same country.

In this context, the presence of an ancestor plays a crucial role in Janie Mae's journey towards self-realization as well. Since she does not have either of her parents, her guardian Nanny is her only connection to her ancestral familial roots. Janie Mae's journey begins at the same time as her conscious life is initiated when Nanny, her grandmother/ancestor, catches Janie Mae and Johnny Taylor kissing under a pear tree. The place of the pear tree awakens sexual feelings for Janie Mae that she experiences for the first time and the result is the kiss with a boy that she believes she might have similar feelings that the place presents for her. The setting is the place where her erotic experience has initiated. It is also the place where Janie Mae begins to fantasize about both marriage and intimacy in a natural way.

Nanny seems to be the embodiment of the ancestral figure whose presence is needed to provide the initial training and protection for Janie Mae. However, her restricted vision detains her from genuinely protecting Janie Mae. Nanny's response to Janie Mae's sexual awakening is to force her to marry Logan Killicks to ensure her to have a respectable position in the community. Nanny believes a successful marriage will help Janie Mae to avoid a fate that she and Janie Mae's mother, Leafy, had to experience as rape victims. Even though Janie Mae opposes to a loveless marriage at the beginning, Nanny's true feelings about the African-American women persuade her at the end: "*De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin' for it to be different wid you. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd!*" (Hurston, 2000: 29). Nanny represents the repressed African-Americans who have experienced violence and slavery. Sandra Paquet asserts that instead of being an ancestral figure, Nanny is the one who is disconnected with her ancestral roots (1990: 503). She advises Janie Mae that: "*honey, us colored folks is branches without roots*" (Hurston, 2000: 31). She represents "*the standing roots of some old tree that had been torn away by storm. Foundation of ancient power that no longer mattered*" (Ibid., 26). As Janie Mae tries

to elude away from her grandmother's beliefs, wishes, and ideas, she comes to the realization that African-Americans do have a history and ancestral roots contrary to what she has been taught by Nanny. This re-imagining of the past constitutes another proto-Afrofuturistic aspect of the novel.

Logan Killicks' house is constituted as Edward Soja's firstspace that is connected with the "*real material world*" (1996: 6). Soja asserts that firstspace is "*directly sensible and open, within limits, to accurate measurement and description*" (Ibid., 66). It is about the relationship between people and the material world. Hence, the firstspace is considered as the "*real*" space. This is the space how individuals perceive their everyday life. In the novel, Janie Mae and Logan demonstrate their own perspectives on what they take into consideration in their daily routine. While Logan appreciates the farm life, Janie Mae refuses to accept the firstspace, which is the material reality of her married life. Contrary to her husband's view of marriage, Janie Mae desires a marriage that is constructed on mutual love. Her efforts to find reasons to continue her marriage portray Janie Mae as an "*enslaved and a semi-literate*" individual. The narrator describes Janie Mae's semi-literate figure in the novel as: "*She was seeking confirmation of the voice and the vision, and everywhere she found and acknowledged answers. A personal answer for all creations except herself*" (Hurston, 2000: 13-14). This realization along with Janie Mae's look "*up the road towards way off*" (Ibid., 30) to the horizon foreshadows Janie Mae's decision to run off with Joe Stark. This is also the first referral to the horizon as an alternative space after the opening passages in the novel. Believing that she will find the companionship that she is searching for on the horizon, Janie Mae leaves Logan for Joe Starks who promises her a life away from plowing a mule, as was expected from her.

Eatonville, an all-African-American town, presents an almost entirely different world/space of its own. In his 1934 speech titled, "A Negro Nation Within a Nation," Du Bois comments on how "*this matter of a nation within a nation has already been partially accomplished*" (2003: 177) but still needs more structured development. Du Bois emphasizes that since African-Americans are labeled as uneducated and backward within the social structures, the whites do not take their progress into consideration. Alondra Nelson's emphasis on the formation of African-American "*networked consciousness*" (2002: 15) can be considered one of the ways for Du Bois'

assertion of a need for structured development. According to scholar Nelson, who was also an external fellow at Harvard University's W.E.B Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, the African-Americans need to form a networked consciousness which is the collective unity among the African-Americans established mainly through the sharing of folklore and folk culture that enables them to confront the oppressive white domination. The proto-Afrofuturistic novel establishes this consciousness first in Eatonville through the spread of the African-American folk culture and generated stories. As an all-African-American town, Eatonville is still under the jurisdiction of Maitland and most of the residents of the town are employed by the whites. At the end of a working day, the narrator describes the transformation of the townsmen into a networked consciousness:

It was the time for sitting on porches beside the road. It was the time to hear things and talk. These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. (Hurstons, 2000: 1-2)

Once they peel away from the white gaze that views African-Americans as "*muscle-machine*" (Mercer, 1994: 138), they transform into their own African-American selves. The African-Americans in Eatonville humanize themselves in order to restore the dehumanization effects caused by the white domination. This separatist color line enables the African-Americans to interconnect and build a possible future for themselves.

As Du Bois suggests, this interconnectedness needs a structure in order to become effective and Joe Stark is the person who envisions this. The social cohesive atmosphere that he constructs paves the way for the networked consciousness among the residents of Eatonville. When he first arrives, the town does not even exist. Eatonville is an underdeveloped town that people come with bigger dreams or just to be separated from the mix communities. Eatonville is a rough place with no advanced technology whatsoever. It is the negative image of any average white settlement. Ambitious Joe Stark buys large amount of land believing: "*De man dat built things oughta boss it. Let colored folks build things too if dey wants to crow over somethin* "

(Hurstons, 2000: 33). It can be argued that Hurston draws parallelism between Joe's approach to the land and "Forty Acres and a Mule: Special Field Order No. 15" which was the policy for the newly freed slaves to own about a forty-acres of land of their own. Major-General William Tecumseh Sherman ordered for the policy to be implemented and the full document was published in the newspaper in January 1865. It is considered to be the first systematic attempt to help the newly freed slaves at the time, but unfortunately failed after Andrew Johnson, who was Lincoln's successor, invalidated the Order in the fall of the same year.

According to Henry Louis Gates, Jr. the idea of distributing land to former slaves was actually generated by the period's African-American leaders (2013). The significance of the idea is great when it is considered how this would have affected the history of race relations if that policy had been implemented and the former slaves would have had ownership of land and become self-sufficient. It can be interpreted that Hurston is referring to the possibility of what would have happened if the Order was granted to the African-Americans. The mule was also a significant addition to the Order since the animal, like the former slaves, would be able to carry the loads as a silent help in the fields.

After his arrival to Eatonville with Janie Mae, Joe asserts himself as an influential figure who has the ability to initiate progress and then "*form[s] a committee*" to take action around the town (Hurstons, 2000: 42). Prior to becoming the mayor of the town, Joe names the town (which is a referral to his colonizer personality), increases the size of the land with cash, opens a store, helps to establish a post-office to transform the town into "*lak every other town*" (Ibid., 50). However, Eatonville cannot be like every other town because people of the time are not used to witnessing a self-sufficient town of all-African-American residents. Some of the African-Americans, including a character named Hicks, are irritated by Joe's boldness since they are "*used to the world one way and then suddenly have it turn different*" overwhelms them (Ibid., 45). Nonetheless, Joe establishes his store as the center of the town with all-African-American residents. "*[A]s the Mayor—postmaster—landlord—storekeeper*" (Ibid., 56), Joe Starks constructs the networked consciousness of the town from the very beginning. Even though this area is restricted with the town's borders, Eatonville enables a collective African-American experience where they can find

racial consensus, belongingness, and amusement away from white domination and oppression.

By moving to Eatonville with Joe, Janie Mae creates another alternative space which also coincides with Soja's secondspace that "*reality through 'imagined' representations of spatiality*" takes place (1996: 6). At the beginning of her new chapter, life appears ideal for her as the wife of the mayor and away from a mule. Janie Mae is convinced that her new husband will awaken the "*flower dust and springtime*" that she'd felt under the pear tree (Hurstons, 2000: 39). Soon, however, Janie Mae witnesses the changes with her husband whose main purpose becomes to gain political and social power among the community. Michael G. Cooke portrays Janie Mae "*in a world of paradox*" (1986: 141) with Joe Starks since he begins to suppress and neglect her in the name of making a lady out of her. Even though Janie Mae feels a "*sudden newness and change*" (Hurstons, 2000: 31), she is still restricted to Joe's conventional vision on the settings and the place of women in society.

Soon after, Janie Mae's positive image of her secondspace is reversed due to the psychological and physical oppressions of Joe. Joe's psychological oppression begins with scorning and belittling Janie Mae in private and public. The more Joe possesses power, the more oppressive he becomes of Janie Mae. After a while, he forbids Janie Mae to engage in conversations with townsmen on the store's porch and orders her to dress in a certain way. Janie Mae notes that Joe does not indulge in the porch talk himself but he sits on his elevated chair and watches the people over. By taking an observant position, Joe seems to demonstrate a position of a colonizer and a controller. While he is allowed to observe, he restricts Janie Mae's right to observe by sending her to the store. It comes to a point that Janie Mae "*had come to hate the inside of that store anyway*" according to the narrator (Ibid., 64). Her psychological condition begins to reflect on her health as she develops headaches when she is inside the store.

According to Stepto's description, the narrative shift to immersion begins after the last psychological oppressive act of Joe when he accuses her of losing a bill for an order from Jacksonville. With Joe's increasing oppression, her "*condition imposed by solitude*" also increases. When Joe scorns her: "*They [women] just think they's thinkin.' When Ah see one thing Ah understands ten. You see ten things and don't understand one*" (Ibid., 83), Janie Mae realizes the real image of her marriage where

she is not in a love marriage but rather in an enslaved one. Over time, she learns to become quieter and turns inward to herself in order to cope with the realities of her marriage. Within her routine life between the house and the store, however, Janie Mae's emotional connection with the past affects her reality in the present. She can neither completely live in the present nor disengage from the past. This leads to her disintegration from the both. And Joe's treatment causes further disruptions with her present reality/imagination. The final step for Janie Mae to figuratively leave her marriage is Joe's physical abuse after he slaps Janie Mae for not preparing his food the way he likes. The narrator describes her as:

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. (Ibid., 85)

Janie Mae stands still and is lost on her thoughts "*until something fell off the shelf inside her.*" Her "inside" and the store that she spends most of her time are compared. Her inner thoughts are restricted just like Joe's restriction of her boundaries within the limits of the store. She cannot go out of the store even when its porch is filled with the townsmen. While learning to become more and more silent among the community, she externalizes the inner, and, with this final abuse, she internalizes the outer by comparing her inner self to resembling a store⁸. There is also a referral to Janie Mae's double-mindedness, which is an aspect of immersion narration (Scott, 1997: 45) as well as double-voicedness. This experience enables Janie Mae to examine her displacement from the both sides. She comes to a realization that the self that portrays how she really feels inside should not have to be suppressed and separated from the self that tries to meet the expectations of her husband and society. She also realizes

⁸ For further examination of Janie Mae's acknowledgement of her inner and outer separation see Barbara Johnson's "Chapter 8: Metaphor, Metonymy, and Voice in Their Eyes Were Watching God" in **Black Literature and Literary Theory**, Ed. by Henry Louis Gates Jr. New York: Routledge, 1984, pp. 108-125.

that her woman-needs needs to be heard as much as her mayor's-wife-self. This metaphor can also be interpreted in terms of the store being the place of Joe's setting in which he is the master, possessor, and proprietor. In **Gender Trouble**, Judith Butler argues:

"Inner" and "outer" make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability. And this stability, this coherence, is determined in large part by cultural orders that sanction the subject and compel its differentiation from, the abject. Hence, "inner" and "outer" constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject. When that subject is challenged, the meaning and necessity of the terms are subject to displacement. (1999: 170-171)

With the last act of Joe's physical abuse, Janie Mae cannot hold her inner and outer selves stable. However, instead of causing her to lose her self further, Janie Mae begins to understand her fragmented self and embrace it. At this moment in the novel, Janie Mae's dream of Joe's image is permanently broken: "*[L]ooking 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*" (Hurston, 2000: 85). She comes to a realization that Joe is just a life jacket that she holds onto after she has aborted the ship of Logan. Her new sense of realization leads to the change of balance in terms of authority between the couple's dynamic.

This final reflective state brings out Janie Mae's heroic development in which she reviews her affection for Joe. This silence reflection represents her personality's strength. She is ready to move on from this oppressive relationship as she was with Logan. She "*looked further*" to the horizon as a person who is ready to leave her present setting and become an outsider. This is the second connection Hurston draws between the horizon and alternative spaces. Janie Mae believes the horizon means new alternative spaces with different possibilities and whenever there is a referral to the horizon, she is ready to take the chance of a new probable alternative space over her present condition. Along with new possibilities, the horizon reflects a space that she can escape from her current circumstances. She becomes more united within herself and fits the description that Robert Stepto provides in ascent narrative. Her ascending is initiated after she moves from Nanny's nest into a world where material wealth and

control are validated values and almost completed when she is ready to leave Eatonville for another place with opportunities.

Judith Butler also asserts that “*according to the understanding of identification as an enacted fantasy or incorporation, however, it is clear that coherence is desired, wished for, idealized, and that this idealization is an effect of a corporeal signification*” (1999: 172). In other words, Butler means that all our verbal and non-verbal behaviors as well as desires are constructed in our inner selves but portrayed on the surface of the outer body. She also adds that if reality is “*fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse*” (Ibid.). From her perspective, the lines between a subject’s inner and outer selves as well as personal and social discourse are all blurred. At this moment in the novel, even though evolving, Janie Mae is still looking for an alternative space that will help her to achieve the state of wholeness but as Butler points out, there is no definite personal wholeness that a subject can reach. Janie Mae needs to become aware of her fragmented self and embrace it. After evaluating the effects and significance of her journey between the alternative spaces, she chooses to go further South. She comes to the realization and is ready to accept the end of her second marriage due to psychological and physical abuse.

Farah J. Griffin’s definition of safe spaces as “*places where black women ‘speak freely’ and where domination does not exist as a ‘hegemonic ideology’*” (1995: 9) can also be applied as a definition for the alternative space in the Everglades. Following Vergible “Tea Cake” Woods’ arrival and the couple’s elope to another alternative space in the Everglades, she is finally able to make a connection with the African-American community and heritage before she finds her own self. In the narrative, the Everglades is the most significant safe/alternative space. It is the space where Janie Mae experiences an inclusive folk culture that she can engage as equally as the other members of the community. This engagement enables her to discover a space that allows her to develop further. The self-growth brings along the courage to restore her faith in herself. Tea Cake is one of the most important characters in the novel that guides Janie Mae to find her own place and voice among society. Tea Cake is the opposite of her previous husbands. He teaches her to play checkers, chops “*down that tree she never did like by the dining room window*” (Hurston, 2000: 130), supports

her to participate in conversations and tell stories, and grants her some space and freedom in the relationship. Tea Cake prepares Janie Mae for a social life that is outside of the house and by cutting down the tree that blocks her view of the landscape, it is emphasized in the narrative that he is ready to present new opportunities for her to realize.

One of the most prominent aspects of Tea Cake is his oral ability. With the addition of storytelling to the Blues music, Tea Cake is able to relocate his audience between different spaces. While describing the African-American artists, Alondra Nelson comments on the Afrofuturist African-American artists' "*past-future visions*" (2000a: 35). The artists "*garner text, sound, and image in the service of reimagining black life*" along with creating "*reflections on the African diasporic past and renderings of our possible futures*" (Ibid.). Nelson's definition can also be used to interpret Hurston and her work. She portrays Tea Cake as a character that is able to use his charm, music, and words in order to shift the past and create possible futures for his audience including Janie Mae. In this respect, Tea Cake satisfies Janie Mae by delivering the Everglades as an alternative space/world for her, where she, even for a limited period of time, feels her own "*Afrotopia*"⁹.

Tea Cake introduces Janie Mae to the "*restorative power of folklore*" (Paquet, 1990: 499) that helps to connect the novel as a proto-Afrofuturistic work by providing her enough space to get involved in the rural African-American culture as a separate entity. Tea Cake is "*benevolent, instructive, and protective*" (Morrison, 1984: 343), but he does not try to oppress Janie Mae in a way her Nanny and previous husbands had done by forcing her into a frame which is accepted and respected for a woman in the surrounding community. Instead, Tea Cake allows Janie Mae to acquire and learn things on her own. Within her alternative space in the Everglades, Janie Mae meets Soja's thirdspace or Bhabha's "*Third Space*" where the various possibilities enable the individual to have broad perspectives on matters. This is the most significant alternative space that enables Janie Mae to complete her transformation. It is the setting that not only introduces her to the folk culture but also allows her to be engaged in

⁹ In *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History*, Jeremiah Moses describes a utopic perspective in which "Black American historical consciousness is based not only on an African-centered construction of the past, but on a variety of attempts to fashion visions of a better future" (1998: 17).

equal participation in the community which enables her to develop and reconstruct her self-identity in terms of African-American life, culture, and language. Even though it may not be applied to all, the idea of alternative spaces can generally be identified as “*places where black women ‘speak freely’ and where domination does not exist as a ‘hegemonic ideology’*” (Griffin, 1995: 9). The Everglades not only enables Janie Mae to speak freely and participate in a non-dominated environment, but also enables her to develop and change. She forms a complete identity and achieves a voice at the end of her experience in the space.

Soon after their arrival, Tea Cake expects her to work in the fields. He says: “*‘Ah gits lonesome out dere all day ’thout yuh. After dis, you betta come git uh job uh work out dere lak de rest uh de women – so Ah won’t be losin’ time comin’ home’*” (Hurston, 2000: 156). African-American women’s lack of recognition on the side, Hurston also makes connections between the whole race of African-American bodies and mechanization. Considering Kobena Mercer’s description of African-Americans as dehumanized “*muscle-machine*” (1994: 138), it is possible to infer that the technological concept of race is likely to be understood “*as a labor-based technology*” (Lavender, 2011: 54). In her folklore, Hurston favors conceivableness over technological progress within her portrayal of African-American spaces among white dominated world. The Everglades section of the novel, in which Janie Mae and Tea Cake harvest “*cane and string-beans and tomatuhs*” (Hurston, 2000: 151) for the wealthy white men, illustrates an example in terms of the use of African-Americans in return of money. At the same time, the Everglades refers to Soja’s spatial dimension for Janie Mae because it offers a new site of resistance and challenge the oppressive perspective that places women at home both socially and spatially. It is the place where the clear distinction between the genders is no longer visible and the engaging dialoguing disturbs the patriarchal as well as colonial ideologies.

In an interview titled “The Third Space” with Jonathan Rutherford, Homi K. Bhabha argues that hybridity and the Third Space is closely associated. He asserts: “*[H]ybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge*” (1990: 211). He refers to the need for an alternative space in between for the construction of the hybridization to occur. Hence, the two terms are interdependent of one another. Since the migrant workers work on the field all day long, their place becomes like “a

magnet, the unauthorized center of the 'job' ” (Hurstun, 2000: 155) where laughing, chatting, music, some gambling, and fun connects the African-American community. Without this unity among the race, the operation of their exploitation in the fields would not be able to work as smoothly as it does. As mentioned earlier, Alondra Nelson defines this kind of interpersonal connectedness among the African-American community as a networked consciousness which is necessary for the survival of African-Americans. The place demonstrates a space of intimacy for the migrant workers. They seek solace and share their thoughts, feelings, and misfortunes. The medium of intimacy created by the people in the space brings along new understanding in terms of hybridity and embracing one another's differences rather than denying them:

Some came limping in with their shoes and sore feet from walking [...] [Some] came in wagons from way up in Georgia and they came in truck loads from east, west, north and south. Permanent transients with no attachments and tired looking men with their families and dogs in flivvers. (Ibid., 154-155)

The migrant workers all come from different backgrounds but unite on their goals: *“Dancing, fighting, singing, crying, laughing, winning and losing love every hour. Work all day for money, fight all night for love. The rich black earth clinging to bodies and biting the skin like ants”* (Ibid.). The workers are described as spending the money they have earned generously and not thinking about the far off future, instead, they live the moment without getting too attached.

According to Stepto, the searching character, like Janie Mae, in an immersion narrative explores the conditions of *“tribal literacy”* (1979: 171) which improve or eliminate the aspects enforced by solitude. In the Everglades, by her active participation, she becomes a member of the community which is constituted of migrants whose only purpose of being in that community is to earn money and acquire company. Tea Cake's expectation of her to work is not what Janie Mae is used to receiving from her previous husbands. Instead, she was expected to be separated from the rest and take part mainly in the house/store. Janie Mae voluntarily participates in the job and the conversations of the workers all day long. Contrary to Eatonville, Janie Mae's involvement among the daily life of the seasonal migrant African-Americans

reinforces their intimate relationship. He encourages her to experience the “jook” (Ibid., 155) at night, work in the fields beside him during the day, and participate in all kinds of conversations with the others. This starts her initiation of connecting to the community in which she is accepted and respected as herself. By being able to “*listen and laugh and even talk some herself if she wanted to*” (Ibid., 158), Janie Mae’s individuality and autonomy develops further. She becomes an active member of the community through direct participation and begins to redefine her own expectations as an ordinary African-American woman.

As for the feature of ascent narrative’s ending, Stepto argues: “*The narrative ends with the questing figure situated in the least oppressive social structure afforded by the world of the narrative and free in the sense that he or she has gained sufficient literacy to assume the mantle of articulate survivor*” (1979: 167). Ordinarily, in the end of an ascent narrative, “the questing figure” ends up in the least oppressive community within the narrative, and unbound since “*he or she has gained sufficient literacy to assume the mantle of an articulate survivor*” (Ibid.). According to Stepto, the phrase “*articulate survivor*” reflects the protagonist’s will to abandon her oppressive community for new experiences that “*at best, one of solitude; at worst, one of alienation*” (Ibid.). For Janie Mae, abandoning the oppressive setting for new opportunities starts after she elopes with Joe Starks and continues with her abandoning Eatonville (which is the most oppressive place in the narrative) for the Everglades (which is the least oppressive one) to be with Tea Cake.

It is important to emphasize that Janie Mae experiences not only personal freedom—at least to a certain extent—but also tragedy in all the alternative spaces she creates. As the least oppressive setting, Janie Mae and Tea Cake find happiness in terms of living their love in the migrant community of the Everglades and tragedy which results in the death of Tea Cake. In the novel, Janie Mae and Tea Cake experience a hurricane which signifies the use of a major catastrophe.¹⁰ Following the hurricane there are also a fight for survival, a flood, a rabid dog attack, and a threat of racial discrimination. After the catastrophe, the racial division between the whites and

¹⁰ Major catastrophic events are very common in Afrofuturistic and proto-Afrofuturistic works. W.E.B. DuBois’ proto-Afrofuturistic short story, **The Comet**, also portrays the lives of Jim (An African-American) and Julia (white American) after a comet hits the earth and they are the only survivors.

African-Americans is renewed as the two communities—two worlds—collide with one another. This aspect of the narrative recalls the immersion narrative's examination of the racial division among society. After the hurricane settles down, Janie Mae and Tea Cake find themselves in a mixed town where Tea Cake is forced to be a part of a small army to "*service to clear the wreckage in public places and bury the dead*" at gunpoint (Hurstons, 2000: 199). Their duty is first to find the dead bodies of whites and African-Americans and separate them afterwards, because they cannot be buried in the same place. African-Americans will be buried in a mass grave while the dead white bodies will be buried in pine boxes. When Tea Cake manages to escape from this involuntary work, he takes Janie Mae back to the Everglades where they are familiar with the whites as well as the African-Americans because "*It's bad bein' strange niggers wid white folks*" (Ibid., 202). In this paragraph, Janie Mae and Tea Cake can be viewed as "figurative aliens" (Lavender, 2016: 227) where unknown African-Americans in the South meet with hostility and likely to experience violence. A similar metaphor is also used after Tea Cake is affected by the rabid dog and a strange presence takes over his body in which Janie Mae notices "*a changing look come [...] Something else was looking out of his face*" (Hurstons, 2000: 213). Rabies lead to Tea Cake's transformation to an unknown entity which is not human-like and further leads to his attack on Janie Mae.

Janie Mae becomes a figurative alien when she takes the stand in the court after she kills Tea Cake. She finds herself in a situation where "*twelve strange [white] men who didn't know a thing about people like Tea Cake and [Janie] were going to sit*" and decide on her future (Ibid., 217). At that moment, the white men have the full authority on Janie Mae's life. Even though there are many whites as well as "*all the Negroes for miles around*" (Ibid.) come to witness the trial, the narrator reflects especially on the African-Americans' fear of the white power. This power is significant for whites since without the threat it possesses, the white domination would lose its context. After the demonstration and consolidation of their authority, the white jury and the judge set Janie Mae free.

According to Stepto, the narrative transforms into immersion after Tea Cake's death and Janie Mae's decision to move back to the oppressive community in Eatonville because, as Stepto defines, the immersion narrative is:

fundamentally an expression of a ritualised journey into a symbolic South, in which the protagonist seeks those aspects of tribal literacy that ameliorate [...] the conditions imposed by solitude. The conventional immersion narrative ends [...] with the questing figure located in or near the narrative's most oppressive social structure but free in the sense that he has gained or regained sufficient tribal literacy to assume the mantle of an articulate kinsman. As the phrase "*articulate kinsman*" suggests, the hero or heroine of an immersion narrative must be willing to forsake highly individualized mobility in the narrative's least oppressive social structure for a posture of relative stasis in the most oppressive environment, a loss that is only occasionally assuaged by the newfound balms of group identity. (1979: 167)

Both types include a protagonist's quest and journey among different spaces. However, the end of the journey differs greatly with respect to the geographical, social, and mental state of the protagonist. By deciding to move to Eatonville, Janie Mae also ventures to join the most oppressive and judgmental community and "*forsake*" her mobility, but since she is an individual who is equipped with individuality and a voice, she is assumed to be able to survive as an "*articulate kinsman*."

Contrary to the community in the Everglades, the community in Eatonville is still loyal to the memory of their mayor. People judge Janie Mae's return as "*another tragic story of female abandonment and failure*" (Barbeito, 1998: 380). The people of the town do not only judge her due to their conditions as a working class community or established notion of what is regarded as respectable/acceptable within their community, but also because "[s]eeing the woman as she was made them remember the envy they had stored up from other times" (Hurstons, 2000: 2). Her return with overalls and "*firm buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume; then her pugnacious breasts trying to bore holes in her shirt*" (Ibid., 2-3) capture the desire as well as the envy of the town's men and women. They direct their true feelings into a form of moral judgment and keep safe under the assertion of Joe Starks' on-going legacy within the town as well as value judgment on what is considered acceptable/respectable for women among the community.

Janie Mae becomes an articulate kinsman as well as articulate survivor as in the ascent narrative. She survives a destructive hurricane and a flood, Tea Cake's madness, and his attempt of murder as well as the feelings and emotions she has due

to the killing the man she loves and the trial which occurred after the unfortunate incident. In addition, she survives several physical and psychological oppressions. Following her move to the South with Tea Cake, she reconstructs herself as an African-American woman who is conscious about her identity and cultural heritage. The significance of her newly established self-individuality and experience of the loss of love are all reflected in her future where she settles back in Eatonville.

Nevertheless, contrary to Stepto's argument of the narrative shift, it is also possible to interpret that after the new abilities and independence she gains, she is equipped enough to become an "*articulate survivor*" in any community. It is clear that she does not possess "*the archetype of the 'weary traveler'*" which is an aspect of the immersion narrative (Scott, 1997: 44). The constructive experience of the Everglades facilitates the potency to return back to Eatonville and this return fulfills an act of ascent narrative. This is a manifestation of her individualized mobility and selfhood. Like Rosi Braidotti's description of a nomad, Janie Mae, too, "*blur[s] the boundaries without burning bridges*" (2011: 26). In her article "The Exile, The Nomad, And The Migrant: Reflections on International Feminism," Braidotti writes that: "*The nomad has no home to start off from or go back to [...] [T]he point about being a nomad is the crossing over of boundaries, the act of going, independently of a given destination. Transitions without a final goal*" (1992: 8). Janie Mae's rootlessness and nomadic nature related to her thoughts constitute the fundamental part of her actions within the boundaries of space. Like Braidotti's description of a nomad, Janie Mae does not have a home to start with and most of her transitions do not include a final goal, but towards the end she chooses to settle in a place that she considers home. By returning back, she renounces her mobility and her nomadic nature in order to construct a stable life. However, this stability is not imposed by others such as Nanny, Logan or Joe. This is her choice and it portrays another symbol of her achieved individual state. Her complete independence—in terms of psychological, physical, and economical—gives her the freedom of choice to end her mobility and decolonize herself from the oppressive community.

At the very end, she no longer feels the alienation that she has felt almost through the end of the novel. If her move is viewed as her move back to her home instead of Eatonville, then the narration stays as an ascent since her home is the least

oppressive place of all after the death of Joe. The transformation of the house in Eatonville from an oppressive setting (during her marriage to Joe Starks) to the safest setting that she feels sheltered from the outside enables her to fulfill herself and decolonize her mind. Janie Mae is aware of the difference in the representation the house possesses and tells Pheoby that “‘[d]is house ain’t so absent of things as it used tuh be befo’ Tea Cake come along. It’s full uh thoughts’” (Ibid., 225). In **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, “home” is constructed after a series of challenges and journeys have been experienced and gained just like in Ellison’s **Invisible Man**. Thus, Hurston is not only repeating but also revising in describing alternative spaces, settings, communities, and journeys.

The presence of the house in Eatonville and economic independence that is provided from her marriage to Joe help her achieve a new state of independent self-sufficiency. Even though she returns back to an oppressive society, her selfhood is not threatened by it. Her house within her final alternative space where she can settle for good is a safe space that can shelter her from the community in Eatonville. This time she walks as herself instead of the wife of the mayor while walking down the streets of the town. Her final space is her house where she can live her life in the way she desires/imagines. Similar to Ellison’s narrator’s underground hole, Janie Mae’s home separates her from the other members of the oppressive community that alienates her. Rosemary M. George examines the concept of home and proposes that “*the basic organizing principle around which the notion of the ‘home’ is built is a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions*” (1999: 2). Janie Mae’s search for a place for inclusion finds peace at her house in Eatonville when she finally realizes that the concept of home should not be reduced to a geographical level or to the representation of home as the domestic sphere. After her long journey between the alternative spaces as well as geographic ones, the meaning of home changes from being a symbol of imprisonment into an alternative space that protects her from the oppressive and prejudiced community. For Janie Mae, home becomes a mental concept that includes her selected surviving memories of the past that form an alternate connection with the present and possible alternative futures.

Janie Mae’s new position in her home includes solitude. She has her friend Pheoby who “‘done growd ten feet higher jus’ listenin’ tuh’” (Hurston, 2000: 284) Janie

Mae. Moreover, she has her garden seeds which Tea Cake had planned to plant but failed to do so because when he was “*waiting for the right time of the moon*,” his sickness took over him (Ibid., 283). Janie Mae wants to plant them for remembrance. These seeds are significant in terms of Janie Mae’s creation of alternative spaces through landscape. The seeds can help Janie Mae to create a space broadening the limitations of her house. Such private spaces are significant in terms of creating perspectives toward the surrounding environment. She has her independence, safe/private space, her individualized identity, and the memory of the mutual love. In her first night in her home, she asserts: “*the place tasted fresh again. The wind through the open windows had broomed out all the fetid emptiness of absence and nothingness*” (Ibid., 227). The end, similar to **Invisible Man**, reflects a hopeful future.

The examination of the association of Janie Mae and her surrounding communities and environment describes how alternative spaces are constructed through the material and psychological world of an individual that can become both liberating and restricting socially and spatially. In order to fulfill herself and gain autonomy, Janie Mae restructures her geographical spaces as alternative areas and transforms these oppressive spaces into areas where she can develop further. This conception of the progressive development of the self is a feature of the ascent narrative (Scott, 1997: 37). She questions her relations to her husbands and the environment. The result leads her to the realization of the formative nature of her environment and the sense of home. Her longing for the horizon, feeling of alienation, and change of attitude towards the surrounding communities suggest her nomadic nature which finally comes to a rest when she gains an independent decolonized voice. By resisting the oppression, the protagonist decolonizes herself with the help of alternative spaces, however, these alternative spaces first help to develop her sense of self within her body.

2.2 Self Formation of African-American Women through the Body

Janie Mae’s alienation begins in her childhood. Her struggle to create a self-identity is initiated with her childhood experience that originated from the failure of

identification with herself. Especially the passage that includes Janie Mae seeing herself for the first time in a photograph is a crucial moment in the novel that highlights the degree of her alienation within her community. Janie Mae's failure to acknowledge her African-American identity in the photograph can be analyzed with respect to Jacques Lacan's concept of the mirror stage. The photograph does not only lead to a realization of Janie Mae's African-American heritage but also identifies her sexuality as her dress and hair are the only aspects of her that she recognizes. This deferred realization of the self results in her emotional disturbance which eventually affects her ability to manage a healthy marriage. Janie Mae goes through the processes that are depicted by Lacan; however, her racial identity develops late in her childhood. Janie Mae's alienated sense begins with a photograph in which young Janie Mae is the only African-American. She cannot find herself because she is not aware of the concept of race until that moment of her life. She recalls white children calling her names and her awareness of her alienation leads to her exclamation: "*'Aw, aw! Ah'm colored!'*" (Hurstun, 2000: 9). Janie Mae's darker skin color causes a problem for her in her early years. She believes having a brown color has a negative connotation because of the ridicule she receives from the children. The awareness brings along a sense of alien identity since she is an African-American girl living among whites. In his book, **Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory**, Houston Baker Jr. describes Janie Mae as "*an alien, a 'nigger,' a 'zero' in the white world's structures of perception*" (1984: 152). She is also not accepted by the African-American girls at her school. The girls' teasing prevents her from getting involved in their games. They also bad mouth her because of her lighter skin complexion and white-like behaviors. Thus, Janie Mae cannot truly connect with either of the surrounding communities. Aware of her alienation, Nanny tries to eliminate it by moving to a new place. She decides to move because she does not want Janie Mae to go through the same unpleasant experiences as she and Janie Mae's mother did. She is trying to find a solution, however, she cannot realize that it is only a temporary and ineffective one since the issue of race is permeated within the individuals.

Janie Mae's lack of a father figure within her life from the start hampers the development of her identity formation. This first encounter with the self in the projection forms the "*ideal ego*" which "*is the source of an imaginary projection*"

(Lacan, 2015: 356). It is the “*ideal ego*” that the infant derives her future identifications. In his chapter entitled “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the/as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (2005), Lacan asserts that the infant’s confrontation of the “*ideal ego*” includes both attraction and aggression due to the distress of controlling it. Janie Mae’s failure to recognize herself in the photograph originates from her need to form a sense of reality and rationalize her environment during her upbringing by Nanny. Her “*specular image*” (Lacan, 2005: 2) of herself contradicts her self that she creates through her social circumstances and identification with the white children. Albeit of her delayed recognition of herself, she experiences her first sexual fantasy under the pear tree when she is a teenager and does not confront any delays in her genital stage.¹¹ For instance, her concentration of her emotional energy to let down her hair throughout the crucial moments in the novel is a symbol of her sexuality.

After her first kiss under the pear tree, Nanny, who does not believe in Janie Mae’s capability of taking care of herself, forces her to marry Logan Killicks. Nanny only wants what she thinks is the best for her granddaughter: “‘*Tain’t Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have, baby, it’s protection*” (Hurstons, 2000: 18). Nanny’s perception of an ideal life for women is derived from her environment which is constituted of the white middle—and upper—class women. Nanny believes if she can achieve what they possess than all of her struggles in life would be worthwhile: “*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*” (Ibid., 20). Meanwhile she also tells her granddaughter: “*Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn’t for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do. But nothing can stop you from wishin’*” (Ibid., 19). Nanny is incapable of recognizing that just as she does not possess autonomy due to her experience with slavery, she tries to impose a similar pressure on Janie Mae. It is not until the Everglades that Janie Mae can reach her desire of love due to cultural and social impositions she receives from her circumstances.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud. **The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud**. Ed. and Trans. by A. A. Brill. New York: The Modern Library, 1995.

As the most important figure in Janie Mae's childhood and early adulthood years, Nanny is a character who internalizes the white prejudice against African-Americans, especially women's sexuality. In order to protect Janie Mae from her own sexual desires and respectability among the community, she forces Janie Mae into a marriage that she doesn't want. In her article, "'Love me like I like to be': The Sexual Politics of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the Classic Blues, and the Black Woman's Club Movement," Carol Bather asserts that Nanny views Janie Mae as "libidinous" and "uses middle-class respectability as a strategy of containment" and by acting the way she does, Nanny "justifies her rejection of Janie's working-class sexual experimentation as a form of 'protection'" (1998: 205). Thus, Bather draws attention to the correlation between class-consciousness and value judgment of sexuality and concludes that in a "controversial move, the text establishes woman's sexual 'morality' as an issue within the African American community, reproducing a version of white racist ideology" (Ibid.). Within some of the oppressed communities, there is the replication of some behaviors of the dominant communities in order to elevate their class-consciousness among the other similar communities. The two characters that Janie Mae spends most of her life with and have an effect on her, Nanny and Joe Starks, are among the ones that adopt this class hypocrisy among the working class.

Her efforts to love Logan and continue her marriage demonstrate an enslaved, subjugated and alienated figure of Janie Mae because while she is trying to meet Nanny's vision, she completely ignores her own desires. This echoes the beginning of Chapter II in **Invisible Man** when the unnamed narrator admits that he has spent his life looking for something:

[E]verywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was. I accepted their answers too, though they were often in contradiction and even self-contradictory. I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer. (Ellison, 1995: 15)

The unnamed narrator in the novel describes Janie Mae's position as: "*She was seeking confirmation of the voice and the vision, and everywhere she found and acknowledged answers. A personal answer for all creations except herself*" (Hurston, 2000: 13-14).

Her marriage to Logan and living in his house is imprisonment for Janie Mae's personal growth. However, her submission to the desires of others does not last long and shortly after her marriage to Logan, Janie Mae realizes that she needs to move to the horizon in order to fulfill her desire/drive.

According to Lacan, "the aim of the drive is jouissance" (1995: 15). The purpose is not to reach a certain goal or find complete satisfaction but rather to follow its aim and the path. Janie Mae is in search of a journey rather than the result. Hence, she does not hesitate to elope to the unknown with Joe Starks at the first chance she gets to follow her drive. However, while Janie Mae desires and values mutual love, Joe's intentions are more about gaining social and political power among the community. In order to elevate his social status within the class hierarchy, he devotes all his time and energy into his public image. Joe's public image, which he internalizes as his self image, evaluates women as a lower class within the patriarchal community of Eatonville. He feels the women need constant telling of what to do because they do not possess any autonomy. For instance, Joe often refers to his wife as a "doll". This suggests that he enjoys Janie Mae's attractive feminine parts but he is not interested in viewing her as an actual, autonomous person. This act of denigration brings along abuse. When the abuse gets physical Janie Mae's autonomy begins to awaken and mobilize. After Joe slaps Janie Mae for not preparing his food the way he likes the realization of a false "image" occurs.

Following her new realization, Janie Mae's autonomous and self-contained image acquires a new state while Joe's image is "*tumbled down and shattered*" (Hurstons, 2000: 85) on the floor. Janie Mae's silence stand among the community is broken after this illuminating experience. In another incident, Janie Mae, who is tired of Joe's continuous emphasis on how she is old looking, tells him: "*You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but 'taint nothin' to it but yo' big voice Humph! Talkin' 'bout me lookin' old! When you pull down yo' britches, you look lak da change uh life*" (Ibid., 94) in front of the whole town. Janie Mae places Joe's "big voice" against his changing and deteriorating image while emphasizing that his speeches cannot make up for his lack of potency. She also undermines his authority over her and the community as she attacks his "big voice" as a measure of his authority. The narrator asserts:

Janie had robbed him of his illusion of irresistible maleness that all men cherish, which was terrible [...] she had cast down his empty arm or before men and they had laughed, and would keep on laughing. When he paraded his possessions hereafter, they would not consider the two together. They'd look with envy at the things and pity the man that owned them [...] For what can excuse a man in the eyes of other men for lack of strength? (Ibid.)

By looking at the fragmented “*ideal unity*” of his manliness, Joe reflects on his image in society and realizes that his self is characterized not by his “*big voice*” like he thought but rather by a “*lack of strength*.” Joe’s identification with the “*illusion of irresistible maleness*” stops and he begins to view his manliness as an “*empty armor*” or as a fragmented body as Lacan describes it. Joe’s fixation on the townsmen’s “*look*” and “*eyes*” suggest that, now, his impotency is revealed and he has to come to a realization that he was preoccupied on an “*image that alienates him from himself*” (Lacan, 2005: 15). Similar to Joe’s calling Janie Mae a “*doll*”, she implies a similar lack of inner autonomy by emphasizing that his suit is an “*empty armor*.” For the first time, Joe realizes the power of the look of townsmen and their possession of subjectivity. Jean Paul Sartre argues that it is the gaze that enables the subject to realize the Other, who gazes back, is also a subject as well. He asserts: “‘[M]y fundamental connection with the Other-as-subject must be able to be referred back to my permanent possibility of being seen by the Other’” (1992: 344). Thus, when the Other’s gaze occurs unexpectedly, the subject feels “*shame of self*” which stems from “*the recognition of the fact that [he is] indeed that object which the Other is looking and judging*” (Ibid., 350). Deprived from his colonizer position, this realization of psychological shame leads to a physical deterioration and weakness within Joe’s body and eventually to his death.

The same collective gaze is visible following Janie Mae’s return to Eatonville after the death of Tea Cake. As the people see her walking down the town, “[t]he men noticed her firm buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist [...] the women took the faded shirt and muddy overalls and laid them away for remembrance” (Hurstons, 2000: 3). According to Laura Mulvey’s psychoanalytic analysis, the act of looking includes Freud’s scopophilia¹² as

¹² It is the pleasure in gazing at another subject while objectifying it as erotic

well as ego libido¹³. In psychoanalysis, women can signify castration or a mechanism to avoid it. For the men and women, Janie Mae becomes an object of fantasy. For men, she becomes a sexual image, and women focus on her different clothing and “*hope that she might fall to their level some day*” (Ibid., 2). Both types of gaze combine in terms of their focus on the outer appearance of Janie Mae and the aspiration to bring her down to their class status through intercourse or degradation. As Missy Dehn Kubitschek highlights, it is important to realize the novel projecting “*a middle-aged, blue-jeaned woman talking with neighbors*” (1983: 109).

The collective gaze does not affect Janie Mae the same way it affects Joe due to her complete individual identity that is formed through her experiences during her journey. Through the depiction of Janie Mae, the issues of gender and class are deconstructed by Hurston. Borrowing from the feminist scholar and critic, bell hooks: “*It was this marginality [...] as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives*” (1990: 149). Janie Mae troubles the gender identity by reforming her identity as an independent African-American and reconstructing her home as a space of counteraction. Through her individualistic actions, Janie Mae demonstrates her desire to be free and unconstrained and by doing so, she claims and maintains her subjectivity. The passage demonstrates Janie Mae’s new sense of individuality that enables her to confront the oppression presented by the people of Eatonville community. Eatonville’s social order, which is a smaller model of the United States’ hierarchical structure of the time, is threatened by Janie Mae’s outer appearance combined with the individual inner strength.

Tom McGlamery comments that Janie Mae’s body parts need to be evaluated as “*markers of an essentially undiminished ‘strength’ that both sets in motion the anarchy at the heart of Eatonville and protects her from its effects*” (2004: 98). Hence, McGlamery rejects the notion that gazing is correlated with authoritative power. He supports it by arguing: “*Watchers are passive, weak, desirous, envious, feckless, helpless, ignorant, and enthralled*” whereas the “*power belongs to the object of attention, who is often, in fact, God-like*” (Ibid.). The narrator’s voice after the

¹³ It is the processes of identity formation.

paragraph in the novel describes Janie Mae's body as the source of her strength: "*But nobody moved, nobody spoke, nobody even thought to swallow spit until after her gate slammed behind her*" (Hurstons, 2000: 2).

In **Black Looks: Race and Representation**, bell hooks' assertion for the nineteenth century European representation of women can be interpreted into the collective gaze of the people of Eatonville that include sexuality and degradation. hooks comments on promoting African-American women bodies as "*mere spectacle*" and adds:

She is there to entertain guests with the naked image of Otherness. They are not to look at her as a whole human being. They are to notice only certain parts. Objectified in a manner similar to that of black female slaves who stood on auction blocks while owners and overseers described their important, salable parts, the black women whose naked bodies were displayed for whites as social functions had no presence. (1992: 62)

Her description of the displaying of "*salable parts*" of African-American women is also valid for Janie Mae since the people in Eatonville completely disregard her internal thoughts. Even the narrator makes a connection between Janie Mae and the "*auction block*" while describing Janie Mae's frustration after her loveless marriage to Logan Killicks: "*She had found a jewel down inside herself and she had wanted to walk where people could see her and gleam it around. But she had been set in the marketplace to sell*" (Hurstons, 2000: 107). Love constitutes most of Janie Mae's internal thoughts and the collective gaze completely ignores her inner self and, thus, the gazers fail to realize their oppressive structure.

Love is not a way of excelling self-admiration but instead the declaration of it. Jacques Lacan describes it as a "*fundamentally narcissistic structure*" since its object coincides with the creation of ego in the Imaginary order (1978: 186). Object of love is crucial in constructing a satisfying image of the ego within the creation of ideal ego. During the first experiencing of love, the subject feels love towards an object that satisfies the subject's ego. After the first time, the subject's choice of love depends on creating the same ego satisfaction. Thus, the act of love includes the love of one's own ego. Lacan asserts that "*It is one's own ego that one loves in love, one's own ego made*

real on the imaginary level” (1988: 142). Todd McGowan argues: “*Love flourishes in the age of the pathological narcissist*” because when the subject values love more, “*the pathological narcissist*” (1999: 120) also increases the significance of her ego as well. However, the growth of the ego’s emphasis does not annihilate self-doubt. Even in Janie Mae and Tea Cake’s idealized relationship, Janie Mae still feels insecure about Tea Cake’s fidelity especially when she sees him playing around with Nunkie. Throughout their relationship, Janie Mae, who is looking for unity, is completely dependent on Tea Cake and their relation based on love which elevates her own ego. In a way, her love towards Tea Cake dominates her within a new level in which she is devoted to the entity that dominates her at the same time.

Janie Mae’s inability to form effective—mostly emotional—connections with either of her husbands can also be interpreted and analyzed with respect to Lacan’s theory of ego formation. Hurston directs to the limited nature of the visual in providing Janie Mae with an autonomous identity by describing her own “*mirror*” experience. Following Joe’s death, Janie Mae examines his body and reflects on herself:

Years ago, she had told her girl self to wait for her in the looking glass [...] Perhaps she’d better look. She went to the dresser and looked hard at her skin and features. The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place. She tore off the kerchief from her head and let down her plentiful hair. (Hurston, 2000: 103)

Contrary to Joe, Janie Mae’s confrontation with the mirror brings along the realization that she is an older woman whose beauty is characterized by lack of things such as her youth. Her reflection through the mirror presents a fragmented body that emphasizes the effects of the passing years left on her. This realization of the self alerts her autonomy to a degree. By taking off her head kerchief, which she was forced to wear by Joe out of jealousy, and letting her hair down, she demonstrates resistance to Joe and an act of agency. However, after analyzing her reflection in the mirror for a short period of time, she realizes her duty to the community as a wife whose husband had just passed away. She quickly “*combed her hair and tied it back up again. Then she starched and ironed her face, forming it into just what people wanted to see, and opened up the window and cried, ‘Come heah people! Jody is dead. Mah husband is*

gone from me” (Ibid., 104). By announcing the death of her husband and thus her widowhood inside the house, Janie Mae performs an act within the patriarchal system which believes a woman’s “*place is in de home*” (Ibid., 51). Janie Mae’s use of head kerchief after Joe’s death is her way of fulfilling the expectations of the collective gaze of the town people who value the same patriarchal system that Joe signified.

About nine months after Joe’s death, Janie Mae decides to leave Eatonville to follow, again, her drive and to be with Tea Cake, however, this time her identity desires to find new opportunities for expression. In the Everglades, Janie Mae acquires the sufficient literacy that enables her to speak her mind. She has grieved and grown during her journey. The psychological and physical abuse she received allows her to become more independent. She explains to Pheoby her decision to marry and take off with Tea Cake as: “*‘So us is goin’ off somewhere and start all over in Tea Cake’s way. 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*” (Ibid., 134). Janie Mae’s freedom can be evaluated within Hurston’s definition of freedom in **Moses, Man of the Mountain**:

[Moses] had meant to make a perfect people, free and just, noble and strong, that should be a light for all the world and for time and eternity. And he wasn’t sure he had succeeded. He had found out that no man may make another free. Freedom was something internal. The outside signs were just signs and symbols of the man inside. All you could do was to give the opportunity for freedom and the man himself must make his own emancipation. (2010: 257)

Moving further the South with Tea Cake is an exhibition of her opportunity towards freedom. With this journey, she can demonstrate her gained individuality and improve her alienated condition among society. After her move, first, to the Everglades and, afterwards, back to Eatonville, she shows that she is ready to take part in a community which possesses “*newfound balms of group identity*” (Stepito, 1979: 182) with her own individuality.

The quest for unity, totalization, and wholeness is significant; however, the option of healthy fragmentation or division within the character’s self seems to be not an option in the novel. The end is described as:

Of course [Tea Cake] wasn't dead. He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see. (Hurstun, 2000: 227)

Janie Mae pulls the horizon into her self as an assumption of gradual restoration and tranquility. After her loss of the other half, she believes that her self can become a whole. The need for unity and peace is visible at the end of the novel since Hurston may believe this is the only way to end her protagonist's story in order to present her journey as a success.

Similar to African-American literature, literature that is produced by women generally possesses the same double-voicedness. Henry Louis Gates Jr. argues “[t]he ‘heritage’ of each black text written in a Western language [...] is a double heritage, two-toned, as it were [...] Each utterance, then, is double-voiced” (1984: 8). In order to produce works that are authentic, the authors need to express female fragmentation and self-difference through this double-voicedness. In the novel, even though Janie Mae seems to find tranquility and totalization, she cannot feel in unity since she loses the person who she thinks completes her. Instead she finds a way to deal with her fragmented identity with her imagination, the abilities and awareness she has gained throughout her journey. At the end, the house itself and the seeds from Tea Cake can be seen as vehicles for theorizing her fragmented body as a metaphor for decolonization within postcolonial body politics. Her fragmented and hybrid body is an adapter and adaptation to a degree that she decides gives her the strength to decolonize herself from the rest. In **The Madwoman in the Attic**, when discussing the nineteenth century women writers, Gilbert and Gubar assert that there is a portrayal of a madwoman character that is regarded as a “*monster that [even] she fears she really is rather than the angel she has pretended to be*” (2000: 77). This madwoman portrayed in the literature produced by women is not “*an antagonist or foil to the heroine*” (Ibid., 78) as she might be portrayed in male literature. Rather, Gilbert and Gubar view the character as “*the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage[...] [M]uch of the poetry and fiction written by women conjures up this mad*

creature so that female authors can come to terms with their own uniquely female feelings of fragmentation” (Ibid.) in terms of who they really are inside versus who they are supposed to be.

Hurston uses a tool that may be called inside business in her work. Like the name suggests, inside information—meaning personal—is given in her works in order to interfere with the view of how scholarship should be and present the notion of private versus public knowledge. For example, Hurston mixes the “*inside business*” of those in Eatonville with the folktales she recounts. This is done to make a place for female episodes in African-American art and literature. In her novel, Hurston mingles with the borders of power and reestablishes the boundaries that entrap African-American females in the South in order to enable the protagonists, such as Janie Mae, to have some sort of influence on their destiny. The emphasis on bodies of women and their natural course of change puzzle some people. Rosi Braidotti comments on the reshaping of the women body and its troubled relation with the established fixed notions:

The woman’s body can change shape in pregnancy and childbearing; it is therefore capable of defeating the notion of fixed bodily form, of visible, recognizable, clear, and distinct shapes as that which marks the contour of the body. She is morphologically dubious. The fact that the female body can change shape so drastically is troublesome in the eyes of the logocentric economy within which to see is the primary act of knowledge and the gaze the basis of all epistemic awareness. The fact that the male sexual organ does, of course, change shape in the limited time span of the erection and that this operation—however precarious—is not exactly unrelated to the changes of shape undergone by the female body during pregnancy constitutes, in psychoanalytic theory, one of the fundamental axes of fantasy about sexual difference. (1992: 80-81)

The result of this change of shape brings forward the multifaceted aspects women possess. This is one of the reasons why the collective gaze of Eatonville community does not affect Janie Mae as much as the same collective gaze affects Joe Starks.

Contrary to Lacan’s description of defining one’s sexual position within the psyche, Cixous asserts that women need to include their bodies within their narratives in order to resist omission. Hélène Cixous believes that women should resist patriarchy and write about their sexuality:

Women have almost everything to write about femininity: about their sexuality, that is to say, about the infinite and mobile complexity of their becoming erotic, about the lightning ignitions of such a minuscule-vast region of their body, not about destiny but about the adventure of such an urge [...] Women's body with a thousand and one fiery hearths, when—shattering censorship and yokes—she lets it articulate the proliferation of meanings that runs through it in every direction. (1988: 94)

Cixous wants women to declare that they are aware of their own bodies and desires. In **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, Hurston covers Janie Mae's experiences relating her own body, self, and gender along with other female characters' beauty and femininity. One of these characters is Daisy. She is depicted as she enters Joe's store:

Daisy is walking in a drum tune. You can almost hear it by looking at the way she walks. She is black and she knows that white clothes look good on her, so she wears them for dress up. She's got those black eyes with plenty shiny white in them that makes them shine like brand new money and she knows what God gave women eyelashes for, too. Her hair is not what you might call straight. It's negro hair, but it has a kind of white flavor. Like the piece of string out of a ham. It's not ham at all, but it's been around ham and got the flavor. It was spread down thick and heavy over her shoulders and looked just right under a big white hat. (Hurston, 2000: 68)

Hurston emphasizes the sensuality of the African-American features while deconstructing the Western view that favors white skin, blue eyes, and blonde hair. The passage demonstrates Daisy's recognition of her appealing physical features that enable her to celebrate her own feminine state. Her eyes are associated with money and her hair is compared to food. Money and food are the two essential entities that are valued among all people. It can be inferred that sexuality is essential for people as much as food and money. However, Joe tries to confine Janie Mae's sensuality in several ways. He forces her to wear a head kerchief to cover her hair and restrict her space within the borders of the house and the store. Even the store's porch where the social gathering of the town takes place is off-limits for Janie Mae.

Contrary to Joe or the majority of the community that value people upon the outer self, Janie Mae does not find mutual love or fulfillment with Tea Cake because of his "*full, lazy eyes with the lashes curling sharply away like drawn scimitars*" or his "*lean, over-padded shoulders*" (Ibid., 114). For her, Tea Cake is "*like the love thoughts*

of women. He could be a bee to a blossom in the spring [...] He was a glance from God” (Ibid., 126). His untraditional and natural manners appeal to Janie Mae. Along with refusing to take part in the social hierarchical system, Tea Cake grows affection for Janie Mae who is much older than he is and shows his feelings by admiring and reminding her of her beauty, cleaning the dandruffs and combing her hair. After they get married, however, Janie Mae uses her body in order to counteract Tea Cake’s disloyalties. After she discovers Tea Cake’s flirt with Nunkie, Janie Mae attacks Tea Cake. The narrator describes the physicality as:

They wrestled on until they were doped with their own fumes and emanations; till their clothes had been torn away; till he hurled her to the floor and held her there melting her resistance with the heat of his body, doing things with their bodies to express the inexpressible... (Ibid., 137)

This physical attack leads to physical closeness after which they submit, reunite and lay in bed “*in sweet exhaustion*” (Ibid., 162). This kind of behavior becomes their habit for resolving conflicts. In order to demonstrate the act of love—especially after a fall-out—they reunite mechanically. Janie Mae believes marital bliss and love are connected; hence, the former represents the essence of love. She considers love culminating sexual contentment which, at the end, leads to her self-realization and individuality.

Hurston tries to demonstrate African-American women’s difficult position in society in which she can neither find any position among white communities, nor any value among the African-Americans. In order to represent the African-American women struggle, Hurston includes the death of Tea Cake from the hands of Janie Mae. After the incident, she is taken on a trial in front of a white jury. The jury decides on her innocence whereas the African-American crowd claims that she is guilty: “*Tea Cake was a good boy. He had been good to that woman. No nigger woman ain’t never been treated no better*” (Ibid., 218). This paragraph reminds Nanny’s earlier words about African-American women being “*de mule uh de world*” (Ibid., 17). bell hooks writes about the struggles of African-American women with racism as well as sexism in the name of making them freer in **Ain’t I a Woman**. She argues that black woman

should have a separate category (1981: 8). She presents an analogy from white feminists:

Since analogies derive their power, their appeal, and their very reason for being from the sense of two disparate phenomena having been brought closer together, for white women to acknowledge the overlap between the terms “blacks” and “women” (that is, the existence of black women) would render this analogy unnecessary. By continuously making this analogy, they unwittingly suggest that to them the term “women” is synonymous with “white women” and the term “blacks” synonymous with “black men.” (Ibid.)

These kinds of gaps may result in the disappearance of African-American women within the analogical discourse that is produced to reflect on the challenges of African-American women. At the end, these discourses lead to their struggle even more.

Through Janie Mae, Hurston asserts that the positions in community can be powerful places to introduce unwelcomed critiques of a community/society. David L. Smith criticizes the focus on solely the oppressed group by commenting:

For intellectuals who represent the interests of an oppressed group, and not their oppressors, it is not enough to be merely ‘organic.’ One must challenge the acculturation—the common sense—that holds one’s group in oppression. One must challenge, not endorse, hegemonic consensus. In short, the ‘organic intellectuals’ of an oppressed group must be the most thorough, unsparing, and demanding critics of that culture. (1997: 183)

Janie Mae deconstructs the common sense of her closest community. She does not hesitate to elope with a man she hardly knows after her unsatisfactory first marriage. She does not consider how her grandmother and the rest of her community would think or react after her elope. The same thing happens after Joe’s death. Even though she tries to act according to the norms of the community and fulfill their expectations of a grieving widow, it does not take long for her to elope with Tea Cake to another place. And she does not listen to the African-American migrant crowd in the Everglades when they are first accusing her of murder and then begging her to stay afterwards. She also disregards the African-American southern town culture by avoiding the women who become jealous and gossip about her as well as the men’s stares from the porch after she returns to Eatonville. She refuses to share her story with this standby

audience. Instead, she chooses to reveal her story to Pheoby, who is a trustworthy friend. By sharing her story with the one person and excluding the other town members, Janie Mae criticizes and destabilizes the self-importance of the rest of the community. At the end, Janie Mae reaches to an individuality that enables her to act autonomously in order to decolonize her identity from the oppression she receives throughout her life. With the newly gained acknowledgement of her fragmented and divided character, she manages to move on to the problems in the attainment of speech which enables her to access complete agency.

2.3 Production of Speech through Voice Acquisition

Janie Mae's transition to the Symbolic order is initiated by a loss. In the novel, the loss of a dream or the failing to fulfill it leads to Janie Mae's growth as a subject. Logan's treatment of Janie Mae as a mule results in the loss of her dream of the pear tree. This loss is significant and necessary for her to generate a sense of loss which initiates her transformation into being a subject. In Jacques Lacan's Symbolic order, the objects are lost and symbols appear in place of the object. In "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power," Lacan states "*the being of language is the non-being of objects*" (2005: 200). A person can only become a subject in the symbolic order after the loss of an imaginary object such as Janie Mae's pear tree. After seeing Janie Mae and Johnny Taylor's kiss, she warns her about the expected role of the woman in a marriage. Nanny's view comes from her own colored life experiences. She says:

Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin' fur it tuh be different wid you. (Hurstons, 2000: 17)

Nanny's view of the relationships between African-American-white and male-female is her way of preparing Janie Mae for the reality of the world. She had witnessed the

workload passing from white men to African-American men and from them to African-American “*womenfolks*”. Because of her own ideas about African-American women being the lowest class of the community, she wants to restrict Janie Mae’s assumptions on womanhood. In order to protect Janie Mae from the sexual desires and silence her, Nanny ends up arranging a quick marriage for her after the kissing incident which leads to the loss of the pear tree imagery.

In the novel, since Janie Mae does not know either of her parents, Nanny becomes a mother and thus the first Other for her as her caretaker and the protector. Janie Mae listens to her until she comes to a realization of her flaws. The first sight Nanny demonstrates her flaw is after Janie Mae’s kiss with Johnny Taylor. Nanny becomes the narrator of her own story after seeing him “*lacerating her Janie with a kiss*” (Ibid., 14). She “*closed her eyes and nodded a slow, weary affirmation many times before she gave it a voice*” (Ibid., 15). She begins to unveil her own experiences; including racial and sexual exploitation, physical violence and giving birth out of wedlock, as well as worries and desires for Janie Mae. Nanny narrates her story (and her daughter Leafy’s story) the same way Janie Mae narrates hers to Pheoby. Her main aim of narrating her own story and proposing her to marry Logan is to warn Janie Mae of the complications of life and provide a better option for her since she did not have one: “*Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin’ on high, but they wasn’t no pulpit for me*” (Ibid., 19). Yet, she still manages to preach Janie Mae about the African-American women being the lowest class among the hierarchical system and therefore they are as worthy as mules of the world. Hence, the content of the speech becomes a political one as well as a personal one.

At first Janie Mae tries to have feelings for her husband like she had under the pear tree, but she is disgusted by him and his “*toe-nails look lak mule foots*” (Ibid., 17). The mule imagery once again is present to silence Janie Mae. In the meantime, Logan becomes more demanding expecting Janie Mae to get involved in more physical work around the farm. When he tells her that he is going “*over tuh Lake City tuh see uh man about uh mule*” that is so gentle that a woman can handle it, silenced Janie Mae does not question what he means by it. However, in Logan’s absence the first seed of questioning her fate is planted by Joe Starks. He tells her: “*You behind a plow! You ain’t got no mo’ business wid a plow than a hog is got wid uh holiday!*” (Ibid., 34)

And thus, Janie Mae starts to acknowledge she has other options than staying and being under Logan's orders. Hence, Janie Mae takes the stand and uses speech to express herself. She reflects her disappointment and dissatisfaction to Nanny, who fails to find a solution, and even expresses her thoughts to Logan himself: "*S'posin' Ah wuz to run off and leave you sometime [...] Ah might take and find somebody dat did trust me and leave you*" (Ibid., 36). The uneasy seed grows as Logan refuses to take Janie Mae's speech seriously. Since he has made up his mind about working her behind a mule, he refuses to hear Janie Mae's threats about running away. And when she talks about her place being in the house, Logan objects: "*You ain't got no particular place. It's wherever Ah need yuh [...] You better dry up in dere*" (Ibid., 38). By "*dry up*", he means Janie Mae to be silent and talk no more. The phrase also suggests Janie Mae's drying up in this master-mule type of marriage.

During her first marriage, Logan tries to shape Janie Mae into a role that is similar to a mule. By acting this way and not being able to give her what she desires, Logan shatters her imaginary identification by contaminating the idea of the pear tree and, thus, her belief in correlation of love and marriage. The alienation, which results from this realization, illustrates her symbolic castration by her submission to the Symbolic order. She becomes a subject not through her imagination of the pear tree but rather from the "*desecrating*" of it by Logan (Ibid., 17). Through her marriage, her understanding of love is altered: "*She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman*" (Ibid., 30). Like Lacan, Hurston asserts that only by going through a loss of a dream that Janie Mae, or the African-American woman, can develop into being a subject.

According to Lacan, the Symbolic order is the space that is constituted by the loss of the objects. Thus, the emergence of the symbol—instead of the object—takes place. Without this experience of loss and alienation, the subject cannot be formed. Lacan asserts: "*There is no subject without, somewhere, aphanisis of the subject, and it is in this alienation, in this fundamental division, that the dialectic of the subject is established*" (1978: 221). Only after she is forced into a marriage with Logan, Janie Mae "*became a woman*" (Hurston, 2000: 30) because of the shattering of her dream of the pear tree which reflects her imaginary identity and began her transformation into being a subject. The very idea of Joe Stark indicates liberation away from her first

husband and everything he represents. After she elopes with Joe, she feels: “*What was she losing so much time for? A feeling of newness and change came over her [...] From now on until death she was going to have flower dust and springtime sprinkled over everything. A bee for her bloom*” (Ibid., 39). She feels excitement for her salvation, however, soon she realizes that she has been liberated into a different form of oppression.

Lacan argues that speech derives from neither the ego, nor the subject; it originates in the Other. He emphasizes that language and speech cannot be controlled consciously. It is formed through the outside consciousness and thus “*the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*” (2005: 16). From the beginning of their relationship until the final outburst in the store, Janie Mae remains silent next to Joe in the majority of their marriage. Despite her attempts to take part in the social events, she is forbidden to do so. In the day of the election for the mayor of Eatonville, she is asked to give a speech, however, Joe declines this invitation as: “*Thank yuh fuh yo’ compliments, but mah wife don’t know nothin’ ‘bout no speech-makin’. Ah never married her for nothin’ lak dat. She’s uh woman and her place is in de home*” (Hurston, 2000: 43). By identifying marriage with “*no speechmakin’*,” Joe emphasizes that Janie Mae’s silence stems from her role as a wife. In **Gender Trouble**, Judith Butler mentions the notion of “gender performativity” which can be useful in interpreting Janie Mae and Joe’s relationship. According to her, identity of the gender occurs after the subjects—especially women—regularly perform actions that are continuously imposed by the authoritative discourse but it is important to realize that it is also “*a changeable and revisable reality*” (1999: xxiii). Joe’s comment positions Janie Mae and her voice within the walls of their home. In “Metaphor, Metonymy, and Voice in Their Eyes Were Watching God,” Barbara Johnson asserts that “[e]ven plot itself [...] has been conceived of as the doings of those who do not stay at home, in other words, men” (1984: 165). Joe’s views support Johnson’s ideas of the patriarchal understanding of language and storytelling: “*Ah aimed tuh be uh big voice. You oughta be glad, ‘cause dat makes uh big woman outa you*” (Hurston, 2000: 55). He assumes that the growth of Janie Mae’s identity depends on him becoming a “big voice”. Even though Janie Mae does not have a desire for giving a speech, she is not content about this deprivation

but it is not until the increase of Joe's psychological and physical oppression that she consciously grows a desire to have a voice of her own.

Joe establishes his store as the center of the town with all-African-American residents. People gather on the porch of his store to tell tales, play checkers, and pass time. Through use of folklore and stories, the porch presents a vernacular technology that encodes an African-American traditional experience as part of a networked consciousness. In **Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature**, Melvin Dixon asserts that:

Since the major geographical dislocation of blacks from slave-trading Africa and through the nineteenth century, issues of home, self, and shelter have loomed paramount in the black imagination...Black survival, however, requires that those received values and cultural assumptions associating certain places with low and high status, or with moral degradation and elevation, be changed. Afro-American literature is replete with speech acts and spatial images that invert these assumptions about place and endow language with the power to reinvent geography and identity. (1987: 2)

In Hurston's Eatonville, the town's environment has the capacity to help African-Americans build this speech and identity. Especially the porch of the store presents African-Americans a space—away from whites—where they can behave, socialize, develop an identity, and speak freely as well as develop the communal networked consciousness. In "Characteristics of Negro Expression," Hurston asserts that personal language use is emphasized through spatialization:

Frequently the Negro, even with detached words in his vocabulary –not evolved in him but transplanted on his tongue by contact—must add action to it to make it do [...] [T]he speaker has in his mind the picture of the object in use. Action. Everything is illustrated. So we can say that the white man thinks in a written language and the Negro thinks in hieroglyphics. (1997: 56)

It is possible to see an emphasis on the expression forms that are visual within the African-American culture. Hurston views non-verbal forms, such as body movements (almost like hieroglyphics), as tools for communication. For instance, when describing Daisy's body movements, the narrator makes a connection with her and "*walking a drum tune*" which people can "*almost hear it by looking at the way she walks*"

(Hurston, 2000: 68). Even though there are specific meanings expressed by her movements, they also possess a communal form. In Daisy's case, she is aware that men on the porch are watching her. Besides the courtship of the men, the event is a source of enjoyment for the crowd: "[T]he porch enjoyed the play and helped out whenever extras were needed" (Ibid., 81). Interpreting from this quote, the individual actions of Daisy, the men, and other members of the crowd blend into a communal space that forms the networked consciousness mostly through the act of storytelling.

Through storytelling, the oral cultural traditions, which are an important part of African-American heritage, continue to exist. In **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, Hurston uses storytelling as a means to control the flow of the novel which echoes Ralph Ellison's combination of individual and collective identity with geography in literature. Hurston asserts that in order not to get detached, survive, and soften the reality in which the white supremacy is undeniable, the African-Americans tell stories, sometimes twist realities, and perform unappreciated dances (2008). In addition to being a coping mechanism, they use these means of resistance to spread their heritage, culture, and norms as well as their histories. The change is established through the use of humor to undermine the domination goals of whites. With mostly the nonsensical thoughts—at least on the surface—the African-Americans succeed at remaining partially unknown to the outsiders.

After the introduction of Bonner's mule in the text, it becomes the common topic of the town. However, Janie Mae is forbidden to engage in the conversations about the mule even though she is very anxious to do so. Joe Starks tries to isolate Janie Mae from the rest of the townsmen and women because he does not "*want her talking after such trashy people*" because she is "*Mrs. Mayor Starks*" (Hurston, 2000: 63). What Janie Mae desires is not to indulge in conversations but rather to be able to interact with the others. Joe's superior acts continue even when he is involved in the porch conversations:

Janie noted that while he didn't talk the mule himself, he sat and laughed at it [...] But when Lige or Sam or Walter or some of the other big picture talkers were using the side of the world for a canvas, Joe would hustle her inside the store to sell something. Look like he took pleasure in doing it. (Ibid., 64)

By physically removing Janie Mae from the setting of the porch to the inside of the store instead of letting Janie Mae interact and share her thoughts among the community, Joe silences her. He also orders her to wear a head rag when she is in the store. By making her cover her beautiful hair, Joe once again suppresses and silences Janie Mae. Hurston asserts, “*She was there in the store for him to look at, not those others. But he never said things like that. It just wasn’t in him*” (Ibid., 65).

In the novel’s afterword, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. states: “The myths [Hurston] describes so accurately are in fact ‘alternative modes for perceiving reality,’ and never just condescending depictions of the quaint” (2000: 235). In fact, the mentioned alternative modes occur through language because of the popularity of the oral tradition among African-Americans mainly due to the illiteracy of the members of the communities. In order to reflect African-American folklore experience which includes many animal metaphors, Hurston also uses animal metaphors in her writings including her co-written play with Langston Hughes, **Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life** and “The Bone of Contention,” which was published after her death. The mule is also a central figure in her book of African-American folklore collection, **Mules and Men**. Furthermore, the metaphors used in these works form the basis for the mule metaphors in **Their Eyes Were Watching God**. The mule is used to symbolize a folkloric image. In the novel, Joe Stark takes advantage of the mule by using it to secure his class rank and reestablish the hierarchy among the community. The mule helps to display the social, economic, and even political diverseness within the characters.

The animal is also used to portray Hurston’s observations on the gap between speech and silence in Janie Mae’s life. Sharon Davie comments on the link of mule and the African-Americans on the novel as:

the story of the freeing, death, and funeral of Matt Bonner’s mule echoes with complexity the historical linking of blacks and animals in the great chain of being. Hurston creates the framework for a multilayered irony by reminding readers of another Western cliché of otherness: women’s animality and supposedly inferior ability to reason. (1993: 449)

Hurston tries to manifest the effects of being silenced as well as breaking away from the oppressive forces that silences the females. Similar to Ralph Ellison’s **Invisible**

Man, Hurston is also interested in the self-development that comes after gaining speech for one's own autonomous thoughts and identity. Tracing the mule references, it is possible to see Janie Mae's self-evolvment over time. According to Julie A. Haurykiewicz, Janie Mae's self-development occurs as she travels from "*mules to muliebrity*" (1997: 45). Her transition starts from the beginning, where she is oppressed by the community including her closest relatives, and finalizes at the end of the novel where she is an African-American female with a strong and autonomous speech. At the end, her self-growth depends on her ability to assert her thoughts and feelings among others.

The use of mule reference is more common in places where Janie Mae is silenced and unable to transfer her voice to the others. While the presence of the mule represents the silencing of Janie Mae, the absence of it connotes to her capability for speech and self-portrayal. The animal itself is amusing when considering how it is brought into existence and what it represents. It is formed out of the sexual union of usually the male donkey and female horse, a mare. It is generally infertile and used to carry loads and serve in labor. It is also considered to be unamenable and insubordinate. In this context, Hurston draws parallelism between the animal and African-Americans after the emancipation. For example, Janie Mae's mother and grandmother were raped by white men; as a result, both Leafy and Janie Mae are biracial. The infertility of the mule, therefore, illustrates as the way they are silenced by the community. As it is pointed out in the proto-Afrofuturistic novel, her communication struggles are mostly related to sexual desires. She becomes silent/silenced when she no longer possesses those kinds of feelings. Besides, the fact that mules are used for labor connotes to the way African-Americans were used as properties before and after the emancipation. The grandmother, who lives through the slavery period, suffers both by her owner and the consequences of her owner's actions. She not only experiences rape but also has to bear a light skin child out of wedlock. That is why Nanny warns Janie Mae that "*de nigger woman is de mule uh de world*" (Hurston, 2000: 14). Nevertheless, the way Hurston uses mule imagery is more complex including diverse types of associations that accommodate different levels of power and authority. Klaus Benesch asserts that:

the identification of 'mules and men' is no longer the main impetus for the tale tellers in an all-black community like Eatonville. Yet, by using such stories in *Their Eyes*, Hurston not only signifies on a collective past [slavery] but also, in alluding to Nanny's earlier remark that 'de nigger woman is de mule uh de world,' signifies on the role of black women as well as on the male-female relationships. (1988: 633)

Nanny's remarks represent Janie Mae's relationships with her first two husbands. The relationship that both men desire correlates with the relationship between the mule and its master. As mules are portrayed as insubordinate, Janie Mae's impediment to the existing state of the order completes the means of the metaphor. According to Mary K. Wainwright:

At the same time she celebrates the life of the folk in *Mules and Men*, Hurston illustrates black women's vigorous defiance of conventional gender expectations and male authority. Using her folkloric sensibility to subvert the dominant culture's ideology regarding African-Americans, she adds a politics of gender to her politics of race by subtly employing the voice of the *female* folk teller to undermine negative assumptions about black women held by both black and white cultures. (1991: 64)

The mule metaphors in **Their Eyes Were Watching God** are placed to keep Janie Mae silent while directing her silence at the benefit of her self-development and quest for her speech. It is only after Janie Mae performs mule-like behaviors that she starts her initiation process into full womanhood.

The stories in **Mules and Men** significantly portray diverse aspects and lessons of speech from everyday life. For instance, a lesson that can be derived from the story titled "Why They Always Use Rawhide on a Mule," is to know where and when to speak as well as how to use speech in the right context. The aim of Hurston's use of this story can be argued to highlight the consequences of speech and its classification between the relationship of the owner and the slave. In another story, "The Talking Mule," Hurston shows the benefits of speech when it is used in the correct context. The main idea of the story is speech-related surprises can be successful when applied in appropriate manners. In Hurston's novel, when Janie Mae talks to Joe sarcastically after purchasing the mule, she also succeeds at getting the desired reaction since Joe does not expect such reaction. These folk tales, along with the others, demonstrates

what Hurston believes the folklore means: “*the arts of the people before they find out that there is any such thing as art, and they make it out of whatever they have at hand*” (2008: 184).

Matt Bonner’s yellow mule represents more than what it stands for. The mule is known for its disobedience and constitutes the main topics of the porch conversations among the townsmen. The mule’s capability of directing the townsmen to speak and take action lives longer and becomes larger than the mule itself. Wall argues African-Americans “*ceased to be ‘tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences’ whose labor whites exploited; they ceased to be mules and were men and women*” (1982: 373) in Hurston’s writing. The mules, represented in the stories and the novel, have communality. The first description of Eatonville’s evening in **Their Eyes Were Watching God** is as follows:

It was the time to hear things and talk. These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. They passed nations through their mouths. They sat in judgment. (Hurston, 2000: 1-2)

This passage clearly demonstrates Hurston’s association of mules with silence. The arrival of the evening is associated with the time when people gather to talk and convey their ideas and emotions in contrast to the daytime when people cannot communicate properly and become robotic subjects with the “[m]ules and other brutes”—such as “*the bossman*”—around” (Ibid., 2). With their absence, the town’s people feel “*powerful and human*,” in other words, their social status changes. Hurston associates this change with liberation from silence and comments: “*They become lords of sounds and lesser things*.” Besides, in the last two sentences of the passage, she uses the word choice of “*nations*” when referring to the heritage, traditions, legacies, and the experiences that are shared through the networked consciousness with the spreading of folklore.

When her husband buys the mule from Bonner, the townsmen and women regard his gesture as a “*noble thing*” (Ibid., 68). In the meantime, Janie Mae observes

the others' comments and then ridicule Joe in a way the rest of the folks are not sufficient enough to understand:

Jody, dat wuz a mighty fine thing fuh you tuh do. 'Tain't everybody would have thought of it, 'cause it ain't no everyday thought. Freein' dat mule makes uh mighty big man outa you. Something like George Washington and Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln, he had de whole United States tuh rule so he freed de Negroes. You got uh town so you freed uh mule. You have tuh power tuh free things and that makes you lak uh king uh something. (Ibid., 68-69)

Janie Mae's direct reference to Abraham Lincoln highlights the parallelism between the slaves and the mule. As Morris and Dunn assert, she is "*clearly satirizing the so-called freeing of the slaves and the pretense that they are treated as equals by society*" (1991: 7). Her suspicion of the source of the act and the heroic self-portraiture is another aspect of the ascent narrative.¹⁴

By switching the roles, it is Janie Mae who silences Joe this time. He is not able to correspond to her. As for the townsmen, they think that Janie Mae is "*uh born orator [...] put jus' de right words tuh our thoughts*" (Hurstons, 2000: 69). They cannot stop talking about the mule: "*New lies sprung up about his free-mule doings*" (Ibid.). People are not happy with the mule's new position as they thought the animal has disturbed the hierarchy of the town community. According to Sharon Davie, the animal is part of a social-displacement thus becomes a "*vision of reality as indeterminate, as too transient, diverse, and inconsistent ever to be fixed in hierarchy, emerges*" (1993: 448). His death also causes a lot of attention among the community. As the mock funeral of the animal is about to take place, Janie Mae wants to attend it but she is rejected by her husband because Joe believes a place full of triteness is not a place for her. He informs her about the reason for his attending as: "*They's liable to need me tuh say uh few words over de carcass*" (Hurstons, 2000: 71). Again he stresses on his right of speech by silencing her. As she waits in front of the door—a symbolic threshold—she decides not to be silenced by him anymore. The death of the mule is paralleled with the death of the silenced African-American women. The death,

¹⁴ Similar reference to rhetoric of the progress and the heroic self-portraiture is described in Lynn O. Scott's book **James Baldwin's Later Fiction: Witness to the Journey** in which she makes referrals to not only Baldwin but also to Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man**.

according to Emily Dalgarno, foreshadows the finding of Janie Mae's public voice (1992: 527). Another scholar, Joseph Urgo, asserts that Joe had his reasons to act the way he did because of

the incisive, cutting wit foreshadowed by Janie's commentary on the mule episode. Later, when he tries to humiliate Janie in his store, she verbally destroys him with that wit, revealing in public his sexual inadequacies by pointing to the "change of life" inside his pants. (1991: 49)

The times around the funeral are the last times that Janie Mae lets Joe have his glory. At the funeral, he stands on the animal's belly as he gives his effective eulogy that put him in a new spot among the townspeople, at least that is what he believes. The way he stands on the dead mule is similar to how people in authority stand on the silenced ones. Even at its death, the animal is used by Joe to elevate his place to the highest among the community that he lives in. Afterwards, Joe's use of silencing Janie Mae becomes useless as she decides to purposely become silent to protect herself: "*No matter what Jody did, she said nothing. She had learned to talk some and leave some*" (Hurstons, 2000: 90). This silenced phase did not mean for her to give up hope. Her hopes for the future still stand: "*Sometimes she stuck out into the future, imagining her life different from what it was*" (Ibid.). She is in a sort of hibernation, waiting for her time to use her speech abilities.

The final step for Janie Mae to figuratively leave her marriage and begin to claim her voice comes after Joe's slap. The narrator asserts: "*She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them*" (Ibid.). It is at this crucial moment that Janie Mae realizes to keep her inner thoughts and feelings and outer behaviors and actions separated. With this realization, she enters the space of figurative language in which the inside and the outside represent different variables. Following her acquisition of this language, she becomes aware that coherent language needs the presence of different variables of inner and outer self instead of their emergence. Thus, through the self-difference within her identity, she finds her authentic speech.

Her silenced state ends with their argument in the store as Joe tries to humiliate her once again. She cannot take it anymore and takes "*the middle of the floor to talk right into Jody's face, and that was something that hadn't been done before*" (Ibid.,

93). As one of the leading scholars, Henry L. Gates Jr. translates this as Janie Mae “telling him that he not only is nothing but a man, but an impotent man at that” (1990: 162). He further notes: “[T]he revelation of the truth kills him. Janie, in effect, has rewritten Joe’s text of himself and liberated herself in the process” (Ibid.). At last, she is freed from the imposed silenced and is reborn as a new individual. In Joe’s deathbed, she continues to speak and put her true thoughts into words. She talks about the state of speechlessness, having a voice and also listening as she criticizes him of not even listening to his own voice and reflect her discontent of “*all dis bowin’ down, all dis obedience under yo’ voice*” (Hurstons, 2000: 103). Upon his death, Janie Mae becomes aware that by putting her private thoughts, ideas and feelings into words, she became her own person who possesses agency. Thus her transition “*from ‘mule’ into muliebrity*” (Haurykiewicz, 1997: 59) occurs.

The power dynamics begin after Joe and Janie Mae arrive in Eatonville. Janie Mae is not the only one who realizes Joe’s dominated nature within a short period of time. When they see Joe, the people in town realize:

There was something about Joe Starks that cowed the town. It was not because of physical fear. He was no fist fighter. His bulk was not even imposing as men go. Neither was it because he was more literate than the rest. Something else made men give way before him. He had a bow-down command in his face, and every step he took made the thing more tangible. (Hurstons, 2000: 55)

The narrator describes how Joe becomes an authority in the town of Eatonville simply because he acts like one and has the language ability. Initially, he does not possess the necessary intelligence or the strength but only has the appearance of an authority and the crowd who is ready to submit to an authority:

The town had a basketful of feelings good and bad about Joe’s positions and possessions, but none had the temerity to challenge him. They bowed down to him rather, because he was all of these things, and then again he was all of these things because the town bowed down. (Ibid., 59)

His power comes from his possession of a phallus. Since his power of authority only exists because of the people of Eatonville’s recognition of his authority, it corresponds

to the Lacanian symbolic father which is not a real subject but rather a function that helps to enforce the law and order. According to Lacan: “*The true function of the Father [...] is fundamentally to unite (and not to set in opposition) a desire and the Law*” (2005: 321). Joe Starks has the power through phallus as long as people obey his authority. Like the Father—in Lacanian terms—he is really impotent, but the people’s investment in him conceals his impotency. In **Enjoy Your Symptom!**, Slavoj Zizek further asserts:

When authority is backed up by an immediate physical compulsion, what we are dealing with is not authority proper (i.e., symbolic authority), but simply an agency of brute force: authority proper is at its most radical level always powerless, it is a certain ‘call’ which ‘cannot effectively force us into anything,’ and yet, by a kind of inner compulsion, we feel obliged to follow it unconditionally. (1999: 94)

Thus, it can be inferred from Zizek that the phallus’ strength comes from the obedience of the others. This phallic authority depends on the belief that the Father possesses a thing which constructs his authority. Once the illusion of this power is disrupted, the authority is lost. Among the people, Joe also believes that he has the illusionary phallus. In reality, he does not consciously deceive the people but rather he is also in an illusioned state which deceives himself as well. After enduring all his psychological abuses about her physical appearance as well as capabilities, Janie Mae attacks his potency publicly in his store: “*Talkin’ ‘bout me lookin’ old! When you pull down yo’ britches, you look lak de change uh life*” (Hurston, 2000: 94). By targeting the most sensitive as well as significant area of Joe’s power, she destroys his authority to the ground in Eatonville. The narrator narrates this destruction as:

[S]he had cast down his empty armor before men and they had laughed, would keep on laughing. When he paraded his possessions hereafter, they would not consider the two together. They’d look with envy at the things and pity the man that owned them. When he sat in judgment it would be the same. Good-for-nothing’s like Dave and Lum and Jim wouldn’t change place with him. For what can excuse a man in the eyes of other men for lack of strength? Raggedy-behind squirts of sixteen and seventeen would be giving him their merciless pity out of their eyes while their mouths said something humble. There was nothing to do in life anymore. Ambition was useless. (Ibid., 94-95)

After Janie Mae's public exclusion of Joe, his ideology, and authority structure are all destroyed. After the loss of the center (which is himself and his phallus) of his coherent environment where Joe has organized his elements all along, the system fails because in order for it to work the obedient people need to trust a stable and substantial center. If this trust cannot be constructed substantially, then the center cannot operate as the *point de capiton*¹⁵ which is the point that "*the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of the signification*" (Lacan, 2005: 303). It is at this point that "*signified and signifier are knotted together*" (Lacan, 1993: 268) within a structure that produces the fundamental illusion for a fixed meaning. By undermining Joe's impotency, Janie Mae weakens the center and thus, causes a demolition of the hierarchical system of authority. Realizing that "*Janie had robbed him of his illusion of irresistible maleness that all men cherish,*" Joe hits and drags her away from the store (Hurstons, 2000: 123). She is denied agency, voice, and sexuality as the wife of the mayor and when she begins to reclaim these characteristics, she threatens Joe's position in their relationship as well as among the town's community. Even though his position within the town suffers some loss due to Janie Mae's insults, his position or ideology does not diminish among the people even long after his death.

After this public attack, Joe and Janie Mae's relationship falls apart. As Joe's health deteriorates, they become two strangers in the same house. At the beginning Janie Mae fails to understand Joe's anger since she believes she used his words against him: "*Why must Joe be so mad with her for making him look small when he did it to her all the time?*" (Ibid., 96). Janie Mae cannot acknowledge that by damaging the linguistic control Joe has, she symbolically castrated him. According to Deborah Clarke, the damages to Joe's linguistic and "*visual dynamics that he has established*" demonstrates how by "*transforming the visual into a tool of female power, Hurston reclaims the power of the visual as a vehicle for examining African American women's experiences*" (2001: 606). However, she does not remove herself from the established patriarchal system of the language, instead she uses the system that is built around the idea of symbolic phallus. Her voice gains some level of autonomy from the castration

¹⁵ In different English translations, *point de capiton* is translated as "*anchoring point*" or "*quilting point*". In order to avoid confusions, the French term is used.

of the symbolic phallus, however, it is not “*a tool of female power*” separated from the language that is mainly constituted of patriarchal understanding.

Not long before Joe passes away, Janie Mae decides to talk to Joe and tell him who she really is and how she really feels. Upon beginning to talk, she feels as “*[s]omething stood like an oxen’s foot on her tongue*” (Hurstons, 2000: 100). Still, Janie Mae resists Joe’s disruptions to hinder her from talking and continues: “*Naw, Jody, Ah come in heah tuh talk widja and Ah’m goin tuh do it. It’s for both of our sakes Ah’m talkin*” (Ibid., 101). As she admits her faults, Joe’s protests continue to interrupt her. When she finally gains her voice back completely, she admits that there is no sympathy left in her for Joe and this is due to his patriarchal exploitations. Failing to see Janie Mae’s honesty, Joe refuses to believe Janie Mae. Helene Cixous names this situation “*a double anguish, for even if she [a woman] transgresses, her word almost always falls on the deaf, masculine ear, which can only hear language that speaks in the masculine*” (1988: 92). Joe’s “*deaf, masculine ear*” refuses to hear Janie Mae’s voice but Janie Mae also refuses to be suppressed and proceeds:

You changes everything but nothin’ don’t change you—not even death. But Ah ain’t goin’ outa here and Ah ain’t gointuh hush. Naw, you gointuh listen tuh me one time befo’ you die. Have yo’ way all yo’ life, trample and mash down and then die rather than tuh let yo’self heah ’bout it. Listen, Jody, you ain’t de Jody ah run off down de road wid. You’s whut’s left after he died. Ah run off tuh keep house wid you in uh wonderful way. But you wasn’t satisfied wid me de way Ah was. Naw! Mah own mind had tuh be squeezed and crowded out tuh make room for yours in me. (Hurstons, 2000: 102)

Regardless of what she had experienced during her marriage to Joe, she is mainly upset about Joe’s lack of satisfaction with her own self as who she is. She truly feels sorry about Joe’s oppressions upon her individuality and identity. Janie Mae completes her reclamation of her voice by defying herself against Joe. She needs to reach the source of the speech in order to set themselves free to a certain degree of awareness.

By allowing Tea Cake into her life, she continues her new state of individuality. After moving to a new area where things are not as neat for her as it was in Eatonville, she uses her own character and free speech more: “*Only here, she could listen and laugh and even talk some herself if she wanted to*” (Ibid., 128). Her verbal abilities,

along with her character, evolve to a state that “*she could tell big stories herself from listening to the rest*” (Ibid.) and participate in the community games. It comes to a point that Janie Mae gets “*so she could tell big stories herself*” (Ibid., 158). Missy D. Kubitschek asserts: “*The storytelling sessions are crucial to community unity and self-definition, since they generate and develop communal tradition*” (1983: 112). Through such interactions, Janie Mae becomes a social figure in the Everglades community. After the unfortunate incident of the flood and the rabies, Janie Mae leaves the Everglades to return to Eatonville where she is silenced the most before she left the place.

Similar to Nanny narrating her story to Janie Mae, she also narrates her story to Pheoby after she returns back to Eatonville and inserts her own story into the history. The experiences presented in the proto-Afrofuturistic novel provide a unique frame of reference and perspective on the African-American culture. While she lives on the margins of her communities, she remains committed to being a part of her current community. Travelling enables Janie Mae to reconsider the significance as well as the deficiencies of her originating community. In the Everglades, she retrieves more of her voice and returns to Eatonville to narrate her insights to her friend Pheoby. She is wiser in terms of herself and her community with her space alterations. Furthermore, the storytelling that takes place between Janie Mae and Pheoby emphasizes that literature can “*endow [...] language with the power to reinvent geography and identity*” in reality (Dixon, 1987: 2). Having an access to Janie Mae’s individual journey allows all kinds of individual and collective re-creation since Pheoby is considered a part of her voice that helps her “*communicate with the community*” (McGlamery, 2004: 112).

Following her return to Eatonville, through the power they gained, townspeople “*sat in judgment*” (Hurstons, 2000: 2). Following a mentality like Joe’s, the residents of Eatonville criticize others according to their own expectations. After she runs away with Tea Cake, the townswomen judge her because she took off with a younger man whereas the townsmen judge her out of her physical attractiveness. By judging, the community wants to suppress and silence Janie Mae again but she lets her voice heard through her personal conversation with her friend, Pheoby. Her transformation is completed at the end of the novel. She is a woman who can convey and generate private thoughts, emotions, and new ideas. Even though she may be

restricted in some ways, she is mainly her own individual. The proto-Afrofuturistic novel acts as a means of “*exploration of a woman’s consciousness accompanied by an assertion of that woman’s right to selfhood*” (Hemenway, 1977: 232). By using the mule imagery as a way to represent the silenced and objectified state of African-American women in society, Hurston facilitates a confrontation to closely analyze both the African-American and white American culture and the assessments which made up the culture.

Janie Mae’s shared memories with Tea Cake enable her to progress forward with her newly claimed independent and fragmented identity. She has the ability to autonomously live within the African-American networked consciousness. Through her experiences mostly with men, she becomes an African-American heroine who is a lover, fighter, dreamer, thinker, survivor, and a storyteller. With the storyteller voice, she can overcome the oppressive communities of both whites and African-Americans. She shares her story as well as insights with Pheoby and causes a reaction that turns the object into a subject of African-American women empowerment. Following her story, Pheoby asserts that she is “*ten feet higher*” by just listening to Janie Mae and she will not confine to what she has but make demands for more from now on: “*Ah ain’t satisfied wid mahself no mo’. Ah means tuh make Sam take me fishin’ wid him after this*” (Hurston, 2000: 226). Pheoby begins to feel the desire for more in order to create her own adventures.

As Janie Mae resists the restrictions of oppression by recovering from a collective trajectory, she becomes an initiator of African-American historical consciousness. Janie Mae’s journey, both literally and figuratively, becomes more than an African-American woman’s dreams and desires, Eatonville and the Everglades also become more than simple African-American communities. As a proto-Afrofuturist writer, Hurston challenges the formation of African-American reality through Janie Mae’s journey across time and spaces (African-American spaces created by segregation) as well as experiences of white domination and African-American fanaticism. She decolonizes the already established notions of race and gender by the use of alternative spaces as well as her body and the power of language. The novel portrays Hurston’s views on racial consciousness to subjectify the African-Americans and hopes for possible futures.

CHAPTER III

USE OF TECHNOLOGICAL DISCOURSE IN PROTO-AFROFUTURISM: *INVISIBLE MAN*

Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** (1952) draws attention to racial issues in science fiction/proto-Afrofuturism and technologic discourse particularly through the context of decolonization. The proto-Afrofuturistic aspects of the novel emphasize not only the discursive racialization processes but also the degrading scientific practices that are reputedly called "*value-neutral*" which are natural, normal and hence not political (Harding, 1992: 568). In her book, **Is Science Multi-cultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies**, Sandra Harding states that postcolonial studies have identified how the core of contemporary science still remains to have a European and colonial distinction, and "*value-neutrality is not value neutral*" (1998: 61). On the other hand, contemporary science fiction discloses problematic suppositions on how people convey the technological developments worldwide. Emphasizing on the issues that are related to how social and political status, technological developments and environmental changes will be projected into the future, contemporary science fiction is helping to speculate on how the changes are reflected in people's minds today.

In Ellison's **Invisible Man**, the unnamed protagonist is located both in the American south and north. Despite being a resident of different spaces, he takes similar approaches towards understanding the technological developments. This similarity in his approaches is partly due to the way the text questions the techno-utopianism that believes the advancement of technology is able to clear the way for a more socially and environmentally egalitarian society. **Invisible Man** contributes to examine the technology's effects on the African-Americans. The examination of the effects of technological developments on the unnamed protagonist as well as the effects on the African-Americans and how these effects lead people to create spaces of resistance or alternative spaces in which technological developments can be used for more ethical and social encounters is discussed in **Invisible Man**. These perspectives are informative on how the text uses the proto-Afrofuturist discourse as the base for

developing a more egalitarian standpoint, specifically through the adaptation of alternative spaces, body, and language. The novel thus withstands the tendency to draw general inferences on technology and hence evaluate such actions that seem to be generalizing and separating information as part of the dominating actions of whites.

Invisible Man's prologue begins with the declaration: "*I am invisible [...] simply because people refuse to see me*" (Ellison, 1995: 3). The narrator's intimate thoughts about his acceptance of invisibility and its "*wearing on the nerves*" (Ibid.) are very much visible. In consequence of his invisibility, the narrator chose to keep refuge underground. This refuge enables him to share his story and invisibility. As a young African-American boy in the south, he is a successful student with a gift for oratory skills. Following his high school graduation, the white townsmen invite him to deliver his valedictory speech in front of a group of wealthy white townsmen in a gathering but this gathering turns into a discriminatory event. After being subjected to the humiliating Battle Royal in which young African-American boys are forced to fight with each other blindfolded for the amusement of the whites, he is rewarded with a briefcase containing a scholarship to a college for African-Americans. In his third year, he is expelled from the college due to an incident he had with one of the wealthy white trustees of the college, Mr. Norton. Following his expulsion, the president of the college, Dr. Bledsoe sends the unnamed narrator to search for a job in New York. With the support he receives from a trustee's son, he finds a job at a Liberty Paints factory, which is famous for its "*optic white*" color. After an accident in the factory, the narrator is hospitalized and becomes a subject for electrical lobotomy. Upon being released from the hospital, he sees an eviction of an old African-American couple and his days of protest begin after he joins the Brotherhood which is a group that uses allegedly scientific formulas to implement their political agenda. The narrator enjoys the class-based (and not a race-based) system for a while; however, when he realizes the true intentions of the Brotherhood, he tries to part away. In order to disguise himself, he wears a hat and dark glasses, which lead people to mistake him for Rinehart, a man with many different personalities. Soon, he finds himself in the middle of a race riot, which is initiated by an African nationalist leader, Ras the Exhorter who orders the narrator to be lynched. While running from the men and the police, the narrator falls into a manhole. The unnamed narrator states that he has stayed underground ever since

and the story returns to the prologue. By isolating himself from society and staying underground the unnamed narrator realizes to honor his self and identity. In his current state of hibernation, he is determined to end his hibernation and ready to take place in society once again but cannot take action since he is not sure how to project his awareness on society.

The idea of dystopian reality and future, or the opposite of techno-utopianism, is presented in **Invisible Man** when the unnamed narrator realizes he has nowhere to hide towards the end of the novel. He realizes that wherever he travels, he is going to be met with the same invariable behavior and mindsets—hence, no hope for the future. Eventually, he decides to abandon his place in society and moves underground to an alternative space where he literally becomes invisible. At this point Ellison's narrator becomes disillusioned about himself, society, and the future. He continues to be a resident of an underground manhole, because even though he possesses the necessary awareness and the language skills, he is still inadequate when it comes to leaving his current alternative space and act upon his awareness. In **Invisible Man**, Ellison presents settings as alternative spaces and conscious bodies and language as signs of gaining racial visibility in the context of decolonization.

3.1 Exploration of Identity and Decolonization in Underground as an Alternative Space

Similar to proto-Afrofuturistic vision, Ralph Ellison believes that African-Americans should take part in the developments that can create alternative futures but to become a part, they need to be aware and face their pasts. Similar to Ellison, Jules Verne, as one of the leading figures in science fiction, also considers the future while shedding light to the past. To the contrary of being futuristic, it is argued that his work portrays his own contemporary nineteenth century: "*Jules Verne's real originality was not to have imagined the twentieth century, but to have portrayed the realities and the aspirations of the nineteenth*" (Unwin, 2005: 7). While modifying the old myths in his works, Jules Verne includes the technological inventions that did not exist at the time of his writing. For instance, instead of creating a completely new futuristic vision, the

characters revisit Verne's vision of prehistoric eras in **Journey to the Center of the Earth**. Contrary to Ellison, his characters succeed at coping with the technological inventions. Ellison's unnamed narrator, however, cannot find a way to cope with the developed technology and society, hence creates alternative spaces where he gradually reaches self-fulfillment.

The alternative spaces created by the unnamed narrator can be described as Bhabha's "*Third Space of enunciation*," in which all sorts of cultural expressions and systems are constructed. Bhabha's space allows to discover one's hybridity and elude away from the "*exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures*" (1994: 54, 56). The "*diversity*" that is underlined by Bhabha is related to "*the force of ambivalence*" that is encrypted in all postcolonial discourses. He argues the same ambiguity is implicated in cultural interpretation activities because there is a need for "*Third Space*" in order to produce meaningful frames for the relations between the two cultures, traditions, and life-styles. Similar to the analysis of Hurston's **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, the notion of "*Third Space*" as well as Soja's spaces allow to analyze the dualistic categories of colonial binary thinking in Ellison's **Invisible Man** as well. Ellison uses various settings and portrays them as several alternative spaces as the narrator moves from the south to the north and eventually to the underground space to explore his hybridity, realize his invisibility, and decolonize his mind. The narrator in **Invisible Man** encounters multiple alternative spaces that shape his sense of self. These alternative spaces include; the Battle Royal, the all-black college, the Golden Day, Harlem, Liberty Paint Factory, the house of Mary Rambo, the Brotherhood, and finally his underground "*home*".

In order to declare the colonial dualistic categories, first the unnamed narrator needs to become aware. To reach the necessary awareness, he experiences various settings as different levels of alternative spaces. The American South is the setting where the unnamed narrator's adolescent years take place. The South in the book is a place where the African-Americans are vastly uneducated and have a pre-determined future established by white domination and discourse even after "*about eighty-five years ago [African-Americans] were told that they were free, united with others of [the] country in everything pertaining to the common good, and, in everything social*" (Ellison, 1995: 15). The older narrator describes the younger version's main objective

as to adjust himself accordingly to the white community, accommodate and get a college degree in order to establish a class rank in society. In this setting, the narrator is illusioned to believe he can achieve success through education and approval from the white community.

The narrator is known to be a promising African-American boy who knows “*more big words than a pocket-sized dictionary*” (Ibid., 29) and well-liked by the town’s whites because of his submissive nature. After his graduation, he is invited to repeat his valedictory speech in an event for the town’s wealthy white men. Before the Battle Royal, the unaware narrator portrays the “*town’s big shots*” with their tuxedo, smoking, and having drinks, with decent manners in a ball-room where the chairs are arranged “*in neat rows around three sides of a portable boxing-ring. The fourth side [is] clear, revealing a gleaming space of polished floor*” (Ibid., 17). He does not question the events that will take place on the fourth side, all his focus is on his speech and success in getting the attention and approval of the white townsmen. It is described as if the people are about to watch a performance in a theatre. The prominent white townsmen who arranged the evening and the African-American boys who will knowingly partake in the battle are all performing their respective roles to maintain a pre-conceived social order.

Ellison’s inclusion of the socio-economic issues along with the determined existence and violence towards African-Americans through the first sections of the novel in a naturalistic literary style is clearly visible. However, in his speech for the 1953 National Book Award, he characterizes the novel against a convention of naturalistic fiction. In his speech, Ellison asserts that **Invisible Man** embodies a form that reflects a “*more promising*” (Ellison, 1953: 158) view of reality and concludes:

Thus to see America with an awareness of its rich diversity and its almost magical fluidity and freedom, I was forced to conceive of a novel unburdened by the narrow naturalism which has led after so many triumphs to the final and unrelieved despair which marks so much of our current fiction. (Ibid.)

By producing a novel differentiated from “*sociology and case histories*,” (Ibid.) Ralph Ellison reconstructs the African-American image of social victim into a social-psychological model. In **The Negro Novel in America**, Robert Bone appreciates the

novel's "mythic quality" as a "revolt against the naturalistic novel" (1965: 196-197). It is Ellison's vision that includes various possibilities for African-American life that separates the novel from naturalism. In order to reflect his individual experience, Ellison forms an individual and unique literary style that nourishes from the African-American culture. There are many critics that debate on the novel's resistance to the naturalist protest novel. Narrated by an unnamed African-American, the novel enables his voice and perspective—instead of his identity—to dominate the novel. In a naturalistic novel, the protagonist would not be able to reconstruct himself after such experiences that include failure in education, employment, politics, and mutual relationships. The narrator is transformed from being a submissive individual into subversive one after his retrieval to the underground manhole. As a writer who made use of the naturalistic style, Richard Wright's *Native Son* fits into the "*final and unrelieved despair*" that is presented with naturalism which Ralph Ellison rejects (Ellison, 1995b: 105). He rejects the naturalist belief that supports the idea of people being passive players within a deterministic order. Wright's protagonist, Bigger Thomas, lacks the adequate consciousness in his life throughout the novel. Ellison's unnamed narrator, on the other hand, begins his journey at the same point as Bigger Thomas but his consciousness upheavals with the narration that includes accomplishments through symbolic events, focus on narrator's stream of consciousness, African-American folkloric elements as well as the sequences of dreams.

His support of people being capable of constructing their own reality constitutes the breaking point of the novel from naturalism and emphasizes the novel's proto-Afrofuturistic vision. However, the beginning chapters that include "*a note of subdued and controlled hysteria*" (Allen, 1965: 317) proves it to be a naturalistic novel even though the pace in these chapters develops rather rapidly compared to literary naturalism. The novel has a naturalistic strain since naturalism supports the idea of a character's autonomy, which facilitates the individual to figure out things on his own. This thought mainly covers the socio-economic issues within society. Naturalists document the experiences of the characters that are more involved and exist in society's margins while focusing on their desperateness. The difficult life conditions

bring along violence and **Invisible Man** presents the violence the unnamed narrator experiences due to mainly his socio-economic condition.

The first site of violence in his early years appears in the unexpected performance of the narrator in Battle Royal, in which the protagonist and other African-American boys were forced to engage in a blindfolded fist-fight, pushed around by the drunk townsmen, and forced to watch/banned from watching a naked exotic white female dancer who resembles a “*circus kewpie doll with a face heavily powdered and rouged, as though to form an abstract mask*” (Ellison, 1995: 19), provide the narrator with a different view of the relationship between the respected white townsmen and some of the African-Americans. The fight is a warning against crossing the established values of the community and reminds the African-Americans to know their place. They call the African-American boys by names such as “*shines*”, “*Sambos*”, and “*coons*”. Mary Rohrberger comments that the whole performance is a plot to emasculate the African-American boys symbolically: “*In a sense, the battle royal is a choreography of masochism designed to accomplish the sexual satisfaction of the white male majority in a patriarchal society*” (1991: 126). The intense fight of the African-Americans echoes Darwin’s “*survival of the fittest*” which is connected to Naturalism in literature. As a naturalistic novel, Jack London’s **The Call of the Wild** prioritizes the concept of “*the survival of the fittest*,” nature and ancestry as well as the significance of adaptation within survival. The concept of individuals being controlled by “*impersonal internal and/or external forces*” (Imbarrato, 2008: 794) constitutes the basis of literary naturalism. Despite the cruel and tainting treatment the African-American boys receive from the authority figures in Ellison’s novel, the narrator does not have the necessary vision for the larger implications of the hazing ritual because he is promised to make a speech in front of the town’s significant figures that can change the course of narrator’s life if they desire.

At the end of the battle, the narrator is able to recite the speech on social responsibility and in return receives a black briefcase which contains a scholarship to an all-African-American college. The superintendent who presents the briefcase tells the narrator to: “*Consider [the prize] a badge of office [...] Keep developing as you are and some day it will be filled with important papers that will help shape the destiny of your people*” (Ellison, 1995: 32). The event is a demonstration of how some

authoritative figures control African-Americans by causing rivalry and rewarding submission. The white townsmen are portrayed as connoisseurs, the term used in Homi Bhabha's critique on Western connoisseurship that defines the colonialist mindset of the Westerners towards African land and culture. In an interview, Bhabha states: "*Western connoisseurship is the capacity to understand and locate cultures in a universal time-frame that acknowledges their various historical and social contexts only eventually to transcend them and render them transparent*" (1990: 208). This is what he refers as the formation of cultural diversity. His argument develops on how the Western perspective fixates the cultural differences within a more controlled universal structure that enables the observed to be manipulated easily. Bhabha argues that the difference of a culture cannot be placed in a framework because it needs to change continuously and be opened to renewed interpretations. This highlights the aspect of relationship between universalization and limitation. The chairs "*in neat rows*" in a civilized manner are in contrast to the prejudiced opinions of the Westerners on Africans and African-Americans. The posture and positioning demonstrate the universalist framework that confines the African-Americans and their culture within their own frame of perspective.

Despite the event clearly revealing the corrupt nature of the white townsmen, the narrator is in his illusioned state and focuses only on his goal to get into the college. By accepting the briefcase, he also accepts the identities that are imposed on him without being aware. He carries it everywhere he goes up until he falls to the manhole. Surrounded by complete darkness, he opens and burns whatever is inside including the scholarship document, his given name by the Brotherhood, the letter that warns him about going "*too fast*" in order to "*light [his] way out*" (Ellison, 1995: 567) and gain sight of his surrounding. This action of burning the content—therefore, the imposed identities—of his briefcase forms the first step for his hibernation phase.

The Battle Royal further supports the unnamed narrator's reasons for being a submissive African-American boy in order to survive. In **The Call of the Wild**, Buck is adopted by various owners after his abduction. In one of his homes, he meets with the dog breaker who initiates his introduction to the wild. From his experience with the dog breaker, Buck learns that a man that holds a club is a master that wants submission: "*That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of*

primitive law, and he met the introduction half-way" (2009: 12). Buck, similar to the unnamed narrator, protects his dignity and does not fawn on to the white men. Both of them know that they need to obey the stronger men since they have seen that the ones that do not obey face the consequences. Due to this aspect, both characters are categorized as survivors. The unnamed narrator needs white men's support in order to progress and believes college is the key place for it.

The college is not only the narrator's materialized space but also the empirical place where the narrator socially develops. Soja describes it as "*directly sensible and open, within limits, to accurate measurement and description*" (1996: 66). The college is a part of Soja's "*firstspace*" which is associated with the experimental relationship of individuals and their surrounding reality. Hence, this space is often referred as "*real*" space in Soja due to its descriptions of the individual and societal perceptions. The narrator establishes a personal bond with the college and its environment. He portrays the campus as if it is something "*out of a pastoral*" (Hill and Hill, 2008: 22) and takes a break to envisage the statue of the founder. The statue portrays a slave kneeling before the founder who is ambiguously either pulling up or pushing down a veil over the slave's face. The deterministic society, in Naturalism, allows individuals to reach to a certain level that is pre-decided by the dominated authority. In college, the students are given more opportunities than the local African-Americans, however, they also become the subjects for a motionless alternative space which hinders the students from reaching their fullest potentials while repurposing their life goals.

The unnamed narrator appreciates the college and, at the same time, he experiences the abuse of power and rank by the African-Americans. The president Dr. Bledsoe believes he achieved his "*place [...] and [he]'ll have every Negro in the country hanging on tree limbs by morning if it means staying where [he is]*" (Ellison, 1995: 143). The narrator initially believes that he has achieved a well-deserved place by working hard and that one day he can achieve it as well if he stays in college and tries hard enough. In college, he says that "*within the quiet greenness [he] possessed the only identity [he] had ever known*" (Ibid., 99). However, the life he enjoys reverses when he mistakenly introduces a white trustee, Mr. Norton, to an African-American villager, Jim Trueblood. As Trueblood recites his story of incest, the narrator emphasizes that Trueblood's tone had a "*deep, incantatory quality, as though he had*

told the story many, many times” (Ibid., 54). He shares even the smallest details on how he unintentionally had sexual union with his own daughter because they all had to sleep next to each other due to the poor economic conditions.

The specific information he shares before and during the dream highlights the strong sexuality diffused in his cabin. He carefully uses metaphors that evokes and have sexual references almost as if to make the story more intriguing for the audience. Trueblood remembers the smell of the *“fat meat”* and thinking how much his daughter looks like his wife’s teenager self (Ibid.). He transforms sites of the country into *“erotic and suggestive images that anticipate his transgression”* (Hill and Hill, 2008: 22). He associates watermelons that are *“split wide open a-layin’ all spread out and cool and sweet on top of all the striped green ones like it’s waitin’ just for you, so you can see how red and ripe and juicy it is and all the shiny black seeds it’s got and all”* (Ellison, 1995: 56) with the images of his old girlfriend in a red dress. She, too, often whispered *“Daddy”* in his ears at night in the same manner his daughter does. Instead of being punished by his actions, he is rewarded with food and tobacco. The same deterministic society mentioned earlier accepts Trueblood’s taboo behaviors because of his uneducated nature. By allowing the uneducated African-American local sharecropper to practice a so-called backward action, which in this case is the incest relation between a father and a daughter, society is placing the veil over the faces of the African-Americans who take part in deterministic societies that are described in literary naturalism.

Mr. Norton, having the same hidden sexual feelings for his own daughter that passed away recently, faints and he is taken to the brothel where a group of World War I veterans surround them. These veterans are also patients of a nearby asylum. The vets’ attendant, Supercargo, who is well-built in his shorts and tries to provide an order. He neither wears a white uniform, nor a straightjacket. The veterans resist him, hence, they actually resist the symbol of dominant authority of the whites. Mr. Norton and Supercargo both lose their control at the space as one is unconscious and the other is beaten by the vets *“brutally in the frenzied intoxication of newfound freedom”* (Hill and Hill, 2008: 24). One of the vets admits to the narrator that *“sometimes I get so afraid of [Supercargo/white power] I feel that he’s inside my head”* (Ellison, 1995: 84). It is understood that the veterans are not insane but rather victims of African-

Americans' traumatized experiences caused by the established domination and power. This is the second site of violence experienced by the unnamed narrator. In the Golden Day brothel, just like the violence he faces as a member of the Brotherhood, he cannot avoid violence of his environment. The narrator's entrapment by violence is consistent with the novel's naturalism. In naturalism, characters are not appointed the right to free will because of the deterministic nature of the presented white American society. The unnamed narrator cannot make any sense of it at the time. His only concern is how Dr. Bledsoe is going to react to the situation. Without any hesitation, Dr. Bledsoe expels the protagonist from the college immediately in order to part with the narrator who threatens Bledsoe's position with his mistake.

After his expulsion, the narrator travels to Harlem, New York, where his sense of alienation begins. This new state of alienation forms the beginning of his transition to awareness. Lacan argues that alienation is an inevitable feature in the subject formation. The subject is essentially "*split*" or rather alienated from the self. He can neither become a whole nor avoid this separation.¹⁶ The unnamed narrator feels an illusionary 'wholeness' in the college. Thus, his main goal becomes to raise money to return back to the college, where he "*identified [him]self with the rich man reminiscing on the rear seat [Mr. Norton]*" (Ellison, 1995: 39). His spatial longing derives from the possibility that the college could have helped him to create the best identity for himself. John McLeod emphasizes that "*conventional ideas of 'home' and 'belonging' depend upon clearly defined, static notions of being 'in place', firmly rooted in a community or a particular geographical location*" (2000: 214).

In **Home**, Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling describe home as being "*multi-scalar*" (2006: 27) which is significant for forming a sense of home-space. Blunt and Dowling's idea of home is "*neither the dwelling nor the feeling, but the relation between the two*" (Ibid., 22). Their definition includes the elements of material and imaginative. In addition, Gaston Bachelard includes the feelings related to the concept of home and home's materiality as a place. Within these lenses, home cannot be viewed as a fixated concept but rather it is equivocal in terms of space and time and

¹⁶ In the chapter 16 of **The Seminar, Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis** (1964), Lacan discusses the concept of alienation and separation in great depth.

also needs imagination. The concept of home is grounded on the sense of mutual class, gender or race. The unnamed narrator searches for a place in which he feels at home because he desires the feeling of inclusion. According to the portrayal of the younger narrator by the older one, the younger narrator reduces the notion of home to a geographic setting in which people like himself gathered together. Only in his underground hole that he realizes the actual home is constructed mentally with the support from the memories that survived the past and continue to revive in segmented interactions with the present.

When the narrator fails to adjust himself in Harlem, he forms an alternative that allows him to avoid the dual categorization of the real or rather what is perceived, and imagined, meaning what is conceived. Through his imagination and idealization, the unnamed narrator tries to remain intact with his college life. The fact that the narrator is a “*former student*” who “*shall never, under any circumstances, be enrolled as a student*” (Ellison, 1995: 190) at the college again suggests that he will not be able to return to the college and hence implies his detachment. However, after his enlightenment of Dr. Bledsoe’s betrayal, the narrator successfully takes refuge in an imagined home. Interpreting from Rosi Braidotti’s definition of a nomadic state, similar to Hurston’s protagonist the unnamed narrator can also be viewed as a “*nomad*” (2011: 7). Braidotti explains that being in a nomadic state can be defined by “*consciousness-raising and the subversion of set conventions, not the literal act of travelling*” (Ibid., 26). The narrator travels through spaces as well as times in his mind to overcome the sense of invisibility and alienation. Hence, the narrator’s continuous movement from the south to the north, from past to present and vice versa indicate his implied nomadic state. He does not hold any “*passport or has too many of them*” (Ibid., 64). Also, the unnamed narrator’s revision of the college might refer to the fact that settings and places should not be viewed as fixed locations but it is important to take their dynamic manner into an account.

The unnamed narrator does not limit himself to the dualistic understanding of space which is defined by senses (his perception of the college) and the dominant social structures such as Bledsoe’s punishment of the narrator’s mistake. He creates an alternative space at Liberty Paint Factory. Their slogan is “*Keep America Pure.*”. The factory’s signature product is its Optic White, “*the purest white that can be found,*”

a paint that “cover[s] just about anything” (Ellison, 1995: 202). And the factory manufactures most of its product to the government. Nevertheless, the secret ingredient of the paint is formed by an old African-American and its base includes a small amount of black. The old African-American is the inventor of the paint and believes that everyone is after the recipe of the paint. His paranoia eventually causes a fight in between the two and the explosion after which the unnamed narrator recovers consciousness in an infirmary. In the created alternative space, the concept of space which is based on binary oppositions (i.e. material/mental, real/imagined), shifts to three levels which are not dependent on one another. These levels, which should not be evaluated individually, are defined by senses, the domineering social structures and empirical behaviors¹⁷. The accident in the factory and the lobotomy, which the unnamed narrator experiences afterwards, drives him into an alternative space that can be referred as Bhabha’s dialogical space or Soja’s spatial dimension since it helps the narrator develop a new site of resistance which offers him to challenge the subduing perspectives that socially and spatially suppress African-Americans in society. It is the racist treatment of the doctors that disrupt the colonial ideologies within himself. Bhabha defines the “*Third Space*” as

though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew. (1995: 157)

Prioritizing on the meaning of culture that is produced in a performative manner, the doctors’ sign cards represent the problematized identities. As he recovers from the accident, the narrator hears the doctors’ talk but he cannot fully comprehend:

[F]amiliar words to which I could assign no meaning. I listened intensely, aware of the form and movement of sentences and grasping the now subtle rhythmical differences between progressions of sound that questioned and those that made a

¹⁷ For further research on the concept of spaces including cultural, social and political contexts, Henri Lefebvre’s **The Production of Space** (1991) is a beneficial source.

statement. But still their meanings were lost in the vast whiteness in which I myself was lost. (Ellison, 1995: 238)

Being “*lost in the vast whiteness*” does not only refer to being under the vivid hospital lights, it also refers to the white culture that he cannot fully comprehend under any circumstances. The treatment to bring his memory back is full of racial stereotypes. In one scene, one of the doctors shows him a card that asks his name. The narrator tries but is unable to recall his name: “*I tried, thinking vainly of many names, but none seemed to fit, and yet it was as though I was somehow a part of all of them, had become submerged within them and lost*” (Ibid., 241). When asked, he cannot remember his mother’s name either. The fourth card asks about who “*Buckeye the Rabbit*” is. He is “*giddy with the delight of self-discovery*” (Ibid.). He thinks he is the rabbit and remembers they used to sing and dance barefoot to the song of the rabbit when he was a child in the south. He recalls but also feels annoyed because the doctor is trying to reach to the pieces from his old self. The next card says, “*BOY, WHO WAS BRER RABBIT?*” The narrator’s rage increases as he remembers Buckeye and Brer are the same characters. With the notion of being addressed as “*boy*”, he answers, “*He was your mother’s back-door man*” (Ibid.). He is outraged subsequently because by using stereotypes, the doctors succeed at reaching his subconscious group identity. The question about the Buckeye the Rabbit and Brer Rabbit triggers certain feelings due to the nature of the rabbit that is capable of doing anything to survive. He takes it as a reference to his own racial identity. The alternative space at the hospital can be characterized by the awareness of the unnamed narrator’s resistance against the dominant social structures as well as the alienation of African-Americans that not only segregates them from the white dominated society but also disregards them as equals to the other individuals.

Upon being conscious, he is dispatched from the hospital and meets Mary Rambo in a moment of need. Mary is not similar to the rest of the female characters in the novel who are represented as accepting the established gender roles in society to some degree, but rather she is a more “*complete female character*” (Sistrunk-Krakue, 1990: 28) that is interested in taking care of the unnamed narrator’s welfare as well as physical and mental health. According to Edward Margolies: “*Mary was a formidable*

mother earth figure who cared warmly for all the lost and bewildered children of her native Southland” (1968: 140). Mary’s main objective in life is to help humanity. She informs the narrator as:

[Y]ou need’t worry, son, I ain’t never laid eyes on you before and it ain’t none of my business and I don’t care what you think about me but you weak and caint hardly walk [...] so just come on and let me do something for you like I hope you’d do for ole Mary in case she needed it, it ain’t costing you a penny and I don’t want to git in your business, I just want you to lay down till you rested and then you can go. (Ellison, 1995: 252)

Mary is a self-made, self-educated, and self-directed African-American woman with advanced reasoning skills without the help of any proper formal education. She advises him on leadership and taking responsibility. She avouches: *“It’s the one from the South that’s got to do it, them that knows the fire and ain’t forgot how it burns”* (Ibid., 255). She is visible in the narrator’s story for a short period of time; however, her actions influence the narrator more than most of his own experiences.¹⁸ Throughout his contact with Mary, the unnamed narrator’s senses widen in terms of his need to take action towards the African-American invisibility. Thus, when he witnesses an old African-American couples’ eviction, he feels a need to make a speech, which moves people and leads them to take action, in order to express himself and put his awareness into practice. This protesting-self of the narrator enables him to meet the Brotherhood.

Following his release from the hospital, the unnamed narrator comes to a different awareness that adaptation is a key factor in survival. In **The Call of the Wild**, Buck comes to a similar awareness after the death of his friend, Curly, by the huskies when she makes a friendly gesture to one of the dogs. After Curly has been torn into pieces, Buck’s lesson is: *“So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you. Well he would see to it that he never went down”* (London, 2009: 17). Buck’s inference from this experience includes a lesson that one has to learn to not give, expect or ask for anything from the others at all. Adaptation involves all sorts of

¹⁸ In the original manuscripts of **Invisible Man**, Ralph Ellison had written many pages concerning Mary Rambo character, however, majority of the pages were omitted in the published novel because of the editing. Within this respect, it can be concluded that Ellison thought the Mary character was an invaluable and inseparable part of the unnamed narrator’s journey.

behavior changes including negative ones. Buck begins to steal in order to fit into the circumstances in the Northland. London asserts:

It marked his adaptability, his capacity to adjust himself to changing conditions, the lack of which would have meant swift and terrible death. It marked, further, the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. (Ibid., 22)

Ellison's unnamed narrator realizes that he needs to adapt to the Brotherhood in order to fit in and progress.

Upon joining the Brotherhood, the unnamed narrator is taken to a luxurious apartment "*lined with books and decorated with old musical instruments: An Irish harp, a hunter's horn, a clarinet and a wooden flute were suspended by the neck from the wall on pink and blue ribbons. There were a leather divan and a number of easy chairs*" (Ellison, 1995: 300-301). The narrator notices the contradiction of the room's luxury and the men's poor clothing. The composition of the objects represents the impression the Brotherhood wants to present to the narrator and the guests as well as the Brotherhood's physical appropriation of space. The "*hunter's horn*" suggests a hunter and prey relationship. The fine furniture and other instruments represent an attachment to the American culture which creates "*a nest for dreaming, a shelter for imagining*" (Bachelard, 1969: viii). After he accepts the offer, he is provided with a new apartment, which is outside of Harlem, with much simpler decoration. The narrator's office, also in contrast to the initial apartment, does not include any suggestive decorations except a poster called "*After The Struggle: The Rainbow of America's Future*" which is a symbolic representation of heroic figures:

An American Indian couple, representing the dispossessed past; a blond brother (in overalls) and a leading Irish sister, representing the disposed present; Brother Tod Clifton and a young white couple (it had been felt unwise simply to show Clifton and the girl) surrounded by a group of children of mixed races, representing the future, a color photograph of bright skin texture and smooth contrast. (Ellison, 1995: 385)

The poster is thought to be the illustration of the alternative space that was created by the Brotherhood. Since the narrator is overwhelmed with his effective rhetoric skills and the possibility of reaching one of the highest positions in the organization, he begins to feel himself like Frederick Douglass. As a former slave, Douglass is an important figure, especially in African-American history, who “*had talked his way from slavery to a government ministry*” (Ibid., 381). Only after Brother Tarp hangs a portrait of Frederick Douglass and gives his “*lucky*” (Ibid., 389) shackles, which he had to wear for nineteen years, the room becomes more evocative in terms of keeping the history of colonialism alive. The Brotherhood becomes a symbol for home as well as an entity that provide comparison for the cultures of the south and the north as well as the whites and the blacks. Concept of hybridity is visible with the unnamed narrator’s position as the Brotherhood’s new spokesperson with a new given name and identity. However, this hybrid identity has a conflicted conformity that is more than just the blending of different identities: The gap between the narrator’s older self that “*flew without wings and plunged from great heights*” and “*the public self*” (Ibid., 380) that was becoming more and more known among the masses as an important leader figure grows within the awareness of the narrator as he gets more involved in the Brotherhood. The presented hybridization also represents a material level. Right after he joins the organization, he is presented with money to pay off his balance with Mary Rambo and change his appearance. Gina Wisker explains such style and manners “*tend to be transferred or preserved almost as historical artefacts in their consciousnesses, so that sometimes the behaviors in the settler society have become rather out-of-date versions of what is happening in the original homeland*” (2007: 62). The Brotherhood, too, promises material wealth as well as prestige in return for the narrator’s natural source (his oratory skills that are effective on people) and his hard work (his studying of the Brotherhood’s ideology and transferring it to people through his speeches) which will eventually benefit the Brotherhood with the “*two things: [...] plan methods of increasing the effectiveness of [their] agitation, and [...] organize the energy that has already been released*” according to the direction they desire (Ellison, 1995: 362).

The Brotherhood’s decision to allocate the apartment and the office for the unnamed narrator establishes a correlation between space and power. According to Soja,

The multisidedness of power and its relation to a cultural politics of difference and identity is often simplified into hegemonic and counter-hegemonic categories. Hegemonic power, wielded by those in positions of authority, does not merely manipulate naively given differences between individuals and social groups, it actively produces and reproduces difference as a key strategy to create and maintain modes of social and spatial division that are advantageous to its continued empowerment and authority [...] hegemonic power universalises and contains difference in real and imagined spaces and places. (1996: 87)

The Brotherhood imposes its power through differentiating people socially and spatially in the alternative spaces. This demonstrates their use of colonial power. They already possess authority because they are the organization. And the space they provide for the unnamed narrator is away from Harlem, Mary, and his past but close to the Brotherhood headquarters which enables them to reach the narrator whenever they desire. These aspects reveal the organization's superior positioning. In terms of social and spatial alterations between the south and the north as well as the cultures of whites and African-Americans, the Brotherhood seems to possess an authority, which bares many colonial resemblances in terms of how they conceive the setting. Soja explains the oppressed communities "*have two inherent choices: either accept their imposed differentiation and division, making the best of it; or mobilize to resist, drawing upon their putative positioning, their assigned 'otherness', to struggle against the power-filled imposition*" (Ibid.). The unnamed narrator appears to accept his new given name and new identity due to employer-employee relationship as well as the "*common goal*" that he shares with the organization. He works hard and tries not to cross the set rules, yet when he begins to doubt some of the Brotherhood's actions, he shows his reaction to the organization by preparing Brother Clifton, who is shot unarmed by a police, a funeral even though he is aware that it will not be anticipated by the organization. The unapproved actions of the narrator by the Brotherhood seem to project the whites' authority on the organization and the cultural and spatial counter of the narrator to the dynamics of authority. His uncalculated actions lead the unnamed narrator to create self visions of alternative spaces.

The material content of the organization shifts into how spaces are produced socially. Apart from the use of the narrator's office for the meetings and planning the further action of the organization, he also receives letters of different sort. Reading the

letters is one of the main aspects of the social and lived experiences. The majority of these letters are about the correspondence on behalf of the organization, however sometimes he receives personal notes. In one particular case, the narrator receives a letter which warns him on “*not to go too fast*” because it is the “*white man’s world*” after all (Ellison, 1995: 383). There is no name on the letter so the sender is anonymous. As mentioned earlier, hybridity cannot be defined as a fixed entity based on a clearly denoted frame. It involves a series of interruptions in which an individual’s one reality interferes with another. When the narrator reads the letter that threatens him and his position, he becomes involved with different realities. He recalls the past where he was wrongfully expelled from the college and starts to question the one place where he expects to get to “*the very top*” (Ibid., 381) at the present time without making any interactions between the two realities. His atmosphere is also disturbed by a black nationalist, Ras the Exhorter, who believes the “*brothers are the same color*” (Ibid., 370) and the only goal of the whites is to set the African-Americans against one another. One of the reasons he rejects Ras’ dream of Black Nationalism is because the narrator becomes aware that his dream is nothing more than an imitation of ideal film images from the past. Just like the narrator, Ras also fails to produce something new about the future of African-Americans.

The constant interruptions from Ras and the brothers disrupt his emotional bond with the organization and the alternative space it provides and remind him of his grandfather’s words that he chose to ignore since his youth: “*You start Saul, and end up Paul [...] When you’re a young’un, You Saul, but let life whup your head a bit and you starts to trying to be Paul—though you still Sauls around on the side*” (Ibid., 381). He realizes he cannot escape from the reality disrupting his emotional bonds in his private alternative spaces by being himself. The interruptions he receives create a type of hybridity in the sense that he has to decide between his invisibility and the group identity of the Brotherhood which prioritizes its own agenda more than the African-American people. As a human being, it is natural for the unnamed narrator to make mistakes and learn from his experiences. Foucault emphasizes the necessity of mistakes, errors, and miscalculations in the path to gaining true knowledge since it is relative to the error correction process (Foucault, 1977: 218-233). The unnamed

narrator, too, needs to make mistakes as an individual in order to become disillusioned and visible.

In a review, Charles J. Rolo describes how the contemporary age acts according to the “*categories and its indifference to the uniqueness of the individual*” that reduces people to “*a condition of invisibility*” (1952: 84). Nowhere to move forward, the narrator is in need for an alternative/Third Space/thirdspace to fulfill his self-quest for the past, present, and future, thus: Underground manhole. In Soja’s terms, the unnamed narrator is in need of “*an alternative mode of understanding space as [...] a location from which to see and to be seen, to give voice and assert radical subjectivity*” (1996: 104). Being away from the reach of men who chase him, the police, the Brotherhood, and Ras the Exhorter, the narrator’s act seems to be political as well as a social one. In **The Call of the Wild**, Buck learns through experience and proves that he is capable of adapting to the brutal northern environment both physically and mentally, such as gaining wiriness to pain, attempting to evaluate the best outcomes in every situation, sharpness in terms of intelligence and instinct, in order to survive. To the contrary, the unnamed narrator is not able to adapt and fit into society’s conditions as well as Buck and, hence, feels a need to abandon the community. By choosing underground, he avoids a different variety of possible predetermined futures that will be imposed on him as well. The text’s naturalistic aspects also break away once the unnamed narrator opposes the deterministic society. The narrator describes the underground place as:

a home—or a hole in the ground, as you will. Now don’t jump to the conclusion that because I call my home a “hole” it is damp and cold like a grave [...] Mine is a warm hole. And remember, a bear retires to his hole for the winter and lives until spring; then he comes strolling out like the Easter chick breaking from its shell. I say all this to assure you that it is incorrect to assume that, because I’m invisible and live in a hole, I am dead. I am neither dead nor in a state of suspended animation. Call me Jack-the-Bear, for I am in a state of hibernation. (Ellison, 1995: 9)

He accepts the setting and associates himself to be a part of the space while stating that it is only a temporary stage in his life. Once the spring comes, he will break out of his “*shell*” and, join rest of the people. Until that time in the future, he chooses to live “*rent-free in a building rented strictly to whites, in a section of the basement that was*

shut off and forgotten during the nineteenth century” (Ibid.). He calls his state as being in “*hibernation*” (Ibid., 573). It is in this thirdspace that includes the space in which all binarisms contradict with other alternatives. Despite the third space’s display of ambiguities and contradictions, it is rather inclusive and “*initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation*” (Bhabha, 1994: 1). It is in this space that the narrator’s transformation from the state of illusionment to disillusionment is complete, his multi-vocality is born and his use of technology as a part of decolonization movement comes into surface.

Lighting the underground is a very delicate subject for the narrator. He burns 1,369 light bulbs all at once and does not pay anything in return. To the narrator, light warms up, brightens, and contributes to make the hole more like a “*home*”. His excessive use of light bulbs is more about making a statement on resisting the system and giving meaning to his existence. As an invisible observer, he states “*light confirms my reality, gives birth to my form*” (Ellison, 1995: 10). To him, losing his form means “*to live a death*” (Ibid.). Form is the proof of his existence, and light is the necessary accessory to confirm this existence.

The more the narrator masters new technologies in his underground, the more he becomes aware of multiple consciousnesses. In his discussion on sonic Afromodernity, Alexander Weheliye asserts that the “*hegemony of vision*” and optical technologies are connected directly to the construction of the race as the “*look of white subjects deduces supposed inferior racial characteristics from the surface of the black subject’s skin*” (2003: 107). Similarly, the sound related technologies such as the phonograph that facilitates sound recording and its distribution, revolutionize and broaden “*orality and music*” which are thought to be “*the two main techniques of cultural communication*” by African-Americans (Ibid., 102). Artists can take advantage of these technologies as they enable the individuals to create new areas for different ways of thinking, observing, absorbing, and understanding that do not demand “*monocausality*” through their art (Ibid.). These technologies contribute to the alternative ways that help to reevaluate the past and the concept of subjectivity apart from the dominating structures.

While listening “*What Did I Do to Be so Black and Blue*” in the hole, he identifies his own experiences with a fight between a prizefighter and a yokel. The

yokel beats the scientifically superior fighter. Similar to the yokel, the unnamed narrator enters into the song and “*descends...like Dante*” (Ellison, 1995: 8). Ellison writes almost four pages of italicized portion where his imaginary state with the effects of the music continues. According to Michael Hill and Lena Hill, the italicization represents deep or subconscious thought (2008: 19). The narrator describes an exhibition of a nude girl and the bidding of the girl by the slave owners. On the background, there is a sermon on the “*Blackness of Blackness*” (Ellison, 1995: 9). He approaches to a widow who seems upset over the death of her master whom she both loved and hated. She explains that she loved him because he gave her sons, but what she loved more is her freedom. The narrator declares: “*freedom lies in hating*” (Ibid., 11), but she insists that freedom actually lies in the act of love. When he puzzles her idea of freedom and its source, she says, “*I guess now it ain’t nothing but knowing how to say what I got up in my head*” (Ibid.). His insistent questioning cause distresses, and one of her sons punches the narrator for his insensitive and disrespectful manner while shouting, “*next time you got questions like that, ask yourself!*” (Ibid., 13). As the narrator hears the lyrics, “*What did I do to be so black and blue,*” he feels the question evokes an action (Ibid., 12). He admits that he has stayed in hibernation for more than he should and even an invisible person like himself has “*a socially responsible role to play*” (Ibid., 581). He is aware of the need for action but fails to act upon the need so far. The awareness of activism is another proto-Afrofuturistic element of the novel.

Author Bruce Sterling argues that “*technology is visceral [...] it is pervasive, utterly intimate. Not outside us, but next to us. Under our skin; often, inside our minds*” (1986: xi). In **Invisible Man**, the unnamed narrator and his adaptation to technology is portrayed as the opposite of the optimistic “*consensual hallucination*” (Ibid., 51). The narrator’s resentfulness with technology mainly originates from his lack of wealth, power, and right skin complexion. In **Invisible Man** the African-Americans confront the readers “*in the darkness of which no man can bleach himself, with the question: Who am I?*” (1961: 81) Therefore, Ellison’s style makes the invisible man everyman:

All my life I had been looking for something and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was. I accepted their answers too, though they were often in contradiction and even self-contradictory. I was naïve. I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer.

It took me a long time and much painful boomeranging of my expectations to achieve a realization everyone else appears to have been born with: That I am nobody but myself. But first I had to discover that I am an invisible man! (Ellison, 1995: 3)

In his final state, the older narrator realizes that everyone he has met during his life journey has been illusioned by the “*mirrors of hard, distorting glass*” (Ibid.) which hinders them from getting to really know one another. The more he becomes disillusioned with reality, the more he is aware of people only seeing those mirrors, themselves or fragments of their own imagination. Eventually, he alienates his being from the community and himself. Ellison tries to persuade that in order to become someone, first, one needs to become nothing or rather *invisible*. However, it is not the end for the narrator. Living underground about twenty years teaches him who he really is and who he can become one day as an African-American. He asserts:

Like almost everyone else in this country I started out with my share of optimism. I believed in hard work and progress and action, but now, after being first ‘for’ society and then ‘against’ it, I assign myself no rank or any limit, and such an attitude is very much against the trend of the times [...] Whence all this passion toward conformity anyway?—diversity is the word. Let man keep his many parts and you’ll have no tyrant states [...] America is woven of many strands, I would recognize them and let it remain so [...] This is not prophecy, but description. (Ibid., 576-577)

Living underground helps him gain a new perspective that enables him to realize various aspects of the Afrodiasporic existence and the complicated connections of strings that are closely associated with the American reality.

Writing about the Lafargue Psychiatric Clinic in “Harlem is Nowhere,” Ellison writes about “*recognizing the total implication of Negro life in the United States*” (1995b: 242). He further suggests how the Harlem’s residents’ psychological characters contribute to the condition of the clinic’s patients. In doing so, Ellison maps out the psychological dilemma of African-Americans. He writes:

[I]ts psychological character [...] arises from the impact between urban slum conditions and folk sensibilities. Historically, American Negroes are caught in a vast process of change that has swept them from slavery to the condition of

industrial man in a space of time so telescoped (a bare eighty-five years) that it is possible literary for them to step from feudalism into the vortex of industrialism simply by moving across the Mason-Dixon line [...] [T]he nature of [the] world [is] so fluid and shifting that often within the mind the real and unreal merge, and the marvelous beckons from behind the same sordid reality that denies its existence [...] [W]hatever the assigned function of social institutions, their psychological function is to protect the citizen against the irrational, incalculable forces that hover about the edges of human life like cosmic destruction lurking within an atomic stockpile. And it is precisely the denial of this support through segregation and discrimination that leaves the most balanced Negro open to anxiety. (Ibid., 243-245)

The narrator of **Invisible Man** struggles with this spatially-prompted anxiety. He comments: “*I whipped it all except the mind, the mind. And the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived*” (Ellison, 1995: 580). His travel underground to complete his “*hibernation*” is a contribution to the final aspect of his liberation to free his mind.

Before ending the retrospective narrative, the unnamed narrator accepts his irresponsibility and states that he should not be held responsible since “*responsibility rests upon recognition*” (Ibid., 14). He thinks that every person in a community shares a responsibility to society since they may be in the illusioned states or inquire alternative spaces, and he believes that his narrative helps him to pay his debt to an extent. The inconclusive ending of the story implies either going back to the old routine or a change toward a new one which requires action to be taken.

It can be argued that the unnamed narrator deconstructs the common sense of his community. He critiques both the white and the African-American culture and the past. It is possible to witness the process in which the narrator ostracizes himself from the American Dream that needs his acceptance of the established cultural roles that eliminate all holistic sense of the self. His aim is to become a more active member of African-American community. The narrator comments:

I’m shaking off the old skin and I’ll leave it here in the hole. I’m coming out, no less invisible without it, but coming out nevertheless. And I suppose it’s damn well time. Even hibernations can be overdone, come to think of it. Perhaps that’s my greatest social crime, I’ve overstayed my hibernation, since there’s a possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play. (Ibid., 581)

The theoretical speech that he presented at the beginning about social responsibility becomes a spatial experience for the unnamed narrator. He stands as a nomad who has gained a broader sense of himself and the world. According to Bhabha, it is *the* place of hybridity where cultural meaning and individual and collective identities mix with each other and share commonalities:

It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. (1994: 54-55)

The in-between space that is mentioned above is what appoints the culture's boundaries and meaning and also makes hybridity as a significant term as it is. Each of the alternative spaces presented in **Invisible Man** provide the unnamed narrator with ongoing transition stages that assist him through his final presence. With sympathy and a stronger sense of himself and others like him, he is poised to end his temporary state and stake a claim in his community. Ellison parallels the end of the narrator's hibernation in his alternative space as the end of psychic upheaval of the unnamed narrator's life.

3.2 Subject Formation through Body

In the article "Invisibility Embraced: The Abject as a Site of Agency in Ellison's *Invisible Man*," Shelly Jarenski analyzes during the period that the novel portrays (around the decades of 1930s to 1940s) artistic and cultural performances were the only means for African-Americans to 'exist' in a white dominated society. This notion led African-Americans to be seen as entertainers. **Invisible Man**'s significance appears to be being published in an important period of American history, at a time when especially the music industry has developed greatly with the emergence of television. Through the acceptance of the role of the "*other*", African-Americans were granted visibility. It is often portrayed that visibility of racial differences acted as a channel for the white domination's commoditization and attribution of the cultural

forms of African-Americans (Jarenski, 2010: 85). Ishmael Reed, who was influenced by Ellison's works, objects to the established notion of associating blackness with negativity and as means of entertainment for the white Americans the same way Ellison does. In his novel, **Mumbo Jumbo** (1972), Reed focuses on the conspiracy theories that range back and forth through time. The subject of the book is a plague called "*Jew Grew*" spreading all over the United States and causes people to dance impulsively, have appreciation for jazz music and a new apprehension for African-American culture and traditions during the 1920s. Religious and high-technology organizations try to find and obliterate an ancient Egyptian text that is thought to be what the plague supposedly seizes. In the book, Reed explains Jew Grew as an "*anti-plague*" which emphasizes the importance and necessity of innovation as well as individuality. It is: "*Jazz. Blues. The new thang. That talk you drum from your lips. Your style. What you have here is an experimental art form*" (Reed, 1988: 152). While Ishmael Reed considers jazz music, which is part of African-American culture, not having merely an entertaining function, Ellison emphasizes its association with Du Bois' double consciousness throughout the novel.

Ellison reevaluates Du Bois' idea:

The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in [...] a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world [...] [T]his double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (2007: xiii)

Du Bois' attribution to the two-ness of the African-Americans and the wish to become an upgraded versions of themselves while trying not to lose the previous self is evident throughout the unnamed narrator's experiences which includes his college life where he tries to distinguish himself from his Southern identity, after his lobotomy where doctors try to recover his memory by distressing his subconscious identity and in the Brotherhood where he desires to acquire material success while falsely believing to help African-Americans.

For the unnamed narrator, his specular image when he was young is his grandfather who is considered “*an example of desirable conduct*” by the town’s whites (Ellison, 1995: 17). The unnamed narrator follows his exemplary footsteps, however, his whole understanding of the race relations so far at that age is shattered when he hears his grandfather’s last wish on his deathbed. In reality, the narrator’s grandfather gives a brief explanation of the south at the time:

Son, after I’m gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy’s country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion’s mouth. I want you to overcome ’em with yeses, undermine ’em with grins, agree ’em to death and destruction, let ’em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open [...] Learn it to the youngens. (Ibid., 16)

Upon hearing the statements, the narrator’s family feels discomfort and believes the old man is losing his mind. The feeling of uneasiness is overwhelming especially for the young narrator since he is well-liked and presented as an example—just like his grandfather—by everyone, black and white, in the town. The feeling of his guilt originates from believing that he is actually serving in the opposite of the wishes of the whites. However, the unnamed narrator recalls his grandfather’s last words throughout the narrative and understands a new aspect of the race relationship at the end. The words of the grandfather haunt the narrator prior and after Battle Royal (he calls it “*grandfather’s curse*” (Ibid., 18)), during his trip with Mr. Norton and his expulsion from the school, after finding out about Dr. Bledsoe’s betrayal, during his questioning the Brotherhood and when he questions himself: “*You start Saul, and end up Paul [...] When you’re a youngun, you Saul, but let life whup your head a bit and you starts to trying to be Paul—though you still Sauls around on the side*” (Ibid., 381). The unnamed narrator tries to suppress down his grandfather’s “*cynical, disbelieving parts*” (Ibid., 335) in case of being watched by the others. After the unnamed narrator’s loss of his specular image, he begins to hold onto its fragmented image for a while but becomes distorted as the unnamed narrator’s visual experiences lead him to challenge the notion of pre-established specular image. Lacan asserts:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage [...] It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare. (1984: 125)

In “Regarding Mimicry: Race and Visual Ethics in Invisible Man,” Hsuan Hsu sees significant effectiveness in **Invisible Man**’s visual politics. He analyzes Ellison’s way of questioning “*the racial gaze*,” which Herman Beavers defines as the “*mode of voyeurism*” which allows maintaining discriminatory ideas by placing the African-Americans in a frame that includes already established notions of white dominance (2003: 107). While Ellison evaluates the act of gazing as a scheme to conceptualize segregation, Hsu proposes that individuals should not acknowledge the “*fixed terms of identity politics*,” and that the novel presents “*an ethics of visibility, an ethics that pursues heterogeneous alliances*” (Ibid., 108). Recalling Lacan, Fanon, and Bhabha, his argument implies Ellison’s own invocation of the empowered gazer¹⁹.

Dylan Evans argues the gaze in Lacanian terms as “*the object of the scopic drive*” (Evans, 1996: 73). He emphasizes Lacan’s conception of “*an antinomic relation between the gaze and the eye*” (Ibid.). Lacan focuses on not only the gazer but the individual that the gaze is fixed upon: “*You never look at me from the place at which I see you*” (Lacan, 1977: 103). He argues that the gazer and the one who receives the gaze—in many cases, it is the object—have different visions because the gazer is not able to see what the gazed sees. Battle Royal depicts the look of the white and the gaze of the African-American in detail to provide an example of not only the white gaze but also the African-Americans’ gazing back. Ellison is a pioneer in terms of presenting the African-American side of racial separation in American society. The unnamed narrator both describes the whites and the African-Americans at their lowest. In this sense, Ellison demonstrates an example “*to play his themes of blindness and invisibility in the context of White viewership*” (Muyumba, 2009: 60).

According to James B. Lane, whites define “*black men as violence-prone yet childlike, docile yet unpredictable, oppressed yet happy, impulsive yet stoic, primitive yet religious, and super masculine yet impotent in contact with whites*” (1973: 65).

¹⁹ See also Ralph Ellison’s essay, “The Little Man at Chehaw Station”.

This description of the white Americans' psyche is captured accurately on how Ellison portrays African-Americans in the passage of *Battle Royal*. The white townsmen's remarks focus on the physical appearances of the African-American boys: "*Let me at that big nigger!*", "*Get going black boy!*", "*Kill that big boy!*" (Ellison, 1995: 21-23). These remarks characterize the men's views of the African-Americans as objects. "*Desubjectivation*"²⁰ (Foucault, 2001: 241) and compulsion of the unnamed narrator, the African-American boys as well as the white nude female are visible through their forced performances. In **Black Skin, White Masks**, Fanon argues:

Since [the white man's] ideal is infinite virility is there not a phenomenon of diminution in relation to the Negro, who is viewed as a penis symbol? [...] Is the Negro's superiority real? Everyone *knows* it is not. But the prelogical thought of the phobic has decided that such is the case. (2008: 123)

According to Fanon, the African-Americans encounter themselves as phobic objects to the extent that they think and act subjectively as whites do. He connects the beginning to the Lacanian mirror-stage. In the *Battle Royal*, racial (in)visibility renders the African-American body as the phobic object, while providing uniformity to the signifier which causes impotency before the Ego is castrated. The naked exotic dancer is used as an instrument (an object) to further promote the inadequacy of the African-Americans as the phobic object in the presence of the white men whose authoritative gaze establishes an understanding, for the African-Americans, which affiliates masculinity with the dominating authority of whites. In accordance with Lacan, the mentioned phobic object operates as a signifier due to its representation of the segments that need to be processed by the subject (the white man). More precisely, it can be argued that the phobic object is present at the Imaginary order but recalls these segments into the Symbolic order for the subject (Lacan, 2005: 321). Thus, the *Battle Royal* actually creates a visual display that brings miscegenation into consideration.

²⁰ In an interview, Foucault explains desubjectivation as an "*experience*," as a process of loss and self-annihilation. He asserts that it is "*trying to reach a certain point in life that is as close as possible to the 'unlivable,' to that which can't be lived through.*" He continues: "*[I]n Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot, experience has the function of wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself, or that it is brought to its annihilation or its dissolution. This is a project of desubjectivation*" (2001: 241).

As the “objects”, both the African-Americans and the white female signify the demand of the white gaze. Kalpana Sheshadri-Crooks asserts: “*The subject’s corporeality is itself constituted as a coherent image through the intervention of the signifier*” (2000: 35). According to her, whiteness is signified by the agency of visual politics that is presented in *Battle Royal* in order to connect racial (in)visibility to subjecthood/objecthood. The battle, once again, proves to him that to gain any type of recognition/visibility, one needs the acceptance of white domination. In his illusioned state, the narrator believes that he can possess a place in society if he can prove himself by giving his speech. Moreover, he believes that he will be looked in the same manner as he gazes.

The boys’ complete ignorance is presented differently than the narrator’s because, besides the narrator, the other African-American boys are aware and willingly participate in the event. They allow themselves to be blindfolded voluntarily. By having the blindfolds, they do not have any visions or “*control [their] motions. [They] had no dignity. [They] stumbled about like a baby or a drunken man*” (Ellison, 1995: 22). When they lose their vision, they cannot gaze at the subject because of the impaired vision. The insensible scene is described:

Everyone fought hysterically. It was complete anarchy. Everybody fought everyone else. No group fought together for long. Two, three, four, fought one, then turned to fight each other, were themselves attacked. Blows landed below the belt and in the kidneys with the gloves open as well as closed... (Ibid., 23)

The African-Americans are neither fighting against whites nor other African-American boys, they are fighting against their own race. They are the embodiment of the colonial ideology. The colonizer identity within the white townsmen is visible even when the boys are being paid. Instead of giving their shares directly, the whites toss coins onto the carpet that electroshocks the African-Americans while trying to collect their payment.

The ego, according to Lacan, is constructed by the identification of the ego with the specular image. Hence, identification becomes a significant aspect of the Imaginary. Since ego is established through identification with the specular image both the ego and the Imaginary order are entities of alienation. Lacan also argues that

“alienation is constitutive of the imaginary order” (1993: 146). In an interview, Ellison admits to be more interested in observing the local African-American townsmen, since he *“found their unrhetorical activities on the old football field the more meaningful”* (Ellison, 1995: 78). During the years attending Tuskegee University, Ellison observes that the elite and the folk culture of African-Americans were in contrast with one another. In one of his memories of the time, he depicts:

At Tuskegee during graduation week countless high-powered word artists, black and white, descended upon us and gathered in the gym and chapel to tell us in high-flown words what the Negro thought, what our lives were and what our goals should be [...] Graduation week was a festival time for the surrounding Negro community [...] while the big-shot word artists were making their most impressive speeches, the farm people would be out on the old athletic field dancing square dances, having picnics, playing baseball and visiting among themselves as though the ceremonies across the wide lawns did not exist—or at best had no connection with the lives they led. (1961: 77-78)

In the narrative, the narrator’s distaste of the local African-Americans coming to their college and performing music for the amusement of the trustees and the students is a significant example of the narrator’s embarrassment of his heritage or rather his other half. When describing the scandalous Jim Trueblood who has impregnated his daughter in his sleep, he defines him as a good singer who entertains the white trustees with what the official calls as *“their primitive spirituals”* (Ellison, 1995: 47) on Sunday evenings in the chapel. Even though the African-American students feel embarrassed by these performances, they are commanded to participate in the events that the *“crude, high, plaintively animal sounds Jim Trueblood made as he led the quartet”* (Ibid.). The younger version of the narrator alienates himself from the other uneducated Southern locals. He feels the college is the necessary alternative space that will enable him to achieve the equal conditions with whites. At this point of the narrative, he does not realize *“no matter how biggity a niggah gits, the white folks can always cut him down”* (Ibid., 53).

Derived from the French, the term *“captation”* involves an ambiguous meaning. In one sense, it expresses the image’s seductive power and in the other, it is associated with the image’s negative power to restrict the subject within a fixation. One of the most significant turning points of the narrator’s life occurs with the accident

at the paint factory. Following his accident, he ends up being hospitalized and performed lobotomy on. His collective identity and alienation that he discovers after the incident lead to his self-awareness. As he recovers from the accident, the narrator hears the doctors' talk but he cannot fully comprehend:

[F]amiliar words to which I could assign no meaning. I listened intensely, aware of the form and movement of sentences and grasping the now subtle rhythmical differences between progressions of sound that questioned and those that made a statement. But still their meanings were lost in the vast whiteness in which I myself was lost. (Ibid., 238)

Being "*lost in the vast whiteness*" does not only refer to being under the vivid hospital lights, it also refers to the white culture that he cannot fully understand under any circumstances at all. The treatment to bring his memory back is outdated with stereotypical racist behaviors. As the doctor shows him the card that asks about who "*Buckeye the Rabbit*" is. He is "*giddy with the delight of self-discovery*" (Ibid., 241). He thinks he is the rabbit and remembers they used to sing and dance barefoot to the song of the rabbit. In a subconscious level, the Buckeye the Rabbit is his mirror image. He is aware of the stereotypical image he presents but, feeling captivated, he is restricted in the fixation presented by the white domination. The source of his rage is the fact that by using stereotypes, the doctors succeed at reaching his subconscious group identity. When he is asked about the Buckeye the Rabbit and Brer Rabbit, the narrator reacts as he does because he takes it as a reference to his own racial identity.

A good number of critics defined the paint factory accident and his recovery from it as a death and rebirth process. Even more interestingly Marc Singer interpreted the accident as "*the death of his old sense of time*" (2003: 399). Right before the accident, the narrator does not turn the right valve and he experiences "*wet blast of black emptiness that was somehow a bath of whiteness*" (Ibid., 230). And then he falls into a big wheel which Singer connects with the time symbol. The scene from his recovery is described in a similar manner with the birth process which is the beginning of our existence. As the narrator becomes conscious, he is not fully in tune with his body or the circumstances. Moreover, he describes this as "*the crystal and white world*" begins (Ellison, 1995: 238). His state of being in an alternative space in-

between recalls Jacques Lacan's the Real which is the order in which the individual cannot distinguish between self and the other. In a time of nothingness, he reflects, "*But we are all human, I thought, wondering what I meant*" (Ibid., 182). The people who he sees do not bear any resemblance to him, except the fact that the only trait they have in common is their humanness. With his rebirth, his outlook and comprehension of the world change as well. As he heads out of the hospital he is intrigued with:

[T]he feeling that I had been talking beyond myself, had used words and expressed attitudes not my own, that I was in the grip of some alien personality lodged deep within me. Like the servant about whom I'd read in psychology class who, during a trance, had recited pages of Greek philosophy which she had overheard one day while she worked. It was as though I were acting out a scene from a crazy movie. Or perhaps I was catching up with myself and had put into words feelings which I had hitherto suppressed. (Ibid., 249)

The narrator cannot determine whether the words come from an "*alien personality lodged deep within*" himself or serve as a means to imply his former restrained beliefs and views. Either way, he feels that he has to take some measures if he wants to "*catch up*" with his own self.

Ellison further emphasizes on the split, which—according to Lacan—is the general characteristics of subjectivity.²¹ In the novel, Ellison introduces the character Tod Clifton as an opposition to the African-Americans' emasculated vision. In her article, Kimberly Lamm asserts that **Invisible Man** "*map[s] and sketch[es] screens of vision that the eyes of black men look within and across in order to forge perceptions and images of themselves*" (2003: 815). She articulates that the passage on Tod Clifton selling Sambo dolls on the street and a white man's comparison of the doll to the unnamed narrator relates to "*the external 'scaffolding' of black masculinity*" (Ibid., 832). According to her, Clifton's portrayal by Ellison "*attests to the role visual art can play [...] developing a malleable perceptual apparatus*" (Ibid.) that productively records African-American state of being a man in America. Lena M. Hill argues that by using a poster where Tod Clifton is portrayed as a "*very black*" Brother with

²¹ In Lacan's perspective, a subject cannot avoid being split, fragmented and alienated from himself. See Jacques Lacan's **The Seminar. Book VIII. Transference**, Ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, Trans. by Bruce Fink, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015.

“chiseled, marble-like features sometimes found on statues in northern museums,” (Ellison, 1995: 363) and describing the character as a street dealer of Sambo dolls further on the reading, Ellison emphasizes on the image of African-American diminution (Hill, 2009: 791). Similar to proto-Afrofuturistic works, Lamm further asserts that Clifton *“complicates rigid definitions of race, masculinity, and activism”* (2003: 825) that are established by dominating entities. The significance of interpreting visually laden performances and objects are acknowledged through this perception. Brother Clifton’s case helps the unnamed narrator interpret his own behaviors as well as the reasons of leaving the organization. When the narrator finds Clifton upon his disappearance, he describes the former Brother as *“[H]is eyes looked past me deliberately not seeing”* (Ellison, 1995: 432). Clifton’s eyes that are *“not seeing”* channel the narrator’s gaze to the Sambo doll and its uncontrolled dancing. As an act of protest, the unnamed narrator spits on the Sambo doll, which is a stereotypical visual representation that the narrator regrets society attaches to the African-Americans. Seeing his reaction, a man begins to laugh excessively while *“pointing from [the unnamed narrator] to the doll”* (Ibid., 433). Only following Clifton’s death that the unnamed narrator is prompted to challenge the visual representations which are defined in a very constricted way.

While abandoning the scene of Clifton’s shooting by the police, the unnamed narrator gazes on African-American men who are in zoot suits. He associates the men with the Sambo dolls. Both reflect a confrontation of historical restrictions that are established to control the African-American identity. He begins to question Clifton’s choice of selling Sambo dolls among other items that he could earn a living from and reassess Brotherhood’s ideology. During his speech in Clifton’s funeral, he describes Clifton as, *“a man and a Negro; a man and a brother; a man and a traitor, as you say; then he was a dead man, and alive or dead he was jam-full of contradictions”* (Ibid., 467). The unnamed narrator’s awareness of Clifton’s character and the vigorous nature of his character reflected on his identity enable the narrator to identify with him since, according to Lacanian thought, the Imaginary order includes ego formation in the mirror stage. When ego connects with the specular image, its constitution takes place.

This identification brings along alienation²² because this mutual connection is mainly narcissistic which is another characteristic of the Imaginary order. Lacan also emphasizes that narcissism brings aggressivity along and thus, after his eulogy for Clifton, the unnamed narrator confronts Brother Jack: “[T]he *political consciousness of Harlem is exactly a thing I know something about*” (Ibid., 471). The visual representation of the Sambo doll promotes his understanding of the inner consciousness of African-American life, which carries too much of a richness due to historical experiences to the extent that it cannot be restricted to the frames such as one the Brotherhood offers.

After becoming acquainted with the Brotherhood and enlightened to some degree, the narrator challenges the organization’s superficial vision of the future that includes different religious and ethnic cultures. He refuses to contribute to African-American community’s needs in the account of universal battle of class. The retaliation is rapid and definite. In the incident with Mr. Norton, the white trustee has a nervous breakdown which ultimately leads to the expulsion of the protagonist from the college. Moreover in the Brotherhood case, when the leaders of the group realize the narrator’s attachment to the backward history of the African-Americans, they strip him down from his duties and position. At the bottom line, the loss of status—which coincides as a symbol for futurity—for the narrator comes when he does not support the institutionalized future possibilities that dismiss all sorts of disruptions that may be caused by the African-Americans’ already secured-against pasts. The unnamed narrator is exposed to objectivity and his identity is disregarded even when he is most visible in political terms (such as when he is the spokesperson for the Brotherhood). Through the narrator, Ellison critiques radical political movements as well as the determinant group ideologies. In the chapters about the narrator’s discovery of the illusionary political ideology that the Brotherhood possesses, his confrontation and refusal to identify himself with Ras the Exhorter and his refuge in the manhole can all be interpreted as political acts for his individual identity.

²² In **Seminar III**, Jacques Lacan describes alienation as being a “*constitutive of the imaginary order*” (1993: 146)

Evans asserts that Lacan's Imaginary includes "*image and imagination, deception and lure*" (1996: 84). The main aspects of this state include the illusion of unity, wholeness, duality, autonomy, as well as likeness. Imaginary only serves to the surface presence which hinders the inner structure. The unnamed narrator's identity is invisible at its most when he acts as an imposture of a man called Rinehart whose specialty comes from the multiple characters he wraps himself around in order to control the underworld of Harlem. He is many things including a preacher, pimp, lover, gangster, trickster, and snitch. He is the embodiment of form without substance and as the narrator imitates Rinehart, he begins to recognize the power of having various identities enabling more access in society in terms of socio-cultural aspects. According to Anne A. Cheng, Rinehart helps to challenge race along with individualism. She describes him as "*a parable for plurality, a continually resignifiable sign [...] [H]e exposes that racialization is always a matter of style rather than essence—a performance of type that can be either self-stereotyping or self-identifying*" (2001: 132). After his experience with multiple identifications, the unnamed narrator realizes that he can neither incorporate his racialization (when he is serving individuals such as Mr. Norton or Brother Jack), nor avoid the signifying force of it that eventually enables him to make a connection between subjecthood and white domination. He is in need of a segmented position to reach subjecthood in which he can become aware of the limits of whiteness that is thought to signify wholeness and play his "*socially responsible role*" (Ellison, 1995: 581).

In **Invisible Man**, Ralph Ellison does not criticize the "*visual hut with invisibility*" (Hsu, 2003: 108). This interpretation facilitates an alternative reading of the novel in Lacanian terms which identify the principles of visibility that are not fixated. In general, the visibility for the African-Americans reflects a feeling being watched through the domination of white gaze which attributes the negative traits (such as the fragmented body, "*corps morcelé*" (Lacan, 2005)) on African-Americans. In the Prologue, the unnamed narrator describes himself as "*the bodiless heads you see in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass [...] [People] see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination*" (Ellison, 1995: 3). Another visual mechanism that is used for oppression of African-Americans is Lacan's gaze. In this case, it is the white gaze that

objectifies the African-American bodies. Due to the act of looking, the unnamed narrator adjusts his behaviors as if he is being secretly watched throughout the novel. The unnamed narrator recognizes the benefits of having various positions/identities: “[I]f they follow this conformity business they’ll end up forcing me, an invisible man, to become white, which is not a color but the lack of one” (Ibid., 577). It is argued that the unnamed narrator’s blackness brings social invisibility and whiteness cannot be a part of his racial position.²³ Within this lack of dominated comprehension of race, the invisible unnamed narrator holds a humanist position in which the person is concerned with the human values of the whole without discriminating. In her article, Shelly Jarenski comments that by separating between himself and the others in society, the narrator “experience[s] the fiction of [black and white] positions and imagine possibilities beyond them” (2010: 105). In this state, he can reconstruct his visibility as well as his imagination without being objectified. By denying the race, the unnamed narrator denies the notion of whiteness being equal to wholeness. Thus, the mirror stage, which is the base of constituting the subject, is detached from the signifying state of color within the subject. The unnamed narrator is aware of the necessities the reevaluation brings and the path to it is “not [in] prophecy, but description” (Ellison, 1995: 577). While some critics emphasize that the narrator goes through “suspicious humanism” (Vogler, 1974 and Eichelberger, 1999), he develops his argument for the visual momentum through altruism and humanism in his underground manhole.

The unnamed narrator’s opposition is against the predominant and controlling authority. He does not try to break from visibility. That is precisely the reason that he admits leaving everything behind except his mind when he takes refuge underground. He believes the mind’s plan should be to “never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived” (Ellison, 1995: 580). Whatever “socially responsible role” (Ibid., 581) he will engage after his hibernation, it will be visual and transparent by the others to see and imagine.

3.3 Mechanism: Language Acquisition

²³ Schafer, William J.: “Ralph Ellison and the Birth of the Anti-Hero,” **Ralph Ellison: A Collection of Critical Essays**, Ed. by John Hersey, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974, p.123.

Lacan associates language mainly with the Symbolic order while including the dimensions of the Imaginary and the Real relating to the language. In **Invisible Man**, there is parallelism between the unnamed narrator's journey and his oratory development. In the novel, language acts both as enslaving and freeing. It operates like a machine: if one develops and controls it, he can also possess its power to control as well. The use of powerful language and discourse by the white Americans in the novel make it possible to manipulate the African-Americans into the forms that white domination desires. After the development of his oratory skills, the unnamed narrator witnesses how the power of the language transforms passive citizens into ready-to-react active protestors.

The language used in *Battle Royal* by white Americans demonstrates its power of enslavement. During the fighting of the African-American boys, the narrator emphasizes on the comments such as: "*I don't like his looks*", "*[L]et me at those black sonsabitches!*", "*I want to get that ginger-colored nigger*" and "*Kill that big boy!*" (Ibid., 21). The provocative language use demonstrates the current oppressive state of the white minds. Through the excitement of the fight, the violent and racist unconscious states of the white townsmen become visible. Though less violent, the same manner of language is used after the narrator's speech. The superintendent says that if he continues on his path (to be as submissive as he has been), one day "*he'll lead his people in the proper paths*" (Ibid., 32). What he means is that, one day "*he'll lead his people in the proper paths*" toward the pre-determined futures that are designed by the whites for "*the destiny of [his] people*" (Ibid.). From the townsmen's discriminatory remarks such as "*your people*" or "*his people*," it is clear that the segregation mentality would continue further on even when it lawfully ends and it is almost impossible for African-Americans to take equal roles in a multiracial society. The results of their treatment promote the invisibility of African-Americans while hindering their language development. Ellison demonstrates this ideology with the unnamed narrator's speech at the end of *Battle Royal*. Even though he can recite the whole speech by heart, he is portrayed as being very nervous after the fight. This nervousness comes out in the form of a tongue slip. When he says "*social equality*" instead of "*social responsibility*," the whole room "*hung[s] smokelike in the sudden stillness [...] sounds of displeasure filled the room*" (Ibid., 31). Only after he corrects

his “*mistake*” that he is given a simple warning about knowing one’s place. This is an example of Lacan’s unconscious occurring due to the signifier’s effects on the subject. In this context, the signifier’s repressed memories, ideas, and feelings are recalled in the unconscious as forms of dreams, jokes, and tongue slips.

Similar to language and speech, the unconscious is also a learned intersubjective entity: “*transindividual*” (Lacan, 1977: 49). This aspect of the unconscious enables it to supply the resources for the structures that associate whiteness with racial visibility. Since Lacan views meaning as “*something into which [man] integrates himself, which through its combinations already governs*” (1991: 307), it is argued:

‘Man’ must find confirmation of his place in the chain of signifiers, but paradoxically he is ‘man’ because it is unavailable to him [...] in relation to ‘race’, we can assume the prevalence of a master signifier that we identify within our unconscious, and which gives us our sense of having a racial identity. (Sheshadri-Crooks, 2000: 27)

Unless the African-Americans learn to use the codes of language properly and correspondingly, they would not be able to identify their racial identity. The theme of blindness to racial visibility through mainly the language use is also described through dreams as well. On his deathbed, the unnamed narrator’s grandfather asserts:

Son, after I’m gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy’s country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion’s mouth. I want you to overcome ’em with Live with your head in the lion’s mouth. I want you to overcome ’em with yeses, undermine ’em with grins, agree ’em to death and destruction, let ’em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open. (Ellison, 1995: 16)

When getting involved with whites, the grandfather advises to look and behave submissive on the outside but never internalize white’s ideology as their own. Instead of direct confrontation, the grandfather tells them to conquer from the inside. Living his whole life as a submissive African-American who is well liked by the town’s whites, his words contradict his whole self as well as life, thus, do not have a significant

effect on his illusioned family at the moment. Only after the experiences as well as the rhetoric of the college and New York that the unnamed narrator comprehends what his grandfather really meant.

Ellison also establishes the same notion with the unnamed narrator's dream right before he is off to college. The young narrator sees himself and his grandfather in a circus as audience. During the show, his grandfather prompts him to open a letter which says: "*To Whom It May Concern... Keep This Nigger-Boy Running*" (Ibid., 33). After experiencing college, the unnamed narrator begins to understand the rhetoric of the college is used as a mean designed to colonize the African-Americans and keep them running as submissively into the future that the white powers have designed.

Lawrence P. Jackson examines the teaching instructions in American Tuskegee College that correspond to the time of Ellison's student years. Similar to the novel, Jackson detects the grammar that had been taught in Tuskegee lacked correcting "[e]rrors in English, spoken or written, stamp a man at once as being uncultured. [The school] indicate[s] a mental shoddiness that is far from respectable" (2002: 110). Instead, the oratory of the college includes using both economy and spirituality:

[U]pon this stage the black rite of Horatio Alger was performed to God's own acting script, with millionaires come down to portray themselves; not merely acting out the myth of their goodness, and wealth and success and power and benevolence and authority in cardboard masks, but themselves, these virtues concretely! Not the wafer and the wine, but the flesh and the blood, vibrant and alive, and vibrant even when stooped, ancient and withered. (Ibid., 109)

The authority over the college students is predicated not solely through the wealth but also with the use of rhetoric which leads to create and built another possible alternative space with the power of language. The use of sentences such as, "*were stronger than the strength of philanthropic dollars, deeper than shafts sunk in the earth for oil and gold, more awe-inspiring than the miracles fabricated in scientific laboratories*" (Ellison, 1995: 110) echoes wealth. They cajole the students to put off their personal goals and dreams and deceive them into a motionless state where the action continues to take place outside. This is what the narrator's grandfather precisely points towards when he says: "*Keep This Nigger-Boy Running*" (Ibid., 33). Through the use of rhetoric

that enables African-American students to imagine themselves incapable of acquiring economic freedom along with social rank keeps the students stay on the path of the college professors and white trustees want them to follow. The trustees, the sponsors and their supporters do not use emotional and political discourse on the students. The use of rational economic discourse is much more effective. This allows the students to be politically restricted on the path to racial progress.

Ellison presents cues for the discourse used in the college for the unnamed narrator but his illusionment is not affected because he is still in the Lacan's Imaginary dimension of the language, which is structured by symbols and involves dual relations. Minister Homer A. Barbee's exalted address of the Founder whose bronze statue is presented in the school yard demonstrates the visionless language use of the whites as well as their way of constant reminding of the manipulated African-American pasts.²⁴ During his speech, Barbee connects the environment of the college and the folks using common language in his address at the college. The way Barbee maintains his speech is almost as if he is trying to make the audience recall and remember. In the novel, the college rhetoric is used in the same manner as media is used. He argues that the media should operate as a means for forgetting but rather should promote remembrance of the past values. In his speech, the reverend constantly makes references to the past, the previous authorities and figures. He repeatedly echoes the legend of the Founder being heard by the students "*time and time again*" (Ibid., 117) from the previous generations as well as the previous speakers: "*You have heard it and it—this true story of rich implication, this living parable of proven glory and humble nobility—and it, as I say, has made you free*" (Ibid., 118). Barbee emphasizes on the hearing of the story. By pointing to the fact that the story has been heard and not read exposes two aspects. For one, if it is not read, then it cannot exist by itself externally from the community. It needs a host community in order to survive. Also, since it is passed down orally, it cannot be a uniform, fixed story. Instead, it can be adapted and converted to serve for the needs of the present day. The author Henry H. Mitchell asserts: "*The Black preacher [Barbee] is more apt to think of the Bible as an inexhaustible source of good*

²⁴ There is an ambiguity with Founder's statue. On one hand, the Founder seems to be lifting the veil over the slave's face to free him and on the other, he seems to be putting it on to cover the slave's face.

preaching material than as an inert doctrinal and ethical authority” (1993: 58) since the illiterate African-Americans’ first experience with the Bible and its text had occurred as oral stories, and these spoken narratives are transferred and altered in accordance with the existing community. Zora N. Hurston states that “*all religious expression among Negroes is regarded as art*” (1981: 106). So the preachers need to include different forms of oratory skills into their speech in order not to get marked: “*They say of that type of preacher, ‘Why he don’t preach at all. He just lectures.’ And the way they say the word ‘lecture’ make it sound like horse-stealing*” (Ibid., 106-107). In order to fully examine whether or not Barbee’s sermon is a success depends on the consideration of his audience. Even though the audience he is addressing is literate African-American college students, Barbee invokes much older African oral traditions and, as Walter J. Ong states, intelligent power and authority within these traditions “*of its nature generates outsize figures, that is, heroic figures, not for romantic reasons or for reflectively didactic reasons but for much more basic reasons: to organize experience in some sort of permanently memorable form*” (1982: 70). The language works like a learned mechanism which is used as a prompt to orientate especially the African-Americans.

According to the college teachings, spirituals, and folk preaching described by the unnamed narrator are things that the African-American students need to stay out. They are expected to put a barrier between themselves and the other African-Americans outside of the college. The college curriculum and the rhetoric are designed to put distance between the students and their folk/cultural heritage. They are expected to imitate the vernacular in the way it is presented by the whites and internalize the white gaze. The students are infused with the desire for white prosperity, which is Euro-American, as well as the capacity of the African-American folk heritage, however, deferred from the both. Houston A. Baker Jr. asserts that Ellison

seems to imply that expressive performers in America who ignore the judgments of the vernacular are destined to failure. Although his injunctions are intended principally to advocate a traditional “melting pot” ideal in American “high art,” Ellison’s observations ultimately valorize a comprehensive, vernacular expressiveness in America. Though he seldom loses sight of the possibilities of a classically “transcendent” American high art, he derives his most forceful examples from the vernacular. (1984: 13)

The unnamed narrator and the rest of the students are deeply affected by the speech to a point of not being able to move. It echoes Jim Trueblood's dilemma of "*move without movin*" (Ellison, 1995: 59). In contrast to the students' state of numbness, Trueblood chooses motion, thus "*convert[ing] the sin of situation into the sin of volition*" (Nadel, 1991: 142) and accepts his responsibility while believing, "*I ain't nobody but myself and ain't nothin' I can do but let whatever is gonna happen, happen*" (Ellison, 1995: 66). The students, however, are in an everlasting racial state of almost having the equal racial visibility but never actually arriving there. They are provided with dreams of success with limited social conditions that deny their creation of self-consciousness that would enable African-American students to challenge their own identities that is imposed by the college.

The college oratory interpellates the African-American students to continue exerting effort. After Barbee's long and passionate but empty speech with contradictions (such as stating that it was "*the month of September and unseasonably cold*" and, immediately afterwards, describing the "*springtime days; fertile, blossomy, sun-filled days of promise*" (Ibid., 124)), Barbee stumbles and everyone realizes his blindness. This is another version of an "*empty speech*" in which, Lacan describes, "*the subject seems to be talking in vain about someone who [...] can never become one with the assumption of his desire*" (2005: 45). The speaker is alienated from his desire or purpose of his speech. Contrary to his speech, Barbee neither possesses a vision that he believes in, nor has a vision for the African-American students. Ellison presents the main goal of the white domination with the words from a veteran in *Golden Day*. The veteran calls the narrator and the other African-American students as "*negative mechanical zombies who behaved like transparent sleepwalkers*" (Lane, 1973: 66). Everything presented by the college rhetoric target a single goal and that is to "*Keep This Nigger-Boy Running*."

The unnamed narrator's lack of self-autonomy is emphasized through his reluctance to relate to his southern heritage (by distancing himself from the African-Americans such as Jim Trueblood) and dismissal of African-American dialectical traditions. Ralph Ellison describes the African-American folklore as "*an especially courageous expression. It announced the Negro's willingness to trust his own experience, his own sensibilities as to the definition of reality, rather than allow his*

masters to define these crucial matters for him” (Ellison, 1995: 214). The unnamed narrator, however, does not challenge other people to interpret his own actions: “*I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer*” (Ibid., 15). By choosing college and, later on, the Brotherhood’s discourse, the unnamed narrator is inclined to continue his life with the narratives that interpellate him to obliterate his existence and display him as visible.²⁵ The narrator’s oratory journey in the South hinders the development of his language skills while unconsciously oppressing his visibility and attuning him to believe his invisible state is his future.

The beginning of his break from the college rhetoric occurs after seeing the eviction of an old African-American couple from their homes. Upon witnessing the scene, the unnamed narrator delivers an improvised speech that affects the other community members deeply. He does not know how to put his words in order at first: “*only a bitter spurt of gall filled my mouth and splattered the old folks’ possessions*” (Ibid., 273) which he looks “*inwardly-outwardly, around a corner into the dark, far-away-and-long-ago, not so much of my own memory as of remembered words, of linked verbal echoes, images, heard even when not listening at home*” to see (Ibid.). However, the end of his speech prompts others to protest. The power of his words captures the Brotherhood’s attention. Prior to realizing the explosive nature of language in the organization, he cannot control the effects of his words since they are based on his emotional state “*without thought*” (Ibid., 275) instead of the codes of language. Thus, he hesitates of not being able to foresee and interfere with “*what the sight of violence might release*” (Ibid.). He hopes that his words would have the right effect on the “*law-abiding*” citizens who seem to be “*slow-to-anger*” people:

He’s eighty-seven. Eighty-seven and look at all he’s accumulated in eighty-seven years, strewn in the snow like chicken guts, and we’re a law-abiding, slow-to-anger bunch of folks turning the other cheek every day in the week. What are we going to do? What would you, what would I, what would he have done? What is to be done? I propose we do the wise thing, the law-abiding thing. Just look at this junk! Should two old folks live in such junk, cooped up in a filthy room? [...] Old cracked dishes and broken-down chairs [...] [He is] a day laborer [...] but

²⁵ Kenneth Burke. “Dialectic of the Scapegoat.” **A Grammar of Motives**, University of California: Berkeley, 1969, p. 59.

look at his stuff strewn like chitterlings in the snow [...] Where has all his labor gone? (Ibid., 281)

The course of his speech changes when the unnamed narrator claims: “We’re dispossessed” (Ibid.) and picks up the couple’s chair to put it back inside the house. The others follow the narrator’s action and eventually the police comes to interfere the protest. While escaping from the policemen, he thinks about how everything has come to the point of disorder and what he had said to make it happen. In his reality, he had no pre-planned intentions when delivering his speech, but the Brotherhood believes he can be an influential figure and a spokesperson on behalf of their organization with the help of their directives. Giving speeches based on only feelings does not serve to the organization’s aim. Brother Jack does not value the old evicted couple because to him the couple is “*already dead, defunct. History has passed them by [...] They’re like dead limbs that must be pruned away so that the tree may bear young fruit [...] Better the storms should hit them*” (Ibid., 291). Even though he does not agree, the unnamed narrator joins the Brotherhood with the hope of getting access to money as well as a place in an organization.

The narrator channels all his energy to learn the Brotherhood’s ideology and methods because even though Jack “*want[s] to use [him] for something*” since “*everybody wanted to use you for some purpose*” (Ibid., 294), he wants to be “*present at the creation of important events*” which he was “*allowed to glimpse how the country operated*” (Ibid., 306). However, he fails to follow the “*scientific*” ideology of the organization in his speeches because his feelings and emotions toward African-Americans are not designed to serve the Brotherhood’s real goal. He not only forgets “*the correct words and phrases from the pamphlets,*” but also uses “[*t*]he old down-to-earth, I’m-sick-and-tired-of-the-way-they’ve-been-treating-us approach” (Ibid., 342) along with his Southern accent. The result: “*They were mine, out there, and I couldn’t afford to lose them. Yet I suddenly felt naked, sensing that the words were returning and that something was about to be said that I shouldn’t reveal*” (Ibid., 345). Disregarding Brother Jack’s warning, he continues:

I feel suddenly that I have become more human [...] I feel that I can see sharp and clear and far down the dim corridor of history and in it I can hear the footsteps of militant fraternity! [...] I feel that here, after a long and desperate and uncommonly blind journey, I have come home [...] feel that I've found my true family! My true people! My true country! I am a new citizen of the country of your vision, a native of your fraternal land. I feel that here tonight, in this old arena, the new is being born and the vital old revived. In each of you, in me, in us all.

SISTERS! BROTHERS!

WE ARE THE TRUE PATRIOTS! THE CITIZENS OF TOMORROW'S WORLD!

WE'LL BE DISPOSSESSED NO MORE! (Ibid., 346)

The provocative language he uses such as “*more human*,” “*militant fraternity*,” “*blind journey*,” “*my true family*,” “*fraternal land*,” “*vital old revived*,” “*citizen's of tomorrow*” and “*dispossessed no more*,” all refer to an aggression among the African-Americans who need to take action to save their future from the state of past's and present's dispossession. The questions about his words on being more human continue to challenge him: “*Did I mean that I had become less of what I was, a Negro, or that I was less a being apart; less an exile from down home, the South?*” (Ibid., 354) He questions himself after the speech since everything he says is spontaneous: “*Was it a phrase that I had picked up from some preceding speaker,*” or “*a slip of the tongue?*” (Ibid.) The words he recalls have an unconscious dominating effect that he possesses no control over. Mikhail Bakhtin defines this language strategy as an example of the “*thousands of living dialogic threads*” that runs through any kind of oration (1935: 276). The fact that the narrator starts to acknowledge the strategies of language and what it can control show genuine progress on the narrator's side.

It also reminds the time when the narrator starts to hum a tune unconsciously after hearing from someone on the bus. The lyrics of the song which are: “*O well they picked poor Robin clean*” has an immense effect on the narrator. Again, he forces himself to understand the song. He comes to a conclusion that the song was “*for a laugh*” (Ellison, 1995: 194) but he wasn't amused because the humiliation of Robin recalls his memories of the college with Dr. Bledsoe and enables him to realize the childhood song he recites is actually the story of his life. The tune of the song does not present new information to the narrator but connects to his unconscious and raises his

awareness in rhetoric-wise. Both examples express the narrator's dependence on common ideas and ideologies within society but lack to convey his own argument which suits him as an ideal candidate for the Brotherhood to benefit from. The narrator's oratory skills develop but it is clear that he behaves only as a messenger who only delivers but lacks an agenda on his own.

Brother Tarp from the organization gives a portrait of Frederick Douglass to the unnamed narrator as a gift. Lampe argues that the signification of the present needs to be acknowledged since contrary to the African-American college students who have been influenced by and taught with the traditional oratory, Douglas enhances his speech skills by combining "*two traditions—the oral tradition of the slave culture*" as the spiritual aspect with "*the classical rhetorical tradition*" (1998: 13) of economy in order to reach not only the white audiences but also to question the discourse he was involved in. When the narrator receives the portrait of Douglass, he declares:

For now I had come to believe, despite all the talk of science around me, that there was a magic in spoken words. Sometimes I sat watching the watery play of light upon Douglass' portrait, thinking how magical it was that he had talked his way from slavery to a government position, and so swiftly. Perhaps, I thought, something of the kind is happening to me. (Ellison, 1995: 374)

As an author and a critic Robert Stepto evaluates the terminology "*from slavery to a government position*" as a "*remarkable revision or misreading of Douglass's famous 'from slavery to freedom'*" (1979: 185). Douglass and many other African-American slaves were trying to reestablish themselves and their positions as free blacks and the key point they have used was language. However, still stuck in the college rhetoric, the unnamed narrator fails to apprehend language as the main aspect of Douglass' social and economic advancement.

The wiser older narrator reveals uneasiness in his younger self in terms of past and future as well as folk and elite culture when he disapprovingly quotes his younger version. Contrary to Frederick Douglass, the younger narrator's rhetorical skills violate his segmented subjectivity because of the separation of reason and sound:

Listen to the vowel sounds and the crackling dentals, to the low harsh gutturals of empty anguish, now riding the curve of preacher's rhythm I heard long ago in a Baptist church, stripped now of its imagery: No suns having hemorrhages, no moons weeping tears, no earthworms refusing the sacred flesh and dancing in the earth on Easter morn. Ha! singing achievement, Ha! booming success, intoning, Ha! acceptance, Ha! a river of word-sounds filled with drowned passions, floating, Ha! with wrecks of unachievable ambitions and stillborn revolts. (Ellison, 1995: 111)

It is apparent that the extract is a sample of the rhetoric the younger narrator had generated back at the college. The older version examines the speech and provides a brief outline for the main points to evaluate the implicit meaning underlying the dialogue. At the time the younger version produces this dialogue, he is not capable of assessing the criticalness of his words. The older version is being sarcastic when he uses his younger version's speech as his voice just as the younger version uses the college oratory for the same reason. Even though the passage can be regarded as part of the folk culture, it is a parody in terms of the content. In response to the preacher's offer of sacred saving, the young narrator possesses a pointless yearning to material saving: "*blaring triumphant sounds empty of triumphs. Hey Miss Suzie! the sound of words that were not words, counterfeit notes singing achievements yet unachieved*" (Ibid., 111). The illusioned young narrator's words seem like figments of his imagination as the older narrator is aware that such an ideal alternative space does not exist.

The narrator acknowledges while the young version uses the college rhetoric and mentality, he is also in search of bonding with African-American folk origins and culture: "*hear me, old matron, justify now this sound with your dear old nod of affirmation, your closed-eye smile and bow of recognition, who'll never be fooled with the mere content of words*" (Ibid.). Prior to the sermon, the unnamed narrator waits for the sermon to begin, he thinks of Susie Gresham with "*shame and regret*" (Ibid., 112). The younger version thinks this is due to his failure of the Founder's legacy when he introduces Mr. Norton to Jim Trueblood. However, the older version of the narrator is aware that the real reason of his feelings originates from the homelessness, alienation, and desertion of the African-American folk culture to follow the Founder's along with the whites' ideology.

It is important to consider the language's learned structure that helps to decolonize the mind and build an alternative future. After the unnamed narrator's engagement with the Brotherhood, he understands that the African-Americans can also be used as a visual object for ideological purposes. Following his improvisational eviction speech in Harlem, he is approached by the Brotherhood to become a spokesperson on their behalf and his journey towards the organization's ideology and political direction begins. Within a short period of time, he aligns himself with the organization and its "cause" in opposition to the black nationalist, Ras the Exhorter, and his activities. However, he slowly begins to recognize the damages the pre-imposed identity that Brotherhood thrust upon him. This identity, which comes along with a new given name, is constituted of socialism's highly disciplinary and scientific applications which claim to understand the collective will and regard the humans as simply components of the course of history.

Seeing that the organization's ideology is class-based instead of race-based, the unnamed narrator receives this change with pleasure at the beginning. He feels that the "*possibilities were suddenly broadened. As a Brotherhood spokesman [he] would not only represent [his] own group but one that was much larger. The audience was mixed, their claims broader than race,*" after his first speech (Ellison, 1995: 353). However, some of the Brothers do not share his positivity as they accuse him of invoking mob psychology which is not scientific at all. As the argument between the members expands, another ideological characteristic of the Brotherhood is emphasized: subordination of the individual identity for the favor of authority struggles. Brother Westrum accuses the unnamed narrator of self-promoting and later on, the unnamed narrator describes Jack's emphasis as: "*You were not hired to think. ' He was speaking very deliberately and I thought, So... So here it is, naked and old and rotten. So now it's out in the open*" (Ibid., 469). The unnamed narrator finds himself as a subject to a system that exploits some of its subjects to please the others that are dominating.

At his first involvement in the Brotherhood, the unnamed narrator is questioned whether or not he is "*black enough*" to hold the pulse and direct the African-Americans in Harlem (Ibid., 303). He realizes that he is involved in racial objectification within the established system. Through the end of his operation under the Brotherhood, the unnamed narrator realizes the consciousness relating race does not have to "*exist as a*

bedrock or foundation,” but instead as a “*technology—a technology that must be disguised as nontechnical and internal*” (Cheng, 2001: 167) by the ones who reject using rhetoric related to race. Burning of the documents inside his briefcase represents his disillusionment of the signifier that can finally lead to identify himself as a signified without any problems. However, his realization leads him to question his identity further:

Agree ‘em to death and destruction, grandfather had advised. Hell, weren’t they their own death and their own destruction except as the principle lived in them and in us? And here’s the cream of the joke: Weren’t we part of them as well as apart from them and subject to die when they died? (Ibid., 565)

The unnamed narrator’s lack of comprehension of the mutual relationship that connects self and Other while preserving their difference, an interdependence that causes the individuals to be both a part and apart from the culture and vice versa. The language is the medium that not only constructs but also is structured by this oxymoron. Ellison argues that the absorption of African-American language gives characteristics to American vernacular:

whenever anyone tells you that you’re outside the framework of American culture, and when they deflect you into something called “black English,” remember that the American version of the English language was born in rebellion against proper English usage [...] and the imagery coming from the people who lived close to the soil and under the conditions of slavery added greatly to that language [...] The language of the United States is partly black people’s creation [...] There is no specifically American vernacular and language which has not been touched by us and our style. (1995b: 445-6)

While creating a restrained discourse of Other which, in reality, is a part of American vernacular, people eventually suppress the American language. The unnamed narrator’s oratory journey, thus, allows a recovery and unity of the African-American culture and dialect of the south with American culture and language.

The unnamed narrator’s writing, which is driven by a “*compulsion to put invisibility down in black and white*” (Ellison, 1995: 13), allows to form a narrative that acts as a means for his existence. In addition to his writing, his oratory skill is the

actual medium that transforms himself. Thus, the unnamed narrator needs to resort to various oral traditions if it is his desire to employ symbolic forms of language which is more liberating and efficient. The end of hibernation and the beginning of his freeing future depends on the unnamed narrator's acceptance of alternative oral traditions which challenge the language use in western culture.

On Rinehart's flyers it states "*BEHOLD THE SEEN UNSEEN...BEHOLD THE INVISIBLE*" (Ibid., 487), which can be connected to the same paradox of the preacher's sermon on "*Blackness of Blackness*" (Ibid., 9). On one, the signifier and the signified mirror each other, on the other; invisibility distorts the meaning of both invisibility and visibility. Here, the presented vernacular offers understanding of invisibility. It maintains invisibility while displaying it, thus presenting the option of choice. After his disillusionment, the unnamed narrator asserts: "*Incidents of my past, both recognized and ignored, sprang together in my mind in an ironic leap of consciousness that was like looking around a corner*" (Ibid., 506). As alternative inferences to an earlier mention, "*looking around a corner*" may not only connote the visibility of the things that are concealed to the linear context, but also implies the things that are visible can be disguised through fragmented hidden mediums (including language). Another suggestion may include the irony that if an individual sees enough corners, at one point he will turn back to a corner that allows to view and observe himself. When the unnamed narrator comments the world moving "*not like an arrow, but a boomerang. (Beware of those who speak of the spiral of history; they are preparing a boomerang. Keep a steel helmet handy)*" (Ibid., 6), he emphasizes the circling motion of history which often interpellates the individual into a restricted historical path which results in: "*Keep This Nigger-Boy Running.*" Such as in the case of Bledsoe's letter which states: "*I beg of you, sir, to help him continue in the direction of that promise which, like the horizon, recedes ever brightly and distantly beyond the hopeful traveler*" (Ibid., 187). Seeing around the corners leads to an obscurity between the signified and the signifier that creates the deception of the subject's self-sufficiency.

Meanwhile, the unnamed narrator cannot refuse or say no to the deceptive futures that ignore the ramifications of the past and identity. If he says no, then there is nothing left of him to pursue. There are two possibilities for the narrator towards the

end and neither of them seem plausible to the invisible man. On one hand, there is Ras the Exhorter who calls himself “*black nationalist*” (Ibid., 364). The narrator calls him: “*not only funny, but dangerous as well, wrong but justified, crazy and yet coldly sane*” (Ibid., 564). He is dangerous because his vision of maintaining a black identity that is authenticated materialized through uprising and coups. He thinks he is funny and sad at the same time because whites and their cultural narratives interpose Ras’ dreams in the same manner as he speaks about them. The second possible future for the narrator exists in the bodily form of Rinehart. He “*opens up a new section of reality*” for the narrator by refusing to accept a forced future (Ibid., 498). The narrator asserts: “*his world was possibility and he knew it*” (Ibid., 499). Just like thought without an action, only possibility cannot pave the way for a functioning black future. Being inspired by Rinehart, the narrator decides to draw an alternative path and believes that he can seem to agree and please everyone according to their wishes on the surface while acting on his own desire underneath. His arrangement is miscalculated and fails as the citizens of Harlem starts a riot that divides the community completely instead of forming a collective awareness and thus, leads the narrator to seek asylum underground. The manipulated action to take control of their futures by the African-American community does not become successful due to the illusioned state of the community that believes they can gain racial visibility only through language and action without the use of technology and media.

Racial discrimination brings along being an object, signified, and seen only in the light of signifier’s frame of visibility. This absence of self might be viewed as the absence from the symbolic order; however, it actually is what constructs the order itself. The effects of cultural, historical and linguistic functioning of the system which promotes (in)visibility to individuals is present in **Invisible Man** in both as an individual and at a collective level. The characters experience desubjectivation due to the deterministic system. Emphasizing on the promise of delusive visibility by white domination, Ellison focuses on the limits of signification. Even after creating alternative spaces to avoid pre-determined futures, as well as mastering the technology and oratory skills to some extent, Ellison’s unnamed narrator cannot singularly describe a cultural and political intervention for the future that provides an advice for the complex and mutually dependent nature of (in)visibility, race and subjecthood. As

a proto-Afrofuturistic novel, **Invisible Man** presents the awareness to create alternatives but fails to provide action towards establishing such futures.



CHAPTER IV

AFROFUTURISTIC ENCOUNTER IN THE REDEFINING OF HISTORY AND POSSIBLE FUTURES IN OCTAVIA BUTLER'S *KINDRED*

As mentioned in the previous chapters, authors extending back to W. E. B. DuBois, Zora Neale Hurston, and Ralph Ellison used science fiction/Afrofuturist devices, including alienation, invisibility, mind reading, alternative worlds, encounter with the aliens, in order to show the presence of other versions besides the established understandings of American past and to examine the effects on African-American culture and community. The discussion on proto-Afrofuturism that includes Hurston's use of female imagination in the 1930s and Ellison's nonlinear time and space concept in the 1950s enabled the literature to further develop into fully grown Afrofuturist works around 1970s even before the movement was named by Mark Dery. In the 60s and 70s, African-American writers like Octavia Butler began to write in the science fiction genre. For writers such as Butler, science fiction was not only a way to recreate history but also a tool to express how these revisions of history can have impact on possible futures with egalitarian societies and mindsets. Butler infused her narratives with more Afrofuturistic elements by adding onto what proto-Afrofuturists—such as Hurston and Ellison—have started. Thus, Butler's science-fiction with post-colonial roots allows developing a type of memory device that is significant for the needs of Afrofuturists'—as well as Afro-feminists'—revision of history and future.

As one of the most significant African-American writers in science fiction and Afrofuturism, Octavia Butler is often quoted for her imagining of future where leading technological developments help to moderate between the issues of race and gender. (Armitt, 1996; Friend, 1982; Sargent, 1975) Butler indicates that the demonstration of historical memory in ways that acknowledge the effects of slavery on whole familial roots is among the main goals of the novel. In regard to **Kindred**, she asserts:

[While in college] the Black Power Movement was really underway with the young people, and I heard some remarks from a young man who was the same age I was but who had apparently never made the connection with what his

parents did to keep him alive [...] He said, 'I'd like to kill all these old people who have been holding us back for so long. But I can't because I'd have to start with my own parents.' [...] That was actually the germ of the idea for *Kindred*. I've carried that comment with me for thirty years. He felt so strongly ashamed of what the older generation had to do, without really putting it into the context of being necessary not only for their lives but his as well. (1997: 51)

While focusing on the historical memory of African-Americans, she leans more towards the female aspect of the past histories. Similar to other Afro-feminist writers, Butler explicitly argues against masculinist narratives of African-American history. Butler especially criticizes the representation of heroic figures as being portrayed only by men. In the interview, she states that her main character was originally an African-American male, but Butler had to change to a female because she "*couldn't realistically keep him alive*" (Ibid.). She asserts that a male protagonist "*wouldn't even have time to learn the rules of submission,*" but the "*female main character, who might be equally dangerous, would not be perceived so. She might be beaten, she might be abused, but she probably wouldn't be killed and that's the way [she] wrote it. She was beaten and abused, but she was not killed*" (Ibid.). **Kindred's** protagonist is challenged psychologically to great extent and discovers her true self, identity, and strength as an African-American woman at the end.

The novel's main action is concerned with an African-American woman, Dana, who mysteriously and repeatedly travels across time and space from the present time of 1976 Los Angeles to an antebellum plantation in Maryland. Shortly after, she comprehends that the main aim of her transition to the past is to help Rufus Weylin, whose life is important because he will father Dana's maternal family lineage with Alice Greenwood, who is a "*free*" African-American. If Dana does not succeed at saving Rufus' life or she refuses to do so, then not only she will not be able to exist in the future, but also her entire African-American lineage will diminish entirely. In one of her travelling episodes, her white American husband, Kevin, accidentally travels back with her while trying to detain her from traveling across time and space. This incident brings along a series of distressing dilemmas for the couple. At the end of her episode, Kevin cannot reach Dana and becomes abandoned in the antebellum South for five years which is only weeks in Dana's present time in the twentieth century. At

the end, she returns back and her ancestor Hagar is born. The couple reunites in the nineteenth century and travels back to their own time for good only after Dana struggles with Rufus to free herself from his assault and accidentally starts a fire which later they find out that had killed Rufus. Upon completing her last trip back home, Dana's left arm gets buried in the wall due to Rufus' grasp. Despite the severe experience the couple goes through, they possess a newfound sense of knowledge and understanding when they return back to 1976. This new insight brings new light to not only their distinct identities as an interracial couple but also how this relationship is intertwined with the past as well.

Sigmund Freud's concept of the "*uncanny*" is presented in Butler's **Kindred**. It is a concept of an entity jointly being both familiar and foreign and it is especially useful in terms of analyzing the body in the novel. Freud describes the concept as "*class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar*" (1976: 3676). He connects the notion with a phallogocentric description of the uncanny as the fear of castration or the fear of something being discovered and is no longer secret/hidden (and thus can be seen as dangerous). Tania Modleski also expands this concept and includes another source of operation, which is the fear that occurs from the failing of separation between mother and child. This feminine uncanny focuses on the themes of alienation and isolation, the frustration of being silenced, evil being an ordinary phenomenon, and the anxiety of secured places transforming into dangerous ones. Butler analyzes and explores these uncanny themes through use of Afrofuturism by struggling with the unruly subjects of race, class, and gender. In the novels, she generally resorts to extraordinary incidents as well as conditions to demonstrate how race is being used as a means to categorize other people as the Other or an object instead of how it should be viewed as an essentially normal part of human experience. In **Kindred**, she portrays a refusal to submit to binary categorization. Butler uses the Other and race as a way to invalidate the expectations of the general assumptions.

In the novel, Butler uses an advanced version of the Afrofuturistic tropes which were introduced by Hurston and Ellison in their novels, **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and **Invisible Man**. The novel focuses on the use of alternative spaces as well as body and language within the Afrofuturistic concept to remedy the mentioned silencing and evasion by the characters' illumination of the African-American

experience in the past while encouraging more possibilities for the subjects. Butler's creation of alternative time and space continuum with actual time travelling without the use of any technological input, Dana's separation from the law of the father through body and language and the effects of kinship and surrounding communities are mainly highlighted in the chapter.

4.1 Alternative Spaces: The Territorial Places in Afrofuturistic Concepts

While emphasizing on the thirdspace, Edward Soja also mentions the concepts of "*spatial justice and regional democracy*" (2002: 119). According to him, these concepts help with

the spatial aspects of familiar ideas, to show that these spatial aspects have not been given adequate attention and also to suggest that 'putting spatiality first', that is, viewing important ideas first and foremost from a spatial perspective, can often produce new insights, significantly different theories and practices. Hence, spatial justice specifically points to the important spatial dimensions of (social) justice. It does not refer to something different than social justice, except in the sense that emphasizing the specifically social dimensions of justice often occurs with relatively little sensitivity to space, territory, location, boundary, geographical distributions, etc. (Ibid.)

Soja focuses on the important extent of the analytical spatial thought that—not only geographical spaces but also the ideas—help to connect the alternative spaces with the idea of decolonization of individual selves. In **Kindred**, Butler uses the past as an alternative space to address different possibilities in history and the present in which African-American women possess the option to exert some presence, influence, and even power in some situations that they do not possess over the oppressive forces (i.e. the slave owners or the biased white community). By assigning a degree of autonomy, especially to African-American females, Butler also empowers them with an assertive voice with the help of time travelling, technology, and surrounding communities. Contrary to Butler, **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and **Invisible Man** present scopes of figurative time travelling of the protagonists. In Hurston's novel, there is a heavy emphasis on going to the horizon and being back while in Ellison's novel, the emphasis is more on the narrator's hibernation period which enables him to create a

nonlinear time-space continuum. Finally in Butler, Dana embarks on a literal time traveling journey to the past in an attempt to find out significant—in fact, vital—information about the past to help resolve an imminent threat or danger in the present which is her very own existence.

In an article titled “A Grim Fantasy,” Lisa Yaszek appropriates the term “*memory machine*” in order to describe the time traveling that takes place in **Kindred** (2003: 1053). Yaszek associates memory with time/time travelling and suggests an intertwined bond in between. By relocating bodies as well as the characters’ consciousness in a possible past time, Butler helps to evaluate the characters as one version of the past instead of that version being the only one for the sake of present as well as future. Since the changes in the memory affect the evaluation of the present and even the future greatly, Butler offers multiple and unfixed versions that users can dwell on and speculate further. In case of the opposite, the concept of time would become fixed. In other words, the authors’ alterations and adjustments in the narrative are essential for the creation of fluctuation and mobility.

Homi K. Bhabha asserts that in “*doubling of time and space, as the site of enunciation [...] cuts across the boundaries of master and slave; it opens up a space in-between*” (1994: 55). Following Hurston’s and Ellison’s experimentation with time and alternative space, Butler’s application with them can be evaluated as a way to recreate literature so that racial voices would not be silenced or significant issues would not be avoided. This in-betweenness creates an alternative form of time and space in African-American literature. In **Invisible Man**, memory machine is used without the actual time travelling taking place. When the narrator gets high and loses himself in the music of Louis Armstrong, he loses the sense of time. At that moment, he is neither at the present nor in the past or the future. The passage after the lobotomy has a similar connotation. Both passages invoke his racial memory. This constructs one of the most prominent proto-Afrofuturistic aspects of the novel. Similar to Soja’s and Bhabha’s third space, there is an expression of a desire to disturb the fortification of the traditional institution of these terms. Experimenting with alternative time and space allows discussions to be formed on issues such as survival from oppression of racism, elitism and sexism especially for African-American women writers.

Besides looking at the past and future while trying to survive, Dana learns more about her own individual identity in her travels. Edward Soja highlights that the thirdspace occupies two meanings:

[T]he first arising from an ontological argument about the co-equal privileging of the spatial, the historical, and the social; the second derived from a critique of the binary logic that has dominated traditional ways of thinking about space and geography for at least the past century. (2002: 114)

In **Kindred**, Dana comes to realize her own strength and the extension of her real power when it comes to survival following her thirdspace occurrences. She not only gains knowledge about her historical and social heritage but also attains a new sense of understanding of space and geography. Butler's protagonist is not a woman who is "*inferior to men*" (Barr, 1987: 40). In **Lost in Space: Probing Feminist Science Fiction and Beyond**, Marleen S. Barr asserts that Butler and other female writers create women characters "*who epitomize the suppressed authentic self*" (Ibid.). Barr argues that: "*These female speculative fiction writers have, in [Annis] Pratt's words, made of the women's time travel novel 'a pathway to the authentic self, to the roots of our selves beneath consciousness of self, and to our innermost being'*" (Ibid.). Time travel then becomes associated with self -discovery and -understanding. During her time travels, Dana learns more about who she really is and where she comes from. In the novel, in between the trips, there are occasional assertions about Dana's career as a struggling writer while working at a "*casual labor agency*" which she also calls a "*slave market*" (Butler, 2003: 52). By describing the present-day Dana in detail, Butler helps to connect the present and the past and how she reacts to the challenges in the past in the antebellum South. She is described as an individual who holds "*marginal positions in society and [is] removed from the mainstream of daily life*" (Barr, 1987: 40). As a middle class African-American woman, she also holds a marginal stand which is not acceptable or appreciated in the antebellum South. Yet, the contrast between the present Dana and the antebellum Dana emphasizes what she accomplishes as a central figure while operating in the alternative spaces that takes place in the past. While she is in the alternative space of the antebellum South, Dana personally

witnesses and experiences slavery, however, she survives with the knowledge and the information from her present time as well as the assistance and help of the other slaves.

Annis Pratt asserts that the portrayed characters like Dana, who are not included in communal mainstream, experience time and space in a different manner: *“Women’s fiction manifests alienation from normal concepts of time and space precisely because the presentation of time by persons on the margins of day-to-day life inevitably deviates from ordinary chronology”* (1981: 11). Pratt believes that marginalized women need alternative time and space in order to manage their realities separately from the others. It is important to recognize that, as an Afrofuturist author, Butler provokes the contemporary race and gender issues related to African-American women by creating alternative considerations of space and time in the past. This use of in-between space and time renders it possible for Dana to charge herself to engage in the journeys that lead to her self-understanding. The main goal of the narrative is to provide the protagonist with the necessary space to engage on journeys without dealing with the limitations that occur with linear time.

At the very beginning of **Kindred**, Butler introduces a crisis to emphasize the immediate struggle of survival. Dana’s confrontation with unexpected threats to her life throughout the narrative enables the author to experiment with the concept of time and alternative spaces in uncommon ways, as well as explicitly consider the need to revisit the past to find out about alternative ways from which not only the individuals but also the communities manage to overcome the racist and sexist attitudes of whites. Butler uses the experimentation with time and space to uncover Dana’s access to knowledge and self-realization. Dana finds herself in situations where she must act accordingly to the past to survive both in the past and the present. By enabling her protagonist to return back to the past unintentionally, Butler asserts the significance of communal as well as individual reflection of going back and reevaluating the history as a way to create possible alternatives. The novel opens with a challenging sentence: *“I lost an arm on my trip home”* (2003: 9). In Dana’s situation, her trip does not take her to the past but rather transforms her into the present. The most significant aspect of her trip home is that it enables her to recall some details from the past that affect her present life as well as her individual self. Robert Crosley in **Kindred**’s introduction to 1988 edition asserts:

The date of Dana's final return to Los Angeles is July 4, 1976, the bicentennial of the founding of the United States. Her fantastic journey becomes an occasion for meditating on American cultural history. What has been forgotten or trivialized or sentimentalized in the public celebrations of the past reemerges unvarnished in Dana's homecoming on the fourth of July. Dana comes back to southern California with a truer understanding of black history in America than the sanitized versions in the popular media had ever given her. (xix)

Butler also uses time traveling to raise issues with the creation of historical memory. The first instance of it appears when Dana is drawn back to 1815 in order to save a young boy from drowning in a river in Maryland. After saving the boy's life, his father levels a rifle at her head and Dana suddenly finds herself back in her present time. Dana's expression of this first incident is: "*As real as the whole episode was, as real as I know it was, it's beginning to recede from me somehow. It's becoming like something I saw on television or read about—like something I got second hand*" (Butler, 2003: 17). Even after experiencing the whole incident personally, she distances herself by comparing her experience to something on television. She does not want to make an immediate correlation between the past and herself. Through this incident, Butler draws parallelism how "*commercial modes of memory*"²⁶ can cause individuals to distance themselves from past histories. Also, race and trauma/anxiety seem to be the ultimate uncanny elements that are revealed as the hidden fear that designates the individual and societal actions in the narrative.

It becomes inevitable for Dana to distance herself from past as the episodes become more frequent. After her first involuntary time travelling in which she saves Rufus' life for the first time and returns back to the present, she panics and fears since the reason for her travel is not specified and she can only conclude from the whole experience that fear is a driving force within this involuntary experience. Soon, Butler makes it clear that Rufus' fear enables Dana's time travelling to the past and her own fear enables her to travel back to the present. However, understanding the reason for fear does not give Dana any control over her situation. At the beginning, Rufus is more careful about how he treats Dana since he realizes that he needs her to save his life,

²⁶ In her article, "The Grim Fantasy" (2003), Lisa Yaszek uses the phrases such as "*commercial culture*" and "*commercial modes of memory*" to refer to the formation of desired and more utopian forms of American historical memory with the use of mass media.

however, as time in the past progresses faster than the present, he becomes more adaptive of his environment and becomes less careful with his and Dana's well-being. As soon as Rufus understands Dana's purpose of visits, he becomes more careless with his actions. The presence of the forces that include Dana and Rufus into each other's lives also generate alternative spaces where Dana is not only out of her own time but also out of Rufus' time as well as representing a possible future that is beyond their understanding. Thus, traveling back and forth over time and space enables Butler's narrative to create more possible nonlinear, cyclic timelines repeatedly.

In Hurston's and Ellison's novels, the narratives include a cyclic movement, and without this cyclic motion, the brief instances that individuals experience in time would not be able to possess any meaning. This is the structure that is employed in Hurston's, Ellison's and Butler's novels. While Butler's protagonist Dana literally travels across different times and spaces to discover her past ancestry and, thus, her own self, Hurston uses this imaginary cyclic motion to provide meaning to Janie Mae's experiences. In **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, understanding life and self involves a mental journey going back to the past and coming forward to the present, and thus, realizing that the ending is only the actual beginning. To achieve this, Hurston uses storytelling and folktales. In between her storytelling, she also implicitly refers to real incidents that took place such as the Order of forty acres and a mule. Even though the Order was implemented only for a short period of time in American history, Hurston uses this fact to demonstrate how it may have changed the lives of African-Americans if the policy had been fully implemented in reality. Hurston has initiated the notion of reconstructing the past—which may have had significant effects on possible futures—but it did not include a literal time traveling. This concept constitutes one of the core proto-Afrofuturistic features of Hurston's novel as well.

Their Eyes Were Watching God presents an image of possible futures of tomorrow. Janie Mae's journey, both literally and figuratively, becomes more than an African-American woman's dreams and desires, and Eatonville and the Everglades also become more than simple African-American communities. Hurston's proto-Afrofuturism enables Janie Mae to decolonize herself and imagine a better future in spite of the oppression and deprivations. Hurston challenges the formation of African-American reality through Janie Mae's journey across time and space—African-

American spaces created by segregation—as well as experiences of white domination and African-American fanaticism. African-Americans, who ostensibly do not possess a future, resort to folklore to create a future that challenges the racial reality. The sentence: “*‘Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons’*” (Hurstons, 2000: 182) is a proto-Afrofuturist statement in which the horizon reflects an alternative space that offers different possibilities. Janie Mae can make comparisons since she has “*been tuh*” and “*back*.” This enables her to differentiate between the realities of West Florida, Eatonville and the Everglades. This enables her to determine her own future-oriented vision. At the end, she asserts that “*It’s uh known fact, Pheoby, you got tuh go there tuh know there*” (Ibid., 183). The intentional narration of her story revives new possibilities for her. Janie Mae experiences and recognizes the difficulty of achieving this potentiality. She directly indulges in African-Americans’ wishes for a better life and future. Yet, she is anchored in the present and cannot experience more than her life span.

Similarly, Ellison enables future generations to imagine various possible futures that can occur with nonlinear time and space continuum. This is one of the key aspects that make **Invisible Man** become an interest for Afrofuturist thought that was not attainable in 1952. The narrator’s hibernation period in the final alternative space in the novel enables the narrator to develop into a quasi-Afrofuturist—“*proto-Afrofuturist*”—writer (Yaszek, 2005: 309). After developing the ability to “*see around corners*,” the narrator starts to reconsider the past and present experiences that would help him plan the power networks that would push him towards a future that was not made for him. The reflective actions of the narrator’s story illustrate a narrative like proto-Afrofuturists’—as in the definition of a narrative style provided by Ruth Mayer—that moves “*seamlessly back and forth through time and space, between cultural traditions and geographic time zones*” (2000: 557). With the unnamed narrator’s underground home that is mobilized through technology, the invisible man wraps himself around a new identity and—perhaps—to a completely new future which he fails to achieve. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator asserts: “*in spite of myself I’ve learned some things [...] A decision has been made. I’m shaking off the old skin [...] I’m coming out, no less invisible [...] but coming out nonetheless*” (Ellison, 1995: 579-581). After his declaration, it is obvious that he still does not possess the necessary

knowledge about what he should do when he gets out of his hibernation state: “[I]t escapes me. What do I really want, I’ve asked myself. Certainly not the freedom of a Rinehart or the power of a Jack [the Brotherhood], nor simply the freedom not to run. No, but the next step I couldn’t make, so I’ve remained in the hole” (Ibid., 574). In the end, he escapes possible imposed futures and survives “at the edge of revelation and at the edge of action” of his own development (Yaszek, 2006: 44). He is aware that he possesses a chance for a new future but, unlike the Afrofuturists, he is still not ready to announce it or take any action.

In an interview, Homi K. Bhabha explains what he thinks “home” as a concept has two aspects:

One—something to do with the normalized, the naturalized, the inevitable, the original. It’s there—the “thereness” of your existence, even more than the “hereness” of your existence. It is always there [...] I understand this landscape. I know these people. I know the language, and so on [...] And the other, it seems to me, is the kind of Conradian idea that home is what you return to. So, there are these two moments of temporality, these two narrative moments—coming out of the home and somehow allowing yourself to imagine, whether you can or you can’t, that you can go back: so emergence and return are complicit with the concept of home. (2017: 4-5)

In **Invisible Man**, there is the occurrence of emergence of a person’s existence while he is in hibernation but there is no returning back to where the narrator comes from. Ytasha Womack states, no matter how far the text takes you, the “*Afrofuturist paradigm*” (2013: 1) includes the realization of everything starting at the place where you call home at the present time. The unnamed narrator in **Invisible Man** acknowledges the fact but chooses to wait to take action whereas Butler uses the same definition of the paradigm and bases Dana’s journey between two of the places where she calls home. According to Yaszek, Afrofuturism is the result of “*the historical recovery projects*” (2006: 299) that has been pursued since the nineteenth century by especially the African originated authors and scholars. These projects often include the experiences of alienation and homelessness—that stem mostly from Afrodiasporic encounter—of African-Americans. Butler cultivates this idea of home and

homelessness/alienation²⁷ as a part of reclamation and recovery of the past. In the Introduction of **Afrofuturism 2.0**, Afrofuturist Reynaldo Anderson asserts that one of the aspects of Afrofuturism is to question the “*possibilities for black female bodies historically represented as quintessentially other, abject, and alien*” (2016, xv). The characters first need to lose their alienated state and find themselves to create alternatives for the future. Butler presents that the only way for Dana to find her true home and self is to go through the realities of African-Americans’ history personally.

In **Kindred**, the time spent in the past due to the travels increases with each episode. This aspect does not only help to reveal more about past histories but also helps to describe how the past affects Dana’s identity. Her first trip is portrayed in a matter of minutes, her second as hours and her third as days while the concept of time in 1976 hardly progresses at all. This unusual conception of time affects Dana to a degree that at some point in the narrative, she thinks of Weylin plantation as “*home*” (Butler, 2003:190). Historically, the plantation is the home of the origin of her family, and thus, it is normal for her to feel safer due to the effects of her time travelling which automatically creates a double identity for Dana. In the episodes that take place in the past, she experiences almost everything an African-American can experience at the time except for rape. Butler specifically emphasizes that almost none of Dana’s previous knowledge about her real home becomes useful in the past which is also one of the reasons why Dana becomes more accepted of the plantation as her “*home*” after some time. She grows accustomed to the rules and learns to fit in to her best ability and that makes her become a part of the environment. However, at the end, she can never fully belong to the place and will always remain alienated.

In this sense, Hurston’s **Their Eyes Were Watching God** presents a prominent example for the alienated African-American woman who is in search of an idealized alternative space to decolonize her mind from the state of alienation since the plot of

²⁷In Afrofuturism, the theme of alien and alienation is used commonly. Inspired by Mark Dery’s finding a semantic bond between the “*alien*” and the “*other*,” Ytasha Womack uses the dehumanization of Africans and compares Africans to alien abductees (2013). Being the Other, according to Womack, brings along an alienation for Africans that can be similar to being an alien abductee in another dimension, space or location.

the novel describes Janie Mae's self-journey to several alternative spaces²⁸ that become home to her at some points of her life. Hurston's Janie Mae also needs to visit places physically to discover the idea of home or alienation. Each settlement that she visits provides a different perspective of African-American life and history for her and, like Dana, Janie Mae also tries to fit in to her best ability. In Eatonville, for instance, she experiences the class difference among the African-Americans as the wife of the mayor of the town in contrary to Palm Beach where she is a forced visitor after the flood and witnesses the white mindset expressing explicit views on servitude and segregation against African-Americans. She also becomes a seasonal worker in the Everglades and finds a place for herself among the common folks. Janie Mae finds herself in the Everglades but soon finds out that the Everglades cannot form her "home" and that she needs another space to outdistance her alienation. All these different settings enable Janie Mae to realize the true concept of home in the proto-Afrofuturist paradigm sense. Contrary to Dana who lacks the feeling of really belonging to a place in a healthy manner at the end of the narrative, Janie Mae feels she belongs to her final place.

Through the unnamed narrator, however, Ellison observes the themes of homelessness and alienation address to the majority of the contemporary African-Americans:

Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility. Invisibility [...] gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead [...] That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' [jazz and blues] music. (Ellison, 1995: 8)

²⁸ In Afrofuturism, the self-journey is almost always followed by a physical journey to different spaces. This journey enables the characters to realize the fragmentation and the embracement of this fragmented self. In Nnedi Okorafor's Afrofuturist trilogy, **Binti**, a similar journey of a young woman with ethnic background travelling across the galaxy only to acknowledge her differences and find her true self is experienced.

The narrator explains the state of not being able to fit and belong as an invisible individual because of the “*different sense of time*.” It is only after his retreat to underground home that the narrator moves out of his mechanical stage and becomes a meddler who takes pleasure in diverting power from Broadway, which is thought to be the fortress of white American artistic culture, in order to empower his light and sound related technologies. Coinciding with Afrofuturists that came later on, Ellison carefully uses the rhetoric of science fiction—especially the emphasis on technology—in order to stress on the Africans’ alienation from exonerated futures. The language he uses to define the students is “*robots*” with “*minds laced up*” (Ibid., 36). Later in the novel, a black veteran calls the narrator as “*a walking personification of the Negative [...] mechanical man*” (Ibid., 94). In the paint factory, the African-American worker defines himself as “*we the machines inside the machine*” (Ibid., 217) and the leaders of the Brotherhood, along with the group’s ideology, view the blacks as “*one step in the experiment*” (Ibid., 350) of renewing the community. The narrator’s record player expresses the invisible man’s new understanding of black invisibility. Thinking the ownership of one record player is not enough, he thinks about having four more record players connected to his original player.

The narrator’s underground space filled with light and sound technologies is a metaphor for the necessity of African-Americans to own a space, either physical or metaphysical, for self-discovery and fulfillment. Hurston also emphasizes the same metaphor in her novel while Butler’s **Kindred** breaks free from this understanding to prove that individuals can reach self-discovery without owning a space of their own. The selection of an underground manhole as home or the house that one feels the most oppression as alternative spaces can be regarded as a part of futuristic imagination since it reflects on the unexplored place that includes subhuman African-Americans as a primeval site of phobia. Ruth Mayer also asserts that the racially discriminated experience African-American culture have witnessed in the past orients them to “*concentrate on the fantasy spaces in-between and nowhere at all*” (2000: 556). This fantasy space in-between, such as the underground manhole, benefits from the proto-Afrofuturist concepts to reproduce African-American spaces that traditional ways of reasoning may not distinguish them as real.

Butler uses time travel to create alternative spaces for the protagonist as a way to transform the protagonist in a space to revisit the past to accentuate the necessary means to survive within racial and gender-wise oppressions along with other challenges. She situates Dana in conditions that unleash her inner strength that support her emotional state as well as develop endurance to situations that are dangerous. Dana cannot completely fit into the slave community in the past even though she possesses the knowledge of the present. According to Denea Stewart-Shaheed: “[B]y *disrupting time*, African American authors may introduce themes of agency, resistance, and spiritual liberation” (2009: 235). The author tries to shed more light on the crucial past by enabling Dana to relive the period of slavery, which is the space where resistance is generated initially. In his article titled, “The Social Origins of American Negro Art,” W. E. B. DuBois states that much of African-Americans were subjected to “*social compulsion*” which is

built on the sorrow and strain inherent in American slavery, on the difficulties that sprung from Emancipation, on the feelings of revenge, despair, aspiration, and hatred which arose as the Negro struggled and fought his way upward. Whenever a great mass of millions of men have such common memories and experiences they are bound sooner or later to express them. (1925: 53)

The most common way of expressing one’s feelings toward oppression is resistance. In **Kindred**, along with African-American resistance to an oppressive community, African-American female agency is also present as well. In **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, the idea of female agency is taken to a point of permission of the surrounding community. Such as in the incident of Joe’s death. The first act of Janie Mae is to take off her head scarf in front of the mirror and feel hopeful. But immediately after, she puts it back on and calls on to her neighbors to play the role of a sorrowed widow like it is expected from her. In **Kindred**, Dana’s distress following her first time travelling episode is made evident in her words: “*Maybe I’m just like a victim of robbery or rape or something—a victim who survives, but who doesn’t feel safe anymore*” (Butler, 2003: 17). Even though she calls herself a victim, she demonstrates a figure that is much stronger at the end. She eventually fails to deny degradation, however, she continues to resist and help others to resist the oppressive

structures of the antebellum South. She constantly tries to figure out new ways to increase her agency throughout the novel whether it is to teach other slaves to become literate or stall Rufus so that Alice would have a head start if she chooses to run away.

When Rufus calls her nigger, she corrects him: *"I'm a black woman, Rufe. If you have to call me something other than my name, that's it"* (Ibid., 25). The protagonist becomes a figure for African-American women in the plantations and for the sexual and racial abuse they receive. Dana demonstrates resilience above common during her visits to the antebellum South and at the end, manages to survive despite all the hardship she experiences. Barbara Lewis asserts:

Butler crafts a character with dual status, one that steps in and out of the box. Dana is ordered around, made to say master, sent to the fields, whipped, and faces down a gun, twice, but she can read and write, she can nurse and heal the sick, she doesn't age, and, on death's doorstep, she can flee to another time. (2007: 302)

Time travelling enables Dana to resist death and discover the durableness of African-American women ancestors. The goal to survive allows Dana to adopt various roles and adapt to the changes in the oppressive structure. Following Dana and Kevin's trip back to the past, she says that they need to adjust themselves to social roles accordingly: *"We're going to have to fit in as best we can with the people here for as long as we have to stay. That means we're going to have to play the roles you gave us"* (Butler, 2003: 65). In order for both to stay away from trouble, the couple acts out the role of a master and a slave.

While she is performing her act as a slave, she tries to survive using her education, literacy, and autonomous character. At this point, she still believes that she can prevent Rufus from turning into a character like his father. As the narrator, Dana asserts: *"I would try to keep friendship with him, maybe plant a few ideas in his mind that would help both me and the people who would be his slaves in the years to come"* (Ibid., 68). Using the prior knowledge from where she came from, the protagonist tries to enhance her and the surrounding African-American community's position by attempting to change Rufus' character and understanding of the African-Americans. However, when she tries to use her prior skills and education, her attempts are met

with violence in the majority of the time. Dana thinks that she can educate the other slaves with her literacy skills to help them construct a better life for them. However, the passage following Tom Weylin's discovery of Dana's actions is a violent one:

Weylin dragged me a few feet, then pushed me hard. I fell, knocked myself breathless. I never saw where the whip came from, never even saw the first blow coming. But it came—like a hot iron across my back, burning into me through my light shirt, searing my skin [...] I screamed, convulsed. Weylin struck again and again, until I couldn't have gotten up at gunpoint [...] By then, I almost wanted to die. Anything to stop the pain. (Ibid., 107)

When she can no longer endure the pain, she vomits and returns back to her present time. Since pain is the only thing that enables her time travel, she asserts: "*Pain had never been a friend to me before, but now it kept me still. It forced reality on me and kept me sane*" (Ibid., 113). In a way, the pain proves Dana that history really occurred and her wounds and scars attest to that realization.

Just like Janie Mae's remarks through the end of **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, Dana, too, "*been tuh de [past] and back and now [she] kin set heah in [her] house and live by comparisons*" (Hurstons, 2000: 182). The difference is that Dana literally goes back to the past and is able to make comparisons by actually living and experiencing. From an Afrofuturist standpoint, the past reflects an alternative space where she finds the opposite of contentment and acceptance but completed her journey with a stronger agency and identity. Dana experiences and recognizes the difficulty of achieving her potentiality. The events that Dana witnesses alter the function of space and time travels while she still tries to understand the reality of her experience with her husband, Kevin. Unlike Hurston's and Ellison's characters, they are able to make comparisons as well as connections between the realities of Maryland in the nineteenth century and Los Angeles in the twentieth century. This enables them to determine their own future-oriented visions. That is why it is necessary for them to go to Maryland and try to learn what happened following Dana's and Rufus' last encounter.

Similar to Dana, Hurston's protagonist is ready "*for her great journey to the horizon in search of people*" (Ibid., 106) after Joe's death. She wants to find a community where she can belong to. From a proto-Afrofuturistic perspective, after

appeasing all of Joe's wishes, Janie Mae experiences what Mark Dery describes as "*the estrangement that science fiction writers imagine*" (1994: 212). In this marriage the cause of Janie Mae's estrangement is Joe's forceful acts of his own vision on her. Joe Starks becomes the colonizing factor of her mind and body. And it is only after his death that she can decolonize herself from his oppressive influences with a help of a new alternative space. On the contrary, the cause of Dana's estrangement towards her own racial history is her own lack of knowledge. By actually visiting the past and experiencing the reality along with it, Dana becomes more aware not only of the people's experiences but also her own cultural history.

At the end, Hurston asserts: "*Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see*" (2000: 227). The passage is taken from a significant moment of Janie Mae's story which signifies the role of alternative spaces in Hurston's creation of her most-acclaimed character. The image of Janie Mae "*pulling in her horizon [...] from around the waist of the world*" reflects the novel itself and mirrors the horizon at the beginning which said to have "*ships at a distance have every man's wish on board*" (Ibid., 1). Hurston comments that it is very difficult to attain the horizon, which is similar to colonialism, especially for the African-Americans due to their oppressive experiences in white dominated communities. Contrary to colonial discourse, Janie Mae's attempt to reach the horizon indicates her decolonization. As the novel progresses Janie Mae seeks opportunities and follows her dreams to a future horizon which has not been explored. This is a proto-Afrofuturistic characteristic to highlight the problems within African-American social experience. Missy D. Kubitschek argues:

Through Janie, Hurston merges the quest pattern with the Afro-American call and response to form a new experience, a group quest or ascent. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* intimates an Eatonville with Janie and a whole group of Pheobys growing 'ten feet tall,' traveling in company 'tuh de horizon and back,' ever constructing and renewing both individual and community. (1983: 114)

Kubitschek's comment emphasizes the pressure between the individuals and the community that guides a person's sense of who and where she is. This new statement

for African-American women that calls for an action of liberation from domination, sexism, racism as well as the soul allows to place Hurston's novel within the proto-Afrofuturistic scope.

With the incident of the invisible man with Mr. Norton, Jim Trueblood, and the veterans in the Golden Day, Ellison also emphasizes, from a proto-Afrofuturistic perspective, that African-Americans cannot be designed to fit the already institutionalized visions of future of their surroundings because of their complicated historical and material connections. Prior to the incident, Mr. Norton calls the narrator his fate: "*I had a feeling that your people were somehow connected with my destiny [...] That has been my life's work, not my banking or my researches, but my first-hand organizing of human life*" (Ellison, 1995: 41-42). In the incident that led to the unnamed narrator's expulsion, the narrator destroys Mr. Norton's mirroring on the African-American life and culture as well as his future vision of submissive African-Americans when he introduced him to Jim Trueblood and the other local veterans, who are also the mental patients of a nearby asylum.

Through the unnamed narrator's humanism, **Invisible Man** establishes its proto-Afrofuturist aspect. The unnamed narrator's journey as a student in a segregated college in the south, a factory worker in a paint factory in New York and a member of the Brotherhood all proves his quest for a black future which he cannot succeed at the time. His efforts for self-realization ends with disappointment as the dominant institutional powers treat him as *a tabula rasa* and reflect their own forced visions of the future on him, such as in the case of Mr. Norton telling the narrator: "*You are my fate, young man. Only you can tell me what it really is [...] Through you [...] I can observe in terms of living personalities to what extent my money, my time and my hopes have been fruitfully invested*" (Ibid., 42-45). Thus, the African-Americans are treated as objects of an experiment that white domination reflects its biased future vision on. Mr. Norton is similar to the individuals behind the Brotherhood. The organization's hypocrisy becomes evident as it, too, approaches the African-American members as resources rather than individual subjects. The Brotherhood's biggest difference among the others is the use of so-called scientific and technological methods that only serve for the greater good of the group's political agenda.

Technology in Afrofuturist works is among the key concepts for creating alternative pasts, presents, and futures while decolonizing one's mind. In her article, Yaszek focuses on the women aspect of technology more heavily. She discusses that producing African-American women history enhanced with technology helps to enable different versions to "*masculinist approaches to history*" (2003: 1055). She tries to highlight the ways Butler "*participates in Afro-feminist projects to interrogate the relationship between historical memory and commercial culture by appropriating and adapting the commercial form of science fiction itself*" (Ibid., 1054). However, Butler also focuses on the inadequate effects of technology in African-American context. Just like Dana's prior knowledge in advanced technology and history cannot help her in the antebellum South, she realizes that not all her knowledge was formed correctly. On her second trip to Maryland, Dana comes across some white patrollers assaulting an African-American slave who was leaving the plantation without permission to visit his family:

I could literally smell his sweat, hear every ragged breath, every cry, every cut of the whip. I could see his body jerking, convulsing, straining against the rope as his screaming went on and on. My stomach heaved, and I had to force myself to stay where I was and keep quiet. Why didn't they stop! [...] I had seen people beaten on television and in the movies. I had seen the too-red blood substitute streaked across their back and heard their well-rehearsed screams. But I hadn't lain nearby and smelled their sweat or heard them pleading and praying, shamed before their families and themselves. I was probably less prepared for the reality than the child crying not far from me. In fact, she and I were reacting very much alike. My face too was wet with tears. (2003: 36)

Dana makes correlation between her experience and being an audience to a program on television. While she distances herself from the experience, she also realizes that the television programs in 1960s and 70s were inadequate in terms of preparing Dana for the things she had witnessed first hand.

The protagonists in all three novels cannot exceed their socio-economic status with the assistance of technology. Contrary to many white science-fiction characters such as German professor Otto Lidenbrock and his nephew Axel in Jules Verne's **Journey to the Center of The Earth** (1864), the access to technology often separates the characters from gaining greater social power and equal terms as a member of

society. It is only after their separation from society that enables the protagonists to benefit from the technological developments and help them to transform their thoughts on alienation and racial visibility. In **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, Janie Mae has the most access to the developed technology when she is the wife of the mayor but does not have any access to it at all due to the repressive character of Joe, however, when she leaves all behind to work in fields with almost no access to any technology, she succeeds to find her self and establishes an autonomous place among the community. In “Some Questions and Some Answers,” Ellison comments on the concept of the digital divide and how it has been used to hold the Africans back. However, he evaluates that things have changed and technology is the key that helps to secure a better position for the African-Americans within the society:

It is precisely technology which promises [Africans] release from the brutalizing effects of over three hundred years of racism and European domination. Men cannot unmake history, thus it is not a question of reincarnating those cultural traditions which were destroyed, but a matter of using industrialization, modern medicine, modern science generally to work in the interest of these peoples rather than against them. Nor is the disruption of the past a totally negative phenomenon; sometimes it makes possible a modulation in a people's way of life that allows for a more creative use of its energies. (1995b: 264-65)

While Ellison stresses upon the importance of technological developments and the importance of being up-to-date, his main character fails to use the technology to his own benefit. Only after he retrieves to underground that the narrator begins from the start and works his way out with the technology without the oppressive and dominant white culture. Prior to his retrieval in the manhole, the invisible man is rather a tool instead of an operator of technology. The veteran in the brothel is the first person to announce the narrator as a robot or rather a mechanical man:

He registers with his senses but short-circuits his brain. Nothing has meaning. He takes it in but he doesn't digest it. Already he is—well, bless my soul! Behold! A walking zombie! Already he's learned to repress not only his emotions but his humanity. He's invisible, a walking personification of the Negative, the most perfect achievement of your dreams, sir! The mechanical man! (Ibid., 94)

The veteran criticizes the narrator for being what the whites hope African-Americans to be: “*The mechanical man.*” Referring to the motionless state, he associates the young narrator with a zombie who does not possess any proper emotions or ideas. He views the narrator as the live “*personification of the Negative*” just like the common prejudiced view that beholds the digital divide that associates backwardness with blackness. In an event for his science fiction book, **The Water Knife**, Paolo Bacigalupi argues that Afrofuturism “*hunts for the techno-fix, not the social-fix*” (Taylor, 2015). It is possible to examine the consequences of technological developments and how the characters in the novels portray the idea of development and progress in the presence of an alternative space. The point that separates Hurston’s and Ellison’s novels from contemporary Afrofuturist novels, according to Bacigalupi’s definition, is the fact that they also focus on the social fixation of society. Afrofuturist scholars argue the improvement of the “*social-fix*” needs the accompaniment of technological developments. If not, it predicts that science will continue to be enslaving.

The mechanical behaviors of **Invisible Man**’s narrator related to the technological discourse of the book are connected with the oppression of the visual technologies. One incident would be the time after the narrator moves to the north. In a created alternative space, he spends a lot of time thinking about adjusting himself both psychologically and physically in order to fit the accepted stereotypes of Hollywood that are associated with success, fame, and wealth: “*I imagined myself making a speech and caught in striking poses by flashing cameras, snapped at the end of some period of dazzling eloquence [...] I would hardly ever speak above a whisper and [...] I would be charming. Like Ronald Coleman*” (Ellison, 1995: 164). Following his experiences, he realizes that reality is much more different than portrayed on television. After comprehending the importance of refusing the realities that are brought by mass production, he becomes enlightened of its treacherous effect on the African-Americans. It is only after his retreat to underground that the narrator moves out of his mechanical stage and becomes a meddler who takes pleasure in diverting power from Broadway. During his hibernation, similar to Afrofuturists, Ellison focuses on technological developments as a way for conciliation of the “*digital divide*” issue (Nelson, 2002:1). Alondra Nelson believes with the involvement of African-

Americans' authorial bodies with technology and media, Afrofuturism can help to balance the digital divide. Butler is also interested in creating a field for Africans that is based heavily on technology, similar to what Nelson argues on.

For the invisible man, the surrounding communities always have negative impact on the protagonist without differentiating among the race. So, the only solution for the narrator is isolation. Butler's novel, on the other hand, demonstrates the ways Butler creates alternative spaces, especially, for African-American women and highlights the importance of Dana's survival depending on the survival of her respective community. In the forced situations, Dana discovers the need of her community in the essence for surviving in the past and reaching to a realization about herself. Throughout the narrative, Dana acknowledges the significant place of community in survival and how that communal involvement enables people to develop as individuals.

Not being able to avoid violence even with the prior knowledge from the future, Dana takes refuge among the slave community within Weylin plantation. In her first encounter with Alice, who is her great-grandmother in reality, she believes that Dana can take "*refuge*" (Butler, 2003: 37) in Weylins' plantation. According to Angela Davis, "*if resistance was an organic ingredient of slave life, it had to be directly nurtured by the social organization that the slaves themselves improvised*" (1995: 204). Butler's positioning Dana in the antebellum South creates an alternative space where Dana experiences a type of oppression that she would not be able to in her own time. Experiencing such oppression helps her to develop a resistance that she would not normally be able to develop if she had not experienced such space. Surrounding slave community that eventually becomes like an adopted family as well as her refuge from the realities of slavery plays a crucial part within the development of her resistance. In a moment of despair, Dana states:

Sarah and Carrie were alone when I went in, and I was glad of that. Sometimes old people and children lounged there, or house servants or even field hands stealing a few moments of leisure. I liked to listen to them talk sometimes and fight my way through their accents to find out more about how they survived lives of slavery. Without knowing it, they prepared me to survive. But now I wanted only Sarah and Carrie. I could say what I felt around them, and it wouldn't get back to either of the Weylins. (Butler, 2003:94)

It is important to emphasize that Dana can find solace only among some of the members of the slave community. Butler does not try to romanticize the communal relationships among the slave community. She portrays all dimensions of the antebellum South from the African-American perspective and adds Dana's prior knowledge from the future to equip her with the necessary tools for resistance and survival. As the places of the birth of resistance, Butler emphasizes on the ideas of resistance that stem and the collectivity that is visible among the slave community. Butler's main aim at placing Dana in such violent situations may occur from the desire to visualize and evaluate the emotional growth of the protagonist from the beginning until the end. This way, the writer can assign significant roles to the African-American characters within the novel. Dana's journey becomes the path of a transitive search toward understanding one's self, identity as well as the past. When Dana says "*Pain dragged me back to consciousness*" (Ibid., 43), she discloses that in order to arrive at the point of self-understanding and the necessary knowledge, one needs to overcome and survive the challenges and obstacles along the journey.

Another reason for Butler to place Dana in such brutal situations is to emphasize the significance of not forgetting and reevaluating the past histories not only individually but also communally. Even though Dana is the protagonist, the other characters also play crucial roles and assume essential places within the narrative especially in the revisiting of the past. This aspect of the novel leads to Butler's focus on the significance of the community in survival and understanding the self. The surrounding community in the past also includes Dana's distant relatives including her great-grandfather and the slave owner, Rufus, and her great-grandmother and supposedly a free slave, Alice. When she questions her reasons for travelling the past involuntarily, she asserts: "*Was that why I was here? Not only to insure the survival of one accident-prone small boy, but to insure my family's survival, my own birth*" (Ibid., 29). She realizes that she needs to survive herself in order to assure the survival of Rufus, her entire familial line from her mother's side as well as her very own existence. Within this difficult journey, her surrounding community—besides her blood relatives—helps her to achieve her goal of survival. By encountering and working with the other African-American slaves in the plantation, Dana becomes aware of a different kind of community that eventually helps her to find the necessary strength to

continue experiencing her violent journey that includes physical and mental oppression and return back to her home in the present time.

Alice's sufferings that include sexual abuse and physical violence originate because of Rufus' affection for her. In the course of the narrative, this enables Dana and Alice to form a special bond. Dana comments on the issue as "*there was no shame in raping a black woman, but there could be shame in loving one*" (Ibid., 124). When Alice and her husband, Isaac, decide to run away together Rufus releases the dogs that almost kill Isaac and capture Alice. When she arrives home in a wagon, she is "*bloody, filthy, and barely alive*" due to the attack (Ibid., 146). Dana becomes as a substitute mother for Alice while healing her and even Alice calls Dana "*Mama*" (Ibid., 153) at some point. As Alice gets well with the help of Dana's care, she also begins to question and remember what had happened to her and Isaac. As a former free African-American, it is even more difficult for Alice to accept and adjust to her new state of enslavement. Alice begins to accuse Dana because she helped her heal and did not tell her the truth sooner: "*'Doctor-nigger,' she said with contempt. 'Think you know so much. Reading-nigger. White-nigger! Why didn't you know enough to let me die?'*" (Ibid., 160). Since Dana and Rufus' relationship has not been witnessed before, her status among the community bears controversial ideas. To Alice, Dana is more white than African-American: "*You always try to act so white. White nigger, turning against your own people*" (Ibid., 165). Alice's accusation mainly originates from her personal negative feelings toward Dana. In the article titled "Exorcizing the Past: The Slave Narrative as Historical Fantasy," Sarah Wood argues against Alice and writes: "*Dana does not meekly accept the position prescribed for her by slavery*" (2007: 89). It seems that Dana tries to apply her knowledge from the future for not only her sake but also for the African-American slave community's sake instead of trying to assume a white identity. Alice also realizes her unfair treatment of Dana and admits: "*I get so mad I can taste it in my mouth. And you're the only one I can take it out on—the only one I can hurt and not be hurt back*" (Butler, 2003: 168). Their connection develops even further when Alice shows Dana her letters that Rufus allegedly sent to Kevin, who did not know that Dana had travelled back to the past and was trying to reach him. Upon finding out Alice's suicide in her final episode, Sarah describes them as sister-like: "*You sure fought like sisters...Always fussin' at each other, stompin' away from each*

other, comin' back. Right after you left, she knocked the devil out of a field who was runnin' you down" (Ibid., 250). The novel emphasizes the significance of the assistance among the African-Americans. Butler also underscores that this spiritual female bonding also acts as a means for a survival mechanism.

The narrative also describes a female betrayal among the slave community when Liza informed Tom Weylin on Dana's escape. However, this betrayal has some consequences among the community. Missy Dehn Kubitschek argues that "*Kindred does not romanticize the solidarity of the slave community*" (1991: 31). Alice, Tess, and Carrie punish Liza for what she has done to their surrogate sister. This passage about Liza's betrayal constitutes the realistic aspect of the internal divisions among the African-American slave communities in the antebellum South. Alice receives hostile treatment from the fellow African-Americans in the plantation as a result of her involuntary connection with Rufus. Dana also becomes a subject of the same treatment because she is assumed to take a submissive role:

I went into the cookhouse and the young man who had his mouth open to speak closed it quickly, looking at me with open hostility. The old man simply turned his back. I'd seen slaves do that to Alice. I hadn't noticed them doing it to me before. Suddenly, the cookhouse was no more comfortable than Alice's cabin had been. It might have been different if Sarah or Carrie had been there, but they weren't. I left the cookhouse and went back toward the main house, feeling lonely. (Butler, 2003: 220)

The African-American slaves exclude both Dana and Alice because of the connection they have formed with Rufus. In her book about African-American women slaves in the southern plantations, Deborah White also emphasizes that even though the relationship between African-American women was mainly structured on gender bonding and collaboration, "*female-to-female conflict*" (1985: 133) among the women slaves were also visible. It is not Butler's aim of demonstrating an idealized version of the slave community, instead, she reveals the complex structuring and dynamics of the African-American slave community that includes cultural, economic and speculative aspects.

The special connection between Alice and Dana is not only felt by themselves but also felt by the others around them as well. However, Rufus' interconnection

between the two women is described more than just believing it to be a resemblance. For instance, when Rufus cannot find either of them around, he keeps searching and when he finds them together, he is satisfied: “*Behold the woman [...] You really are only one woman. Did you know that?*” (Butler, 2003: 228). Alice’s reaction to Rufus’ comment is much more concerned. She says: “*I know what he means. He likes me in bed, and you out of bed, and you and I look alike if you can believe what people say [...] [A]ll that means we’re two halves of the same woman—at least in his crazy head*” (Ibid.). This passage also foreshadows the last encounter of Dana and Rufus. His obsession comes to a point that Rufus does not hesitate to attempt to rape Dana. Dana has no choice but to stab him in order to resist his assault. The consequence of Dana’s resistance leads her to lose an arm while traveling back to the present for the last time. Dana’s marked body signifies the African-Americans’ buried history. Dana’s loss also shows that the cultural trauma caused by the colonial oppression of slavery still exists within the generations who did not experience slavery directly. Losing her arm after the final episode cannot be compared to the changes in her existing conscious experiences throughout the novel, as if the novel stands as a warning of the consequences one needs to face as the price of forgetting one’s past history. At the end, Dana possesses a memory that cannot be forgotten mainly because of the marks it has left on her body.

In the proto-Afrofuturist novels, the authors experience with a theme that blends the nonlinear time and space continuum with lighter additions in the narratives through figurative time travelling, in **Kindred**, however, the use of technology and surrounding communities to create alternative spaces that help the protagonist to decolonize her mind is the central focus of the narrative. While the physical time travelling enables the main character to gain much more understanding of both the past and the present, the use of technological developments as a tool does not lead a direct path to autonomy. Furthermore by adapting such arguments within the text, Butler challenges the science-fiction genre’s white male domination and unveils the effects of having an alternative space along with self-conscious bodies with advanced oratory skills for African-Americans.

4.2 The Double and the Fragmentation in the Imaginary Body

Lacan asserts that the images of fragmented body include “*the images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body*” (2005: 9). In his seminar on psychoses, he also writes the subject “*is originally an inchoate collection of desires—there you have the true sense of the expression fragmented body*” (1993: 39). Thus, the fragmented body represents not only the physical fragmentation but also the sense of mental fragmentation as well. Frantz Fanon, on the other hand, generally uses the term “*fragmentation*” to point out the social stratification among the different social classes in the colonized societies. In **The Wretched of the World**, he stresses that to overcome the colonial discourse, there is a need to overcome its displacement rather than its fragmented aspect. In Hurston and Ellison the displacement of the protagonists is more related to the psychology and the identity formation of the protagonists. In Hurston and Ellison, the recognition of their displaced selves enables characters to form their newly sensed decolonized state of minds. The feeling of displacement in themselves allows to gain a sense of autonomy which helps them to form alternative possible paths for the past, present, and future. In Butler, there is also an addition of physical fragmentation through amputation along with the feeling of displacement. One of the key aspects in Butler’s **Kindred** is that even when examining for the use of body or rather the fragmented aspect of it, Dana is a character that needs to be evaluated accordingly to memory. Dana needs to “*(re)live certain aspects of the lives of her ancestors in order to insure her present existence*” (Hampton, 2010: 1). In her case, Dana cannot remember or understand the history that her family has experienced in the past. Thus, she feels the displacement since she is not able to experience existence in the present either. Neither Dana’s literary skills nor her prior knowledge of slavery from history books can protect her from the experiences in the antebellum South. Just like looking at the mirror and realizing the displacement, Dana realizes how inadequate the African-American historical facts that are presented on the resources. This forms the first steps of the realization of her fragmentation.

Benjamin Robertson suggests that Dana is able to exhibit more about her African-American familial line’s history through “*time travel [which] suggests that it is only through bodily experience that Dana can come to truly know slavery*” (2010:

244). Dana's lack of memory is also most noticeably demonstrated through her body. As she involuntarily travels in time, her body is transferred through time and space and changes both physically and beyond from the beginning until the end. The protagonist is defined as not being fully aware of her history or the race and gender relations in the past and present of the United States. It is possible that these would be the reasons that have initiated Dana's involuntary time travelling to the past. The novel is a device that demonstrates race as a socially constructed entity and racism occurs because of "*a system of advantage based on race*" (Tatum, 1997: 7). Thus, such memory loss of the past can be fragmentary especially for some individuals in alien times and spaces. Through Dana, Butler reconsiders memory a part of identity and empathy.

Sigmund Freud's essay titled "The Uncanny" can be regarded as one of the canonical works on the creation of double. Freud describes "*uncanny*" as belonging "*to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror*" (2003: 1). Freud also describes the words "*heimlich*" and "*unheimlich*" in order to create a context of what "*uncanny*" truly means. According to Freud, "*heimlich*" means something which is familiar while "*unheimlich*" is used to refer to things that are concealed (Ibid., 3). When the two emerge together, "*uncanny*" is created in a context that the word means to describe when an unfamiliar entity is added to a familiar one. Thus, Freud associates the term with the concept of "*double*." He also sees the "*double*" as a degree of development which is associated with his theory of "*narcissism of the earliest period*" (Ibid., 10). He explains this with a child creating multiple projections of the self that later enables the child to develop an ego. When the child becomes an adult, "*double*" becomes involved as the individual encounters the narcissism that the child had experienced early in life. This encounter leads the adult to return back to the stage of childhood and cause the "*uncanny*". In the novel's uncanny, the concept of home, and kinship evolves around discrepancies among people whose bodies do not belong to themselves.

The uncanny effects of Dana's episodes are elaborated more after her realization of who Rufus really is. Discovery of this knowledge automatically leads to an alteration of her perception of home and kinship along with the discovery of the falsehood of the truths that she believed and came to rely on. The only way that she

can exist in the future is through the rape of her African-American great-great-grandmother Alice. Thus, Dana's existence can be said to be the product of the uncanny which reveals what was hidden in her family Bible. While Rufus Weylin was listed as her great-great grandfather, the book did not reveal anything about his race or status of being a slave-owner. After Dana's discovery of who Rufus is, her already established world collapses. Furthermore, by saving Rufus' life in order for her own existence, she becomes an accessory to the rape of Alice. Knowing the consequences of this conundrum, Dana chooses survival of the self over the undesirable truths of slavery in the antebellum South. Through Dana, the first person narrative towards the realities and difficulties of slavery is described in depth. This description enables an uncanny experience through the described issues, incidents, beliefs, and actions that are usually not properly described due to the filtering of time. There may even be a feeling of discomfort with Dana's decisions to survive above all. Her actions do not only include a goal to survive, but also involve a desire to return to the present to Kevin. Her white husband also becomes a constant reminder of the divide between the two realities that she bridges.

In the novel, Butler emphasizes the effect and connection of the two worlds with each other. This is mostly apparent during Dana's travelling episodes. The first time Rufus sees Kevin, he says "*You aren't as bad as I thought you'd be [...] I saw you [...] You were fighting with Dana just before you came here*" (Butler, 2003: 64). For Dana, Rufus is the kinship and Kevin is the home. In this described moment in the novel, Dana manages to exist both in the past and the present at the same time. Moreover, even though the couple is not fighting, Rufus interprets their relationship as an abusive one and makes a remark about Kevin being better than he had imagined. This is one of the aspects that the past and present are intermingled also through the bodies in Butler's narrative. From the narrative of the novel, Rufus' interpretation of their relationship can be true since there are few times in the narrative that Kevin echoes aggressive and narcissist attitudes of Rufus in terms of his treatment of Dana.

In **Black Skin, White Masks**, Fanon discusses that black people are fixated in their blackness and white people are fixated on their whiteness. He asserts that the fixation on whiteness generates the fixation on blackness. This reduces black subjectivity into their race. Fanon believes that colonialism is a completed project that

affects an individual's life entirely. In order to stray away from its effects, he stresses on the importance of recognition which also justifies African-American subjectivity and therefore humanity. In **Kindred**, just like Fanon, Butler draws clear lines between white and black. In the novel, Rufus is fixated on his whiteness and views the world and the African-Americans accordingly. Rufus Weylin possesses the same type of aggression and narcissistic behaviors that are described in Freud's uncanny especially towards Alice and Dana that look very similar in appearance but very different in reality. Rufus is used to getting what he wants without the consequences.

Similar to Rufus, Kevin is also a dominant figure in their marriage. At one point prior to their marriage, Dana recalls, Kevin asking her to type his writing. Dana says:

I'd done it the first time, grudgingly, not telling him how much I hated typing [...] The second time he asked, though, I told him, and I refused. He was annoyed. The third time when I refused again, he was angry. He said if I couldn't do him a little favor when he asked, I could leave. So I went home. (Butler, 2003: 109)

Later in the novel, Rufus asks the same thing for his letters. At first Dana opposes but at the end she possesses no other option but to write his letters. By referring back to the incident above, Dana asserts "*You'll never know how hard I worked in my own time to avoid doing jobs like this*" (Ibid., 226). The only difference between the passages is that Dana does not possess the agency to refuse the involuntary job that has been assigned to her. Her literary skill is used by both men in favor of their own selves and when Dana refuses the wishes, both men demonstrate dissatisfaction and feel as if it is their right to demand such wishes from Dana.

Kevin does not show displeasure when Dana demonstrates agency to the other individuals in society but expects Dana to take a step down in their own relationship. Even though he does not possess any prejudice in terms of issues relating to male domination and race, he expects Dana to be the one who provides more of herself for their relationship. For instance, when they first move to a house together, Kevin only puts his office in order and then expects Dana to unpack the rest of the stuff and organize the rest of his office. Moreover, when he is having a writer's block during the unpacking, Dana gives him an extra job to keep busy, so that he would be able to generate new ideas. In return Kevin looks her in a way that "*wasn't as malevolent as*

it seemed. He had the kind of pale, almost colorless eyes that made him seem distant and angry whether he was or not” (Ibid., 13). And upon returning to the present together, Kevin has a harder time adjusting to his present time. As the more experienced one, Dana tells him that one cannot adjust being at home all at once and he needs time but Kevin has “*the expression on his face [...] something [Dana]’d seen, something [Dana] was used to seeing on Tom Weylin. Something closed and ugly*” (Ibid., 194). When Kevin and Dana first arrive in the past, Dana worries that “*a place like this would endanger him in a way [she] didn’t want to talk to him about*” (Ibid., 77). Dana asserts: “*If he was stranded here for years, some part of this place would rub off on him*” (Ibid.). Following her return, she is afraid that her thoughts about Kevin might have become true. The similarities between Kevin and Weylin men are emphasized in the passage in terms of the look/stare and bodily features such as having pale eyes. Moreover, the influence of a geographical place on individuals is underscored in the narrative. The antebellum south has effects on Kevin’s identity after five years. He becomes a product of the past and his environment to a degree.

As her home, Dana trusts Kevin until the end just like she has trusted Rufus as her kinship until the end. From the beginning until she finds out about Rufus’ dishonesty about sending her letters to Kevin, Dana mainly believes that they have a mutual understanding with one another to a certain degree. Rufus begins to break his end of the agreement almost from the start but Dana always finds some excuses on behalf of him. Realizing her own actions, she says: “*somehow, I always seem to forgive him for what he does to me*” (Ibid., 224). Time travels are difficult to understand for Kevin as it is for Dana. After the first travelling episodes, Kevin asks Dana what had happened. When Dana fails to find the words, he holds her by the shoulders and does not let go until Dana tells him that he is hurting her. Dana continues as: “*I folded forward, hugging myself, trying to be still. The threat was gone, but it was all I could do to keep my teeth from chattering*” (Ibid., 15). When she means the “*threat was gone*” she might not only be talking about the past but the present as well. It was not Kevin’s intention to hurt Dana just as it was not Rufus’ intention to hurt her in most of the incidents that Dana experiences in the past.

Before Dana and Kevin began to have an intimate relationship, they both work at a labor agency which Dana calls “*slave market*” (Ibid., 52). The “*agency clown,*”

Buz begins to make racist and sexist remarks about the two before they even get together. The same sexual relationship between Rufus and Dana is assumed by the community of the slaves and the whites as well. The only difference is that the latter one is thought to demonstrate slave-master sexuality. Even there is a dialogue between Dana and Alice about it:

“Would you go to [Rufus]?”

“No.”

“Even though he’s just like your husband?”

“He isn’t.” (Ibid., 168)

Dana does not want to admit some of the parallelism that Rufus and Kevin share but a similar comment is also made by Dana’s cousin in the novel’s present time. When she returns back to the present by herself, her cousin visits her and asks about the scars while implementing that Kevin has been abusive with her previously. At the end, Dana finally realizes the interconnectedness of the present and the past through Kevin as well. After his return to the present, it takes longer for Kevin to adjust to his present life. He even questions the idea of home himself. He says: “*If I’m not home yet, maybe I don’t have a home*” (Ibid., 190). Dana is relieved to learn that Kevin was providing shelter and food for runaway slaves and had to change his bodily features in order to disguise himself from getting caught. Moreover, he says that he wanted two things while he was in the past; one was to return home and the other was to find Dana. He assures her that even though he is not sure of returning home, he is glad that he found Dana as unchanged. After Dana’s final return to the present, Kevin stands by her and they both unite to interpret and make sense of their experience together when they are being interrogated about the amputated arm and when they visit Maryland in the present time to learn more about the events that followed Dana’s final encounter with Rufus. Kevin’s individual uncanny experience occurs as he has to play a role of Dana’s owner and pretend that he is a part of a racist system. The acting goes as far as Kevin telling Rufus’ father that he considers selling Dana off. After Dana is pulled back and leaves Kevin behind in the antebellum South, he learns to use his position and abilities as a literate white man and begins to act against the system of slavery which enables the production of his wife into existence.

According to Rebecca Rea Ross, with this individual experience, Kevin “*is also able to experience the uncanny matrilineality that so violently interrupts Dana’s life*” (2017: 40). She describes that Octavia Butler issues the brutal separation from the “*maternal figure*” (Ibid.) and thus replaces the act of mothering with trauma as well as fear. This can be viewed as a form of castration. In the novel, this uncanny action is demonstrated as slavery deprives the African-American mothers and children from their humanness, identity formation, and familial bonds while evaluating them as objects that can be sold, bought, and exchanged. In the introduction of **Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema**, Laura Mulvey writes: “*Woman’s desire is subjugated to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. She turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis*” (1999: 834). This is the reason why neither Janie Mae nor Dana has any children of their own. In order to break the chain Mulvey mentions, they sacrifice their offspring in a way. Psychoanalytic feminists are inclined to focus on the modification of the female body and the young female’s relation to the body in terms of her views on daughter-mother-father relationships and the dominant patriarchal Law. Susan Bordo avoids this inclusion of familial ties and focuses more on the surrounding forces that stem from society and how they affect the body and how these forces differ over time and between societies/cultures. She describes the body as a “*text of culture*” (1995: 165) and argues that already established cultural norms are engraved in the body in the forms of physical appearance and activities.

One of the most prominent examples of such activities occurs when Dana sees “*the small slave children who chased each other and shouted and didn’t understand yet that they were slaves*” (Butler, 2003: 76). During her trip with Kevin, Dana experiences the anxiety of seeing slave children acting out their mother’s worst fears as a game without realizing the reality behind it:

“Now here a likely wench,” called the boy on the stump. He gestured toward the girl who stood slightly behind him. “She cook and wash and iron. Come here, gal. Let the folks see you.” He drew the girl up beside him. “She young and strong,” he continued. “She worth plenty money. Two hundred dollars. Who bid two hundred dollars?”

The little girl turned to frown at him. “I’m worth more than two hundred dollars, Sammy!” she protested. “You sold Martha for five hundred dollars!”

“You shut your mouth,” said the boy. “You ain’t supposed to say nothing. When Marse Tom bought Mama and me, we didn’t say nothing.” (Ibid., 99)

Dana leaves the space immediately “*feeling tired and disgusted*” (Ibid.). The example also demonstrates an act of doubling. In the novel, the doubling usually occurs between Dana and Alice as an expression of desire. Alice and Dana’s physical appearances are very similar to each other to a point that most people mistake them as sisters. Through Alice, Dana confronts a life in the past that she could have had. Even though she is portrayed as a free African-American at the beginning of the novel, this status proved to be no use to Alice. Throughout her life, Alice experiences the brutal sides of slavery firstly with the selling of her father, then her husband. Afterwards, she is forcefully taken as a possession by Rufus and finally her children are sold into slavery—at least that is what she believed. Dana takes part in every part of Alice’s life as she is trying to survive in the antebellum South.

Dana also chooses to believe that she can have a positive impact on Rufus that will lead to an overall character and mind change. But later in the narrative, she finally realizes that whatever she does, Dana will not be able to change Rufus and he will do what it takes to keep Dana connected to him in the past. He is aware of his leverage on Dana and does not hesitate to use it. By repeatedly saving Rufus’ life, Dana actually helps with Alice’s rape, which will eventually lead Dana’s existence. In the antebellum South, the African-American slave community tries many different methods to survive. These resistance methods also include black non-resistance to colonial oppression among the whole race. Octavia Butler processes this notion on connecting Dana’s and her ancestors’ entire existence on the rape of Alice. Dana chooses survival over her ancestor’s rape. Thus, the author demonstrates another perspective of the effects of racial oppression on the oppressed ones. However, Dana’s will to survive leads to Alice’s death since after the last removal of her humanity through her children, Alice commits suicide by hanging herself. This is an example of uncanny including separation and doubling. Alice’s suicide is an example of a mother being forcefully separated from her children and in return she separates herself from them at the same time.

Besides her own survival, Dana tries to reassure Alice's survival since she believes that Alice is an exemplary figure to demonstrate Dana how to survive. Dana describes her from her own perspective:

From what I could see of her, she seemed to be about my age, slender like her child, like me, in fact. And like me, she was fine-boned, probably not as strong as she needed to be to survive this era. But she was surviving, however painfully. Maybe she would help me learn how. (Butler, 2003: 38)

From Dana's description and Rufus' special interest in Dana due to her undeniable resemblance to Alice, it is possible to interpret that Alice is a character that mirrors Dana in the past. Their relationship is special since both women mutually benefit from each other on how to survive the oppression in the past. They are also important for Rufus as the main subject of his pleasure.

In **The Ethics of Psychoanalysis**, Lacan analyzes *jouissance's* association with pleasure in detail. Pleasure necessitates a subject to restrict the level of enjoyment in order to set a limit for pleasure. Still, the subject tries to exceed the limit in order to achieve more pleasure without realizing that there is no more pleasure beyond that limit. Above the limit, there is pain and this painful pleasure is described as *jouissance* according to Lacan. In the novel, African-American female body is perceived as a unit of *jouissance* in which pleasure is impulsive and free. The first time Dana experiences such an incident is when she goes to see Alice and her mother at their house. Just as she arrives, she witnesses two white patrollers causing trouble for Alice's slave father and free mother. After the white men leave, Dana approaches the girl and her mother, however, soon is caught by a patroller who returns to rape Alice's mother. Before she can take action, he attacks Dana violently and rips her blouse open. Dana fights with the man until she knocks him unconscious and returns to her present life. However, Alice is not as fortunate as Dana, since the encounter of Alice's body as *jouissance* is more intense. After Rufus rapes Alice—or attempts to, as it is not clear from the narration—Dana confronts Rufus and the below dialogue takes place:

“I would have taken better care of her than any field hand could. I wouldn't have hurt her if she hadn't just kept saying no.”

“She had the right to say no.”
“We’ll see about her rights!”
“Oh? Are you planning to hurt her more? She just helped me save your life, remember?”
“She’ll get what’s coming to her. She’ll get it whether I give it to her or not.” He smiled. “If she ran off with Isaac, she’ll get plenty.” (Ibid., 123)

Even after he owns Alice physically as his slave, he continues to threaten her with their children. In her final trip, Dana is shocked to hear that Alice had hanged herself because Rufus told her that he sold their children as slaves. When Dana asks the reason for his behavior, Rufus explains: “*To punish her, scare her. To make her see what could happen if she didn’t [...] if she tried to leave me*” (Ibid., 251). He does not hesitate to take extreme measures for his pleasure. In **Kindred**, the white men in the antebellum South show perseverance when it comes to taking extreme measures towards African-Americans.

The extreme measures that are taken by the slave-owners are described explicitly in the novel. In one of her episodes, Rufus’ father catches Dana teaching one of the younger slaves with books from his library and Dana’s only thought is: “*It wasn’t supposed to happen. For as long as I had been on the plantation, it had not happened—no white had come into the cookhouse*” (Ibid., 106). He begins to beat Dana violently until she becomes unconscious and returns back to her present time. Upon returning back to the antebellum South, Dana learns that her disappearance caused further anger and confusion which led Master Weylin to blame the other slaves and sell some of their family members as a punishment. Butler is aware of the kinship between the colonizer and the colonized, however, she emphasizes on the “*horror of miscegenation*” (Luckhurst, 1996: 28) that denounces the bond and disrupts the motivation in terms of resistance/survival. The fact is that Rufus’ survival instincts forestall his inbuilt oppressive values and he reaches out to Dana and is able to bring her back to the past only when he faces/fears death. In **Kindred**, body is used as a site of oppression. Butler not only focuses on colonialism’s attention on race but also to consider oppression on gender even long before the oppression on race occurs. Butler intentionally lets Dana misinterpret the history and the mutual relationships. Firstly, she is caught on the idea that Weylin should not have been in the cookhouse in the first

place because she views the master-slave relationship as occurring only between races. She fails to acknowledge that gender also has an important place in this relationship as well. She evaluates the cookhouse as a feminine space for slaves. She does not realize that masculinist view necessitates surveillance on women.

The cookhouse incident is also significant in terms of Butler's shift of the use of science fiction devices. Marleen S. Barr argues that the figure of an alien other generally connotes an expression of perplexity related to race or gender. She argues that women writers use the figure as a way to reflect their own personal agendas. Barr argues that Dana, along with other female protagonists in similar representations, is

in opposition to science fiction stereotypes about vanquishing aliens, join with or are assisted by the aliens they could be expected to view as epitomizing the very opposite of humanness. These female characters, who are themselves the Other, do not oppose the Other. (1993: 99)

In order to face with the dominant historical memory, these—often feminist—female characters associate themselves with the alien other. After the incident, new modes of historical memory take place.

The novel demonstrates various ways of resistance to slavery and solidarity especially among the female slaves while also emphasizing the restrictions. Butler takes the slave community's active mechanism into consideration and tries to portray it as realistically as possible. Each African-American character—male or female—who attempts to resist the system also experiences the consequences of his/her actions. Angela Davis argues that the African-American female characters from the past are exhibited as women “*transcending, refusing, fighting back, asserting [themselves] over and against terrifying obstacles*” (1995: 214). The African-American female characters show resistance on their own ways but Dana, Carrie, Sarah, and Tess can be evaluated as survivors while Alice cannot be included in this category because she surrenders to the sexual and racial oppression. Dana—like the others—“*is not a victim*” (Shinn, 1985: 211). All pay the cost but also help the slave community to be a safer place that can be perceived with an African-American woman's presence. Despite the inner divisions among the community, it becomes a space of nourishment and consolidation for Dana.

Playing with time and places Dana is in such positions that she experiences threats that enforce her to reevaluate, reanalyze, and even rediscover the past. This reclamation of the past through different lenses enables her to rethink her role as an African-American woman, become more autonomous and have more control over her individual self and body in the present community of 1976. Throughout her time travels, her body faces violent obstacles and survives. Even though Dana cannot control what she acquires after she becomes conscious following her time travel episodes, she is able to have control over her own responses to the things she acquires. She feels the responsibility to ensure the survival of herself and the people in her surrounding communities. Marleen S. Barr argues that time travel enables the communities to reevaluate how time is comprehended. Time does not have to mean fragmented moments that are not connected or intervals that hinder, especially, women from progressing further. The protagonist, Dana, travels through time while creating enough fluidity to enable her to revisit the past, return back to the present and expect a possible alternative future. In Barr's terms: "*Speculative fiction's time travelers, like the members of the genre's immortal feminist communities, remind women that they should look to the past—and to the future—and view themselves as a part of a female continuum*" (1987: 46). If time is a series of fluid motions, then it is likely to create the possibility of mobility that includes the future as well. In order to create possible futures, of course, it is essential to be able to survive in the past first.

In Dana and Rufus' relationship, there is a power hierarchy concerning race and gender and this hierarchy complicates the process of survival in both ends. However, the novel does not express who has the upper hand regarding hierarchy. Kevin and Dana discuss who possesses more power in the episodes of time travelling. Kevin asserts: "*Your coming home has never had anything to do with him. You come home when your life is in danger*" (2003: 247). In response, Dana says: "*But how do I come home? Is the power mine, or do I tap some power in him? All this started with him, after all. I don't know whether I need him or not. And I won't know until he's not around*" (Ibid.). It is clear that Dana does not want to depend on Rufus since she has witnessed his betrayals several times in the past. One instance would be the time Dana and Kevin travel together to the past and get separated. Rufus lies about sending Dana's letters to Kevin informing him about where she is. As Rufus ages, it becomes

more difficult to control his behaviors and, thus, Dana becomes more vulnerable in terms of power relations. The final encounter of the past reveals that Dana has to test her theory of whether or not she needs Rufus for survival after Hagar's birth. Rufus tries to replace Alice's place with Dana after her death. Until Alice's departure, Rufus does not force Dana to have any physical intimacy but after he loses Alice, he grows more possessive of Dana sexually. She recalls: "*I realized how easy it would be for me to continue to be still and forgive him even this. So easy, in spite of all my talk. But it would be so hard to raise the knife, drive it into the flesh I had saved so many times. So hard to kill*" (Ibid., 260). However, this is the first instance that she is very close to being violated by Rufus. At the last encounter, Dana knows that she can either let Rufus betray her and forgive him as she has done in the past or defend herself by defying him. While defending herself, she ends up killing Rufus. At this point in the novel, Dana demonstrates a gained agency which empowers her in front of Rufus and enables her to control her destiny to some degree. Dana is no longer a "*slave to a man who had repaid me for saving his life by nearly killing me*" (Ibid., 177). While attempting to escape from Rufus, she stabs him with a knife from her knapsack and then suddenly experiences:

Something harder and stronger than Rufus's hand clamped down on my arm, squeezing it, stiffening it, pressing into it—painlessly, at first—melting into it, meshing with it as though somehow my arm were being absorbed into something. Something cold and nonliving.

Something...paint, plaster, wood—a wall. The wall of my living room. I was back at home—in my own house, in my own time. But I was still caught somehow, joined to the wall as though my arm were growing out of it—or growing into it. From the elbow to the ends of the fingers, my left arm had become part of the wall. I looked at the spot where flesh joined with plaster, stared at it uncomprehending. It was the exact spot Rufus's fingers had grasped. (Ibid., 261)

When she returns for good, she manages to stay alive but loses a part of her body in the process. Lennard Davis benefits from Jacques Lacan's notion of the fragmented body to explain the creation of bodies with disabilities. According to him, these kinds of bodies imply the actual fragmented nature of human identity. He asserts that "*wholeness is in fact a hallucination, a developmental fiction*" (1995: 130). Upon completing her quest, Dana successfully arrives home but she is a changed person both

in literal and figurative ways. Part of her stays in an in-between, liminal space that is neither in the past nor in the present. It shows that by including this final incident, Butler forms a connection between the past and the present. Dana will always be reminded of the connection through the amputated arm. Dana protects and saves Rufus throughout the novel, but when it comes to her own victimization or survival, she chooses her own agency. Dana's survival also emphasizes resistance to sexism as well as racism. Her loss of arm becomes a physical marker from the past that reminds her of not only her personal history but a communal history as an African-American. The missing arm also underscores how people cannot completely extricate themselves from the past once they begin to make a connection between the past and the present.

Alondra Nelson states that narratives of Afrofuturism reflect on "*who we've been and where we've traveled is always an integral component of who we can become*" (2000a: 35). In Hurston's proto-Afrofuturistic novel, Janie Mae recalls the connection made between the past and future through her first kiss. However, at this point of reference that Janie Mae recalls, does not include her future experiences yet. Hurston highlights a significant point in Janie Mae's life that partly justifies her future endeavors. Contrary to Butler's Afrofuturistic novel, this passage in **Their Eyes Were Watching God** does not lead to who Janie Mae becomes. It only highlights the motive for some of her subjective actions in the latter sections of the novel. Brought up with a restrictive guardian who is under the influence of her own negative past experiences, Janie Mae's sexual awakening under the pear tree forms a significant connection to her humanity. When she reflects on this experience after she retells her story to Pheoby, Janie Mae asserts that "*her conscious life had commenced at Nanny's gate*" (2000: 12). While retelling her story, the older Janie Mae realizes her eagerness for mutual love is formed from this experience.

In the Introduction of **Afrofuturism 2.0**, Afrofuturist Reynaldo Anderson argues that one of the aspects of Afrofuturism is to question the "*possibilities for black female bodies historically represented as quintessentially other, abject, and alien*" (2016: xv). The chosen novels also demonstrate the anxiety towards interracial intimacy and marriage as well as the unique alternative space it provides for the protagonists. Butler does not only focus on the enforced sexual involvement between enslaved African-American women and white men in the antebellum South, but also

demonstrates the difficulties of the novel's present-day interracial couple and the oppositions they receive from the others. The relationship between Dana and Kevin is unconventional not only because their relationship survives after everything they had been through but also their love for one another is depicted as a psychologically healthy relationship that does not generally occur in African-American literary works after the Second World War.

Kevin assumes a key role in his wife's survival even when he does not travel with her across time and space. Dana describes him as: "[Kevin] was like me—a kindred spirit crazy enough to keep on trying" (Butler, 2003: 57). Aside from trying to understand what is happening to his wife at the beginning of her travels, Kevin stands by her throughout her journeys back and forth. When they time-travel together, Kevin repeatedly tells her to leave Weylin Plantation for a safer place but Dana believes that it is the safest place for her even though Rufus tries to hinder Dana from going back to her present time. She argues that she is more likely to survive if she stays: "*I'll have a better chance of surviving if I stay here now and work on the insurance we talked about. Rufus. He'll be old enough to have some authority when I come again. Old enough to help me. I want him to have as many good memories of me as I can give him now*" (Ibid., 83). Dana sees Rufus as insurance because she believes she can change him. As time progresses, Dana realizes that it is not as simple as she believes to be.

At the beginning of the novel, Dana cannot be sure of Kevin's real thoughts and what separates him from the racist coworker, Buzz, who sees African-American women as "*objects of display*" (Collins, 1990: 168). In "Eating the Other," bell hooks argues that a considerable number of white men possess:

The desire to make contact with those bodies deemed Other, with no apparent will to dominate, assuages the guilt of the past, even takes the form of a defiant gesture where one denies accountability and historical connection. Most importantly, it establishes a contemporary narrative where the suffering imposed by structures of domination on those designated Other is deflected by an emphasis on seduction and longing where the desire is not to make the Other over in one's image but to become the Other. (1992: 25)

According to hooks, some whites express desire for African-American women not necessarily because they want to express racial domination. Desire reflected on the

African-American body may stem from both the wish to conciliate the undesirable guilt for an individual's prejudiced acts as well as the prejudiced acts of that individual's white ancestors and the individual's possible future descendants.

The couple's marriage faces opposition from their own families. Prior to their marriage, Dana visits her aunt and uncle while Kevin visits his sister to inform them about their decision to marry. Both families oppose the marriage because of different reasons. Kevin's sister, Carol, opposes due to her racial hatred as well as communal oppression. When explaining his encounter with his sister, Kevin says: "*She didn't want to meet you, wouldn't have you in her house—or me either if I married you*" (Butler, 2003: 110). By emphasizing that his sister would end her connection with Kevin if he married an African-American woman, Kevin demonstrates what is called "*rebound racism*." After his dialogue with his sister, Kevin begins to question his own self. The uneasiness he feels is reflected to Dana. Heather Dalmage comments on the distress stemming from the rebound racism. People who feel rebound racism tend to exclude themselves from being white while trying to demonstrate themselves as anti-prejudiced. She says:

The lack of available language to describe racial identities outside of the black-white dichotomy coupled with the essentialist thinking that all whites are bad leaves some interracially married whites with no option other than claiming a black identity. This is one way in which individuals contend with and get caught in essentialist language and thought. (2000: 67)

Even though Kevin is not African-American, he prefers to perceive the antebellum South from the African-American perspective. Contrary to Dana's fears, Kevin chooses to help the African-American slaves by providing shelter and guidance for their escape during the five years that he gets stuck in the past without Dana. In **Tripping on the Color Line: Black-White Multiracial Families in a Racially Divided World**, Heather Dalmage explains the term as prejudice against whites who are intimately involved with other races:

In these cases, racism is directed at the black partner but also affects the white partner [...] The effect can be financial, emotional, or physical. While the white partner is not the intended victim, she or he is in a relationship with someone who

is. For example, if the black partner does not get a fair raise, this affects the financial well-being of the white partner. If the black partner is given unfair traffic tickets or treated badly at work, this spills over into the family. The white partner with emotional, financial, and familial ties to the black partner gains a sense of the pain and disadvantage doled out to people of color in a system of whiteness. (Ibid., 63-64)

According to this definition, Kevin experiences rebound racism and, thus, puts some distance between himself and his sister in a way that does not directly put the blame on his sister as a racist individual. He, rather, blames his brother-in-law. He says: *"It's as though she was quoting someone else [...] Her husband, probably. Pompous little bastard. I used to try to like him for her sake [...] Her husband would have made a good Nazi. She used to joke about it—though never when he could hear"* (Butler, 2003: 110). In a desperate attempt, Kevin tries to shift the negative focus away from his close relative, however, Dana is more realistic on the subject and says: *"But she married him"* (Ibid.). Kevin, not being ready to accept the truth, ignores Dana's statement and instead tells a story about the time his sister had a high school friend who was African-American and overweight like his sister at the time. In **Interracial Couples, Intimacy, and Therapy: Crossing Racial Borders**, Kyle D. Killian asserts:

Ideologically speaking, 'whiteness' is frequently constructed as a deracialized and monolithic dominant other. Such an ideology tends to subjugate and make invisible both racial and ethnic difference and the ways in which racism operates *among* whites, not just between whites and persons of color. While race does serve as a potent positioning device among white persons in the majority culture, the functions and influence of race and racism go largely unnoticed by many white people because whiteness is not a self-conscious racial identity or social signifier in most white people's minds. (2013: 116)

The novel demonstrates how a white person can encounter problems when connected with an African-American person(s). The novel examines the *"sociohistorical and political meanings of crossing various borders (racial, class and gender)"* (Ibid., 177) and the personal and inherent consequences that are the result of the crossing. By telling this story, it is as if Kevin is trying to exonerate his sister and therefore himself from having prejudiced beliefs. It is easier for him to connect his sister's prejudiced beliefs with her marriage. Kevin associates his sister's behavioral change with the

change of her class. After her marriage, he says that she moves to a “*big house in La Canada,*” and begins to recite “*clichéd bigotry at [Kevin] for wanting to marry [Dana]*” (Butler, 2003: 111). Dalmage argues: “*For many whites, rebound racism makes them more aware of white privilege*” (2000: 66). In the novel, there is no verification whether or not this explains what Kevin goes through, however, it can give an alternative explanation on the anxiety that Kevin experiences due to his interracial marriage. By using the example of his sister and her African-American high school friend, he mirrors the complex behavior pattern of the whites who are not able to resolve their inner conflicts since the examples he provides about his sister’s friend and her husband are barely connected to each other. The only common ground is the aim of Kevin to exonerate his sister and, thus, himself from having racial prejudice. Kevin does not include that people who are friends or get involved with people from different racial backgrounds can also hold prejudiced beliefs.

During the period of the novel’s publishing, which coincides with the post-Civil Rights era, Americans were inclined to amplify the intimate relationships between African-American men and white women to a point that “*those dynamics [were] seen to determine those relationships*” whereas in the case of intimate relationships between white men and African-American women, “*those same dynamics have tended to be downplayed or suppressed, thereby characterizing such whites as people who are less predisposed to racist beliefs than whites who do not have black acquaintances or intimates*” (Foster, 2007: 152). According to this logic, there is a direct correlation between an individual’s sexual choice and treatment of the other race. This is problematic in terms of both races. When a white man, who is involved with an African-American woman, demonstrates hatred or violence towards other African-Americans simply because of their skin color, it is viewed as normal²⁹. On the other hand, an African-American man who is involved with a white woman is viewed as being not only violent with white men but also psychologically unwell because of his inner inferiority towards white men. So, it is possible to interpret the complexity of Kevin’s defense of his sister by linking her with an African-American

²⁹ This relates to bell hooks’ argument on such white men’s involvement in racial submission instead of racial domination.

friend she once had with not also his way of exonerating his sister but only himself as well because he is married to an African-American.

A similar approach of Carol is also demonstrated by Dana's aunt and uncle. Even though Dana is well aware that they will not take the news well, she still feels uncomfortable after she talks to them. Both of her relatives respond very differently from each other. Her aunt does not protest thinking that their children will have lighter skin and that is good enough reason for her to accept Dana's marriage to Kevin because she believes that Dana is "*a little too 'highly visible'*" (Butler, 2003: 111). Dana's aunt does not fancy white people but "*she prefers light-skinned blacks*" (Ibid.). On the other hand, the uncle takes the news personally and gets offended. Dana explains her uncle's motive as:

[H]e's my mother's oldest brother, and he was like a father to me even before my mother died because my father died when I was a baby. Now...it's as though I've rejected him. Or at least that's the way he feels. It bothered me, really. He was more hurt than mad. Honestly hurt. I had to get away from him."
"But, he knew you'd marry some day. How could a thing as natural as that be a rejection?"
"I'm marrying you...He wants me to marry someone like him—someone who looks like him. A black man." (Ibid.)

When Kevin makes it clear that he cannot relate to their reasoning, Dana just says that her relatives are old. However, she makes it apparent that her uncle's reaction bothered her. This uneasiness may stem from her evaluation of her uncle's reasons and their accuracy. By simply making a referral to their ages as the answer to their behaviors, she does not provide a detailed reply to Kevin. Dana finds the belief that separates whites and African-Americans from forming an intimate relationship as offensive because as a character, she is an individualist. The real reason for Dana's uneasiness may stem from Kevin's negligence to the functioning of racism in the United States.

Even though both Dana and Kevin are occasionally exposed to racist remarks by a coworker who is constantly drunk, their relationship is mainly accepted by the surrounding community in 1976. However, neither of the families of the couple welcomes their union. As an option, Kevin suggests Dana to "*go to Vegas and pretend [they] haven't got relatives*" (Ibid., 112). Following Dana's time travels, the statement

becomes ironical since she cannot pretend this without risking her own existence. Through the character of Kevin, the novel mirrors the deviation and the dilemmas that are produced by whites. Dana warns him about his sister who may not be reacting well to their interracial marriage, but Kevin does not agree with Dana's opinion and falsely assumes the best of her. He does not want to believe his sister's inability to resist prejudice that is infused to her by her surrounding community. His sister's rejection paves the way for his individual journey to the past when he tries to hold on to Dana while she is pulled back in time but ends up travelling back with her to the antebellum South. In order to protect Dana, Kevin needs to collaborate with the surrounding community of the South.

Besides concerns, Kevin demonstrates explicit anxiety about Dana's travels to the past. It can be inferred from the novel that Kevin's anxiety stems from his fear that Dana will no longer be able to distinguish between the two due to her ferocious experiences in the antebellum South. Somewhat similar anxiety is also present in Dana. After the trip in which Kevin accompanies her, she says: "*I didn't want him here [...] I didn't want this place to touch him except through me*" (Ibid., 59). She is afraid that his experiences in the past would "*endanger*" him in such ways that Dana "*didn't want to talk to him.*" The narrator explains:

If he was stranded here for years, some part of this place would rub off on him. No large part, I knew. But if he survived here, it would be because he managed to tolerate the life here [...] The place, the time would either kill him outright or mark him somehow. I didn't like either possibility. (Ibid., 77-78)

Dana is against all odds that may have any negative impact on their relationship. She does not know how to behave if Kevin is "*marked*" by any nineteenth century cultural values that may have changed him into a person more similar to Rufus or any other white men of the period. Her anxiety eases after Kevin and Dana reunite and she is informed that Kevin was working with the Underground Railroad in order to guide the slaves that escape to the North for their freedom.

In Hurston's and Ellison's proto-Afrofuturist novels, this issue is handled more implicitly due to the publishing dates. In Hurston, the issue is mentioned as something to be avoided almost completely since it would not form a healthy relationship. Nanny

continuously warns Janie Mae of not getting engaged in a relationship with a white man out of wedlock and rushes her to marry Logan Killicks. Nanny does not even mention the possibility of a natural reunion with a white man. She is very explicit about her warnings but Janie Mae cannot relate to her perspective since she needs to go through different stages of life before she can come to her own realizations about herself and life. Similarly, Janie Mae cannot relate to Mrs. Turner's perspective when she meets her in the Everglades. The narrator describes Mrs. Turner as:

Her nose was slightly pointed and she was proud. Her thin lips were an ever delight to her eyes. Even her buttocks in bas-relief were a source of pride. To her way of thinking all these things set her aside from Negroes. That was why she sought out Janie to friend with. Janie's coffee-and-cream complexion and her luxurious hair made Mrs. Turner forgive her for wearing overalls like the other women who worked in the fields. She didn't forgive her for marrying a man as dark as Tea Cake, but she felt that she could remedy that. That was what her brother was born for [...] Her disfavorite subject was Negroes. (Ibid., 164)

Similar to Dr. Bledsoe in **Invisible Man**, Mrs. Turner tries to create a separate racial category for people like her by distancing herself from the darker African-Americans who do not have biracial blood. Her lighter skin complexion separates Janie Mae from the other African-Americans and that is enough for Mrs. Turner to place Janie Mae in an alternative place apart from the rest of the African-Americans. She is not interested in the nature of how Janie Mae's skin is lighter than the others; she is interested only in the product of the encounter.

In **Invisible Man**, Ellison presents a more egalitarian attitude towards interracial relations. The issue is first mentioned with the poster titled "*After the Struggle: The Rainbow of America's Future*." In the poster, there is:

a group of heroic figures. An American Indian couple, representing the dispossessed past; a blond brother (in overalls) and a leading Irish sister, representing the dispossessed present; and Brother Tod Clifton and a young white couple (it had been felt unwise simply to show Clifton and the girl) surrounded by a group of children of mixed races, representing the future. (Ellison, 1995: 385)

It is explained that the white man next to the white woman is positioned in the poster as a precaution in order not to draw negative spotlights on the Brotherhood's fixated interracial policies since similar to white trustee, Mr. Norton, the Brotherhood mirrors blackness that is fixated and controlled onto the future. And while the narrator is in a trans-like mode, he talks about the African-American woman who kills the white master who is also her children's father. She also experiences the anxiety towards interracial intimacy. She feels that she has to choose between her love and freedom which the narrator replies "*freedom lies in hating*" (1995: 11).

In **Kindred**, the incidents of love and hate cause internal anxieties within the characters. Through the use of concepts that include uncanny, home and kinship, and interracial intimacy, the characters that are presented in the novels transform their illusory unities and the law of the father that challenges them especially with the help of the loss. This loss also intertwines with the fragmentation of the characters. The process of decolonization needs language to be able to gain agency and autonomy.

4.3 Away from the Symbolic Order Away from the Law of the Father

Similar to Hurston and Ellison's mentioned novels, the loss initiates Dana's submission to the law of the father but Butler's protagonist steps out of the Law as she refuses to submit and protest against the father. By fighting against her ancestor's desire and taking control of her life leads Dana to reclaim her autonomy and tell her story. The loss of a limb symbolizes her resistance to the oppressive forces and celebrates her birth as an individual. She successfully separates herself from her "*mother*" in order to survive. It shows that with the final act of autonomy, Dana demonstrates that she is not, and nor will ever be, a slave while Rufus, who is male and white, has been and will always be a slave because of the weakness he possesses due to his desire for domination.

In psychoanalytic theory, the formation of subjecthood is not solely correlated with an individual's self-realization. It is also related to submission to the law of the father which also means to submit to the authority that includes the order of the father, language, traditions, law, and etc. So, the subject is an individual that takes action on its own and becomes a part of a community of subjects that also submit to a greater

power. In Butler's **Kindred**, the protagonist's submission to the law of the father is more complicated since she ends up stabbing the white great grandfather, Rufus, who also symbolizes the order of the father and the language. At the end of the novel, Dana separates herself from the greater law. By doing so, she demonstrates resistance to the binaries such as man-woman or black-white. Her activism for greater impact is among the core aspects that separates Afrofuturistic movement from the others as well as proto-Afrofuturism. This is also what Fanon was trying to assert in his works. He deeply valued and described the colonized individuals as insurgent sources of power. His concentration on resistance of the common people even under great forms of colonial domination is valued among many racially marginalized groups. In the Introduction to **Black Skin, White Masks**, Fanon asserts:

There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell. (2008:2)

In the passages, Fanon criticizes not the black man, rather he criticizes the black man's relation to the white man. He criticizes the blacks' internalization of this relation in between for the hope to be in equal terms with the whites. He does not evaluate the zone in negative terms. On the contrary, Fanon sees the zone projecting on the subject as "*a yes that vibrates to cosmic harmonies*" (Ibid.). Dana breaks away from this desire when she replies to Rufus' assault with her knife and endangers her whole being. Thus, she dives into the zone of nonbeing and "*descent[s] into a real hell*" that blacks fail to enter.

While translating Lacan's **The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis** (1956), Anthony Wilden argues that through the act of naming, the phallic signifier brings the possibility of self-representation (1968: 186). Through the translation of the French words "*non*" and "*nom*," Lacan comments that the father's name means "*no*." Thus, language substitutes various possibilities for the loss of natural spontaneity. It is this way that leads culture to begin affecting nature itself. Lacan demonstrates that the subject is neither unified nor a whole. There is a separation between language and the subject's individuality. For instance, Dana's final

response to Rufus needs agency. By performing this agency, Dana opposes the victimization of not only herself but all other African-American women. However, she pays the consequences of her resistance with amputation. The fragmentation of her fragmented self enables her to gain agency with the help of her surrounding community and writing.

Her fragmented self becomes a model for not only her self-growth but also for the other African-American women who suffer racism along with sexism. Her journey to the past, survival, and gained agency in terms of finding voice in her writing all include communal shared history of the African-Americans. The loss of a limb symbolizes her resistance to the oppressive forces and celebrates her birth as a subject. In the article titled "Families of Orphans: Relation and Disrelation in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*," Ashraf H. A. Rushdy asserts: "*What Dana's physical losses signify is that to flesh out the past means to leave part of one's being there*" (1993: 139). Michelle E. Green interprets Dana's amputation as: "*Butler literally engraves the past onto the present by engraving Dana's body as a readable text*" (1994: 184). Even though Butler believes that she would not be able to return Dana back to the present as a whole, it is apparent that experiences as brutal and vital as the ones that Dana faces cannot be forgotten easily. Dana is aware that the past histories of African-Americans have been engraved into her body and mind by her bloodline. Colonialism's history is recorded on every African-American whether they experience slavery and racial oppression directly or not.

The novel offers a closer perspective on the lives of African-American slaves in the antebellum South and have a different perspective on the women slaves' communal acts of resistance against the racial oppression and power domination. As a young girl, Butler recalls the need to have some distance between herself and her mother's reality. In her interview with Charles H. Rowell, Butler talks about how she witnessed the unfair treatment of her mother at work. She says:

Sometimes, I was able to go inside [where her mother worked] and hear people talk about or to my mother in ways that were obviously disrespectful. As a child I did not blame them for their disgusting behavior, but I blamed my mother for taking it. I didn't really understand. (1997a: 51)

As she gets older, she realizes that it was her mother's silence that kept her fed and helped to have a roof over their heads. In the novel, Dana already possesses this awareness. When she has a discussion with Kevin, she emphasizes that once her mother's car has broken down in La Canada which is the place Kevin's sister currently lives, and people called the police: *"Three people called the police on her while she was waiting for my uncle to come and get her. Suspicious character. Five-three, she was. About a hundred pounds. Real dangerous"* (Butler, 2003: 111). Dana also reflects similar insights about Alice's treatment by Rufus as she also sees Alice as her mother/ancestor. In ***Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism***, bell hooks argues: *"[N]o other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women"* (1981: 7). By putting special emphasis on the African-American women slaves, Butler underlines their crucial roles in survival and decolonization both in physical and psychological ways. She wants to demonstrate the cost of resistance to slavery and domination.

While projecting the past, Butler is more interested in emphasizing the strength of female slave bonding in survival and decolonization of the mind. When Dana is being accused of acting like a white person, which is even worse than being white according to some African-Americans, Carrie helps Dana reach certain level of African-Americanness. According to K. Denea Stewart-Shaheed, *"in her deformity, Carrie is simultaneously marginal and possessed of agency [...] Ultimately, what Carrie brings to Dana's slave experience is an awareness of blackness"* (2009: 246). After being ostracized by the majority of the slaves, Carrie—despite her muteness—understands her feelings:

She came over to me and wiped one side of my face with her fingers—wiped hard. I drew back, and she held her fingers in front of me, showed me both sides. But for once, I didn't understand.

Frustrated, she took me by the hand and led me out to where Nigel was chopping firewood. There, before him, she repeated the face-rubbing gesture, and he nodded.

"She means it doesn't come off, Dana," he said quietly. "The black. She means the devil with people who say you're anything but what you're."

I hugged her and got away from her quickly so that she wouldn't see that I was close to tears. (Butler, 2003: 224)

By using non-verbal communication, Carrie demonstrates the significance of differentiating oneself from the norms that are related to communal memory. Evaluating Dana into an African-American woman who is simply betraying her own heritage or a victim of her race would degrade Dana's position as an African-American survivor. Carrie helps Dana recognize her complicated identity as an African-American woman who needs to make difficult choices that fall in the gray areas instead of black or white. Identity is too complex for it to be judged as either good or bad, black or white. At this point of the narrative, Dana begins to recognize herself as an alien other of African-American cultural history. Lisa Yaszek also argues that in Butler's novel, the liberating acts from the racial and sexual oppression begin with "*black women recognizing themselves as the alien other of those practices*" (2003: 1063). Carrie's reminder leads Dana to a whole other level of understanding of her surrounding communities in the past and the present with a new sense of individuality.

With her new level of understanding Dana begins to question the stereotypical roles that were given, especially, to the African-American women of the time. According to Lisa Yaszek, Butler focuses on this issue especially to "*carry out the Afro-feminist project of debunking cultural stereotypes of black women as happy mummies or long-suffering victims*" (Ibid., 1061). The most obvious example is the house mammy, Sarah. Assuming the stereotypes are true, at the beginning, Dana believes that she is loyal to the owners because, even though her children were sold off by the owners, they also provided her with allegedly an advantageous position over the other slaves. That is why Dana gets conflicted when she finds Sarah as a "*frightened powerless woman who had already lost all she could stand to lose*" (Butler, 2003: 145). Sarah believes that if she does not play the role that was determined for her, she may lose the ones she has, too. This realization enables Dana to make connections and become aware of her similarities with Sarah. She realizes that the confused feelings she possesses toward Rufus that she believed to be "*something new, something that didn't even have a name*" (Ibid., 29) at the beginning of her journey was actually similar to the relationship between all the African-Americans and whites on the Weylin plantation. Dana acknowledges that she is not alone in her experiences but rather becomes a part of the United States' social experience on the issue.

As she begins to spend more time in the antebellum South, Dana experiences the complex slave community dynamics including alienation, exclusion, internal division as well as cooperation and sisterhood. The collaboration and sisterhood were the main elements that help Dana to survive from her experience of racial oppression and gain the necessary agency for her present life. In her review of the novel, Barbara Lewis argues on the female figures:

These slave women did not wage bloodletting rebellions to express outrage at the saddling of their bodies, the theft of their pleasure, or the harnessing of their reproductive organs, but they do what they can to resist on a smaller scale, hitting slavery where it lived and lusted. (2007: 300)

Dana, too, realizes that there are more kinds of resistance than physical or verbal confrontation and the women slaves take different approaches to deal with racial oppression. For instance, the house mammy, Sarah encounters Tom Weylin's sexual abuse and as a result she loses all her children except for Carrie because of Margaret Weylin's jealousy. Dana believes that "*she has done the safe thing—had accepted a life of slavery because she was afraid. She was the kind of woman who might have been called 'mammy' in some other household*" (Butler, 2003: 145). However, underneath her submissive mammy disguise, Sarah fights for her survival in her own way despite all the odds of slavery. "*Sarah's creation and maintenance of a relatively safe space for the slave community attests to the complex strategies conceived to resist slavery*" (Woods, 2007: 92). In addition to ensuring her survival, Sarah is a substitute mother for the other African-American slave community:

In Margaret's absence, Sarah ran the house—and the house servants. She spread the work fairly and managed the house as efficiently as Margaret had, but without much of the tension and strife Margaret generated. She was resented, of course, by slaves who made every effort to avoid jobs they didn't like. But she was also obeyed. (Butler, 2003: 144)

Like a mother, she is sometimes resented by the other slaves, who are ordered to do unwanted jobs, but still respected. She is the one to transform the cookhouse into a solidary place that the other slaves can take refuge in and also to organize the division

of labor among the others in order to eliminate any possibilities of physical oppression. When Dana talks about running away from the Weylin plantation, Sarah tells her to be careful and stresses on the consequences that may occur both for Dana and the other slaves in the plantation. Through Sarah, Butler emphasizes that resistance does not always have to involve direct confrontation.

Alice is also a prominent character that fights for survival. She is one of the figures who experiences slavery most violently. Through her, Butler tries to confound the stereotypes that present African-American women slaves as promiscuous *femme fatales*. Even though born free, Alice is enslaved because she helps her slave husband run away. Captured by Rufus, she finally acknowledges that she can never be free again. From that point on the narrative, she belongs to Rufus. Alice loses the control of her body as well as her life. It is at this point of the narrative that Dana comes to a fork. She can either help Alice and danger her entire maternal familial line's existence or she can be an accessory of the corrupted system and ensure her and her relatives' existence. It is important to highlight here that even though Dana chooses to collaborate with the system for her survival, she does not force Alice into Rufus' arms. After she recovers her health, Rufus calls Alice to his bed. Alice and Dana have the following conversation:

"Would you go to him?"

"No."...

"Then I won't go either."

"What will you do?"

"I don't know. Run away?"

I got up to leave.

"Where you going?" she asked quickly.

"To stall Rufus. If I really work at it, I think I can get him to let you off tonight. That will give you a start." (Ibid., 168)

At that moment, Dana risks everything she's worked for to survive in the past and ensure her existence in the future. While healing Alice's wounds, Dana's conscious is aware of what will happen to her after she gets well: "*I had helped her to heal. Now I had to help Rufus tear her wounds open again*" (Ibid., 165). Still, she realizes that she cannot force Alice into Rufus' bed and be an accomplice to such oppression. At this point in the novel, Dana already tries to break away from the father's law by attempting

to endanger her existence and submit to Rufus' order. However, this time Alice accepts her fate and says that she cannot run away anymore. As Alice gives in to Rufus' wishes, she slowly becomes "*a quieter more subdued person*" (Ibid., 169). After she has children from Rufus, she attempts to run away one last time in order to break free from Rufus' sexual assaults. When Rufus finds out, he tells Alice that he sold Alice's children in the slave market. Upon this news, Alice commits suicide as the final act of resistance. Sarah Wood explains Alice's decision to end her life as "*her only possible path of resistance and rebellion*" (2007: 94). In the novel, Butler uses the character of Alice to demonstrate the sexual and mental abuse—often excluded from the historical documents—toward African-American women slaves.

Dana always needs to be aware of people's actions and consequences so that she can learn and have some degree of control over her environment. Her survival relates to her surrounding community's survival as well. It can be argued that time travelling acts as a catalyst that enables Dana to revisit the past to highlight the main aspects of survival from racial and gender oppression as well as problematic situations. Octavia Butler places Dana in difficult situations to unravel her inner strength and increase her tolerance to violent situations. As the protagonist experiences these situations, she becomes more aware of the places of communal cooperation and association in survival and self-awareness. She acknowledges the significance of being part of a community within survival and how this membership also helps the person to develop herself as an individual entity.

At the beginning, the reason for her trips is not clear to Dana. She feels the confusion of the reasons and the possibility of her time travel episodes. In order to gain some knowledge, she feels the need to recount the already known facts:

Fact then: Somehow, my travels crossed time as well as distance. Another fact: The boy was the focus of my travels—perhaps the cause of them. He has seen me in my living room before I was drawn to him; he couldn't have made that up. But I had seen nothing at all, felt nothing but sickness and disorientation. (Butler, 2003: 24)

By examining the facts, Dana makes a connection between her time travels and Rufus. This helps her to come to a conclusion that it is Rufus that calls and draws her back to

the antebellum South. She continues to question and examine the reasons behind her episodes across time and space. As a quest figure, it is more likely that she learns some valuable information that is beneficial for her life in the present time. She says: *“There had to be some kind of reason for the link he and I seemed to have. Not that I really thought a blood relationship could explain the way I had twice been drawn to him. It wouldn’t. But then, neither would anything else”* (Ibid., 29). She assumes that only a strong bond like a blood relation would enable this involuntary experience to take place. However, besides blood relation being the central point of focus, survival is also another main aspect that characterizes the nature of Dana and Rufus’ relationship.

Dana asserts:

What we had was something new, something that didn’t even have a name. Some matching strangeness in us that may or may not have come from our being related. Still, now I had a special reason for being glad I had been able to save him. After all...after all, what would have happened to me, to my mother’s family, if I hadn’t saved him? (Ibid.)

It does not take long for Dana to realize the crucial place of Rufus within her own familial line. Rufus’ survival means the survival of Dana’s entire side of mother’s lineage as well as her own. The necessity of survival brings Dana and Rufus in a mutual relationship in which both need to depend on each other and this relationship complicates as the narrative progresses. At the beginning, Dana believes that she possesses the power to change Rufus and, therefore, the past. However, she soon realizes that she actually lacks that kind of power and will not be able to change Rufus or the person he will grow to be. Following this realization, the main purpose becomes not to change him or the past for better but only ensure Rufus’ survival until Dana’s ancestor and Rufus’ daughter, Hagar, is born. By allowing her protagonist to return back to the past, Butler provides an opportunity for Dana to experience unexpected circumstances that can help her grow emotionally into maturity. This way, Dana can focus on the issues of the past and their correlation with the present conditions. She acknowledges that the forces that oppress her and her origins in the past continue to be oppressive in the present as well. Through Dana’s time travels, the novel shows the

anxiety caused by the oppressive structures and how they operate in the past as well as the present.

In his “Seminar on Anxiety,” Lacan asserts that anxiety is the only affection that is not deceptive. He believes that anxiety occurs when an object is placed as “*objet petit a*” which Lacan describes it as the remaining that occurs after the introduction of the Symbolic in the Real. After Alice’s death and Rufus’ offer of keeping Dana as a lover in return to set free and accept Alice’s (and his) children, Dana cannot agree to one more of Rufus’ antagonizing, oppressive acts. She says: “*I could accept him as my ancestor, my younger brother, my friend, but not as my master, and not as my lover*” (Ibid., 260). Seeing oneself in the mirror is usually an alleviating act but there may be some occasions when the specular image seems odd to the subject. This is a case that Lacan’s concept of anxiety can be connected to Freud’s uncanny. In the novel, the anxiety caused by the time travelling and eventually the loss of Dana’s arm can be viewed in this light that Lacan asserts: “*[O]ne loses oneself a little [...] [as] part of the function of the labyrinth that must be brought to life*” (2018: 41). The loss of a limb as well as her change of view in terms of African-American history and reality enable her to survive. This also acts as a metaphor for the losses that she endures in the past and an indicator of the fragmented nature of Dana after her journey. Similar to Janie Mae in Hurston’s novel, Dana, too, experiences a healthy fragmentation within her identity. In a way, Dana is mutilated. When Butler is asked about why she chose to end Dana’s journey the way she does in an interview, she replies: “*I couldn’t really let her come all the way back. I couldn’t let her return to what she was, I couldn’t let her come back whole and that, I think, really symbolizes her not coming back whole. Antebellum slavery didn’t leave people quite whole*” (Kenan, 1991: 498). When she and Rufus cannot agree on his intentions, Dana is somewhat forced to respond violently to the person who assaults her. Dana’s realization of her alien identity eventually leads to her liberation.

In **The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis**, Lacan comments on the identity formation which includes construction of images and effects, such as psychological representations, that have been loaded from the beginning of the subject’s life and processing of these inputs in relation with Desire and Law. The inputs are developed in connection with “*the Desire for recognition and the later*

social requirements for submission to an arbitrary Law” (Ragland-Sullivan, 1982: 7). Dana’s involuntary journey begins with more questions than answers. However, as she begins to speculate and question, she also begins to navigate and possess a degree of control over the situation. As she begins to learn to survive in the past, writing becomes a compass to her journey. The journal that Dana keeps in the antebellum South enables her to collect her thoughts and experiences of the past. This written record becomes the necessary inspiration for the subject of her writing. Dana describes her life before Kevin as a struggling writer trying to get her writing published while working in a labor agency. Writing is an important tool for Dana to cope with the aspects of realities of the past and present. Towards the end, Dana expresses a desire to turn her journal writing into a story to share with her readers. She asserts: “*Actually, I was looking over some journal pages I had managed to bring home in my bag, wondering whether I could weave them into a story*” (Butler, 2003: 244). This desire of telling one’s own story recalls Zora N. Hurston and Ralph Ellison’s novels. The need to write or talk about one’s survival through difficult and, sometimes, violent experiences in order to address to a larger audience is understandable since through writing, Dana and the unnamed narrator achieve outlets where they can express the created emotions of the past experiences while Janie Mae achieves it through passing on her story verbally.

In ***Their Eyes Were Watching God***, Zora N. Hurston uses dialect as an element of the dialogue and narrative in the novel. This transition to the dialect helps to expand the presence of dialect in African-American literature. The addition of the folklore with the realities of African-American life enables Hurston to engage in “*mythic and historical pasts in order to describe livable futures*” (Kilgore, 2008: 120) which draws parallelism with Afrofuturist thought that prioritizes the exploration of African descendants’ cultural memories that are based in the thoughts of tomorrow. Hurston channels a comprehensive vernacular by merging folk aspects including the dozens, tall-tales, haranguing, and preaching with the description of the Southern rural African-American community. Janie Mae’s story and experiences portray all kinds of the Southern African-American aesthetics. Madhu Dubey asserts that “*the circulation of meanings can be contained within a clearly bounded cultural locale*” (2003: 177) can also be applied to Hurston’s novel since it allows to recover the narration of the African-American history and thus, provides an aspect for Afrofuturistic

interpretation. The vernacular in storytelling includes a dialect that not only appeals to oral but also to the visual and aural senses as well. Thus, the storytelling sessions are channels that involve repetition, memory, and expansion of African-American native history. Similar to Afrofuturist texts, the novel's use of folklore "*encourages readers to reconsider black mythologies of the past generated by a white supremacist culture that tells blacks who they are*" (Lavender, 2016: 222). According to Deborah Clarke, Hurston's method produces awareness for a voice that honors African-American visibility (2001: 600). By reconsidering and reevaluating the past, the new level of awareness offers a perspective to project alternative futures.

On the other hand, Ellison is considered to be a defender of "*chronopolitical interventions*" which is "*understanding and intervening in the production and distribution*" of the historical dimensions by the African descended artists (Eshun, 2003: 292, 192). Afrofuturists use such interventions for building political activism and the future's language in describing the subjectivity of Americans and African-Americans. Similar to Lacan, **Invisible Man** demonstrates that the development of language and discourse are not natural, but learned. It is like a machine system that needs to be imitated. In the novel, the unnamed narrator's oratory transformation does not only stay with his witnessing "*the boomerang*" (Ellison, 1995: 6) of history, either. He must progress and take control over the African-Americans' pasts and discard the ones that fixated on the future based on the deletion of African-American subjectivity. Brother Tarp, who becomes sort of a representative for Afrofuturism, is the one who enlightens the narrator. Tarp is imprisoned because he refuses to give his possessions to the whites and succeeds at escaping to the north after nineteen years. He tells the narrator: "*I said no to a man who wanted to take something from me; that's what it cost me for saying no and even now the debt ain't fully paid and will never be paid in their terms [...] I said hell no! And I kept saying no until I broke the chain and left*" (Ibid., 387). This quotation signifies one man's power to change the future through language. He is punished because he refused to agree his pre-determined future. Similar to the unnamed narrator, he, too, joins the Brotherhood hoping the organization can guide him to contribute to a better future, however, both end up following a false hope.

In contrast to Janie Mae and the unnamed narrator, Dana's main difficulty is the lack of narratives related to her own situation in the antebellum South. After returning back to the present, she is determined to read anything she can find that is "even distantly related to" slavery (Butler, 2003: 116). While talking about **Gone With the Wind**, Dana says "*its version of happy darkies in tender loving bondage were more than I could stand*" (Ibid.). Reading one of Kevin's books about the World War II and testimonials from the survivors of Nazi concentration camps, Dana realizes that other people have also experienced similar historical memory. She says: "[T]he Germans had been trying to do in only a few years what the Americans had worked at for nearly two hundred" (Ibid.). By starting to feel like the other, she is able to make connection with the Holocaust victims and survivors as they are, too, alien to the incidents that they had to experience. This enables Dana to have a different perspective in understanding African-American cultural history. By having the upper hand in power relations, dominant mode of memory in the United States can easily rewrite historical truths—and even present—the way they desire.

The novel stresses on the memory loss and how it can be an obstacle to fight the silenced voices. In "In Search of My Mothers' Gardens," the author Alice Walker recalls her mother's stories and writes:

Only recently did I fully realize this: that through the years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories—like her life—must be recorded. (1994: 407)

The African-American stories are loaded with the significance of the need to be remembered and transferred into the future. So the purpose here does not only include the survival of the stories, but also involves the significance of using language through storytelling and writing. The use of words is the solution to the silencing of the other, especially for the African-American writers. In "The Highs and Lows of Black Feminist Criticism," Barbara Christian emphasizes: "*We write to those who write, read, speak, may write, and we try to hear the voiceless*" (2007: 53). Similar to Christian's argument, Butler's protagonist reclaims her voice and self-identity with the

time travelling episodes which enable Dana to question the already established notions of history while putting her thoughts into her writing.

Butler also creates an urgency to recall by placing Dana in involuntary time travel episodes to the past to reveal the reality of her mother's lineal line's history. Prior to the time travelling episodes, Dana is demonstrated as a struggling writer who does not possess any connection with her African-American cultural history. Rufus' call of Dana to the past enables her to confront the realities of the past which leads to the cure of her memory loss. When she begins to start making connections for her time travelling reasons, she remembers the old Bible that her family owns for many generations and says that maybe Rufus was her "*several times great grandfather, but still vaguely alive in the memory of [her] family because his daughter had bought a large Bible in an ornately carved, wooden chest and had begun keeping family records in it*" (Butler, 2003: 28). As a religious/spiritual text, the Bible does not only include Dana's ancestral records, but also demonstrates the importance of these records which were seen as significant records to be passed on to the next generations for recollection of both personal and collective history. By enabling her protagonist to visit across time and space, Butler tries to connect the past, reclamation, survival, and writing in her literature.

Dana realizes that Rufus' main importance in her life comes from the fact that Rufus is the father of Hagar Weylin Blake who starts Dana's mother's lineage. In order for Dana and her ancestors to exist, Hagar needs to be born as the daughter of Rufus and Alice. Until her time travels, Dana does not possess any knowledge about Hagar besides her name in the Bible: "*Hagar Weylin Blake had died in 1880, long before the time of any member of my family that I had known. No doubt most information about her life had died with her. At least it had died before it filtered down to me. There was only the Bible left*" (Ibid., 28). When describing, Dana says that all the knowledge on Hagar "*died with her*" except for the Bible. Through time travelling, Dana is able to fill in the gaps within her ancestor's history, experience violence and challenges that enable her to grow individually. The Bible enables Dana to have awareness of her family with limited access and information. The time travels help Dana realize that she can find out more about Hagar and other distant relatives that may or may not have been recorded in the Bible. This realization also brings along the idea that while Dana

is travelling involuntarily, it is for the best if she can make the most of her travels. So, she prepares her bag and plans to teach the slave children how to read and write which can help them obtain their freedom (Ibid., 98). After becoming familiar with her conditions, she resorts to adapting literacy since it can help to build an identity which can then lead to the slaves' freedom, similar to the narrative in Frederick Douglass. However, while trying to teach, she gets caught and her plan becomes unsuccessful. This helps Dana to understand that the path to survival includes communal cooperation.

While trying to survive, Dana also tries to recollect her family's history, grows psychologically and physically, and learns to celebrate African-American individuality and communality. The concept of survival, which includes writing and communal collaboration, connects the past and the present of Dana's existence. In order to implement both aspects of survival, Octavia Butler uses the time travel and memory loss in the novel. Rather than oral traditions, writing enables the writer to pour the inner thoughts of the self that include stories and histories of the past. By putting down on paper, the future generations can read or actively question the writing. Butler not only writes her narrative but also includes distinct aspects to have the readers criticize and question some of the established or forgotten notions about the societies of the past and the present.

Storytelling in Hurston has a similar yet a distinct purpose in **Their Eyes Were Watching God**. It is portrayed as a way of exposing the mind and defining life for African-Americans in various communities. Janie Mae, however, is deprived of the right to expose her mind in addition to being restricted from listening to other people's performances by her husband. She also wants that freedom of voice and the confidence of autonomy but before she can acquire that, she acquires what she is allowed. Notwithstanding, Janie Mae learns to use telepathic communication. She first encounters through the people on the porch then later through Joe who did not stammer while "*cuffin' folks around in their minds*" to maintain his position among the community (Hurston, 2000: 102). When she is called "*uh ole hen*" by Joe meaning that she is too old for the croquet grounds, she does not get offended because "*for the first time she could see a man's head naked of its skull. Saw the cunning thoughts race in and out through the caves and promontories of his mind*" (Ibid., 92). Through the use

of telepathy, Janie Mae realizes Joe's mental oppression over her and the town. This element that is visible in science-fiction leads Janie Mae to become stronger and grow self-independence. Right before Joe's death, she says: "*[Y]ou wasn't satisfied wid me de way Ah was. Naw! Maw own mind had tuh be squeezed and crowded out tuh make room for yours in me*" (Ibid., 102). With telepathy, Janie Mae declares her independence and freedom while removing the negative effects Joe has left on her soul and body. Her main achievement is to learn how to separate her body from her mind in order to cope with the disillusionments of life. After Joe's death, she sends "*her face to Joe's funeral, and herself went rollicking with the spring time across the world*" (Ibid., 106). In order not to lose her respectability among the community, she acts the way that is expected from her while her mental mood is completely different. Hurston emphasizes on the dynamics of social hierarchies as well as established norms of race and gender. Even though Janie Mae comes to a realization and frees herself, she still needs to balance the established notions and power dynamics among the current community.

In Hurston's novel, the purpose of folklore includes the documentation and preservation of the African-American history. It also highlights its value as a fundamental entity for projection of thoughts and ideas onto the future. The most vivid examples are set in Joe's porch where people play the dozens. Trudier Harris asserts that "*[p]orch traditions created a similarity of experience in telling and hearing that became a part of the oral tradition, indeed almost a folk form itself*" (1996: xiii). Good talkers can use words to form things into existence. Hurston engages in a formation to alter possible futures by challenging the oppressive society through storytelling's reflection of parallel worlds especially in the porch conversations. The narrator asserts: "*When the people sat around on the porch and passed around the pictures of their thoughts for the others to look at and see, it was nice. The fact that the thought pictures were always crayon enlargements of life made it even nicer to listen to*" (Hurston, 2000: 60). Hurston emphasizes on a communication type without the use of language. The use of storytelling as a way of handling segregation comes to a point of telepathy for the African-Americans described in the novel. The representation of "*thought pictures*" as "*crayon enlargements of life*" indicates a direct telepathic communication where minds of the African-Americans are connected and synchronized to one another.

This defined shared perspective also leads to the formation of networked consciousness. A prominent example presents itself in the exaggerated conversations of Matt Bonner's mule since "*everybody indulged in mule talk*" to such a degree that the animal "*was next to the Mayor in prominence, and made better talking*" (Ibid., 63). The mule "*draws attention to its value as an abundant source of self-renewal and creative expression*" (Joseph, 2002: 469). Hurston's use of storytelling acts as a time travel device that helps the writer to portray the past and the present as well as the consequences of the actions taking place in the past and also the present time.

The way Butler presents her novel helps to question the behaviors and the reasons of the characters as well as question their own established ethics and notions. This deliberate construction of the structure aims for active engagement in the Afrofuturistic narrative and for the critical questioning of the social frame they have experienced and continue to experience in the present. While she is choosing a protagonist for her novel to function as a guide to a journey to the past, she chooses a woman character to question the notions on gender, race, and power relations. bell hooks also comments on the particular experience the African-American women have while reclaiming their voice during a time when speaking out would not be approved even by the close families out of fear. She gives an example from her own life:

While punishing me, my parents often spoke about the necessity of breaking my spirit. Now when I ponder the silences, the voices that are not heard, the voices of those wounded and/or oppressed individuals who do not speak or write, I contemplate the acts of persecution, torture—the terrorism that breaks spirits, that makes creativity impossible. I write these words to bear witness to the primacy of resistance struggle in any situation of domination (even within family life); to the strength and power that emerges from sustained resistance and the profound conviction that these forces can be healing, can protect us from dehumanization and despair. (1992: 98-99)

She asserts writing as an important tool for resistance against all kinds of abuse/oppression. The use of writing for this purpose reveals its communal and collective aspects for especially African-American women intellectuals. In the novel, Butler does not aim to demonstrate that there have not been any racial, social or cultural developments. Rather, she is trying to emphasize the need to become aware of

the social injustice, unfairness and racial issues that still continue in the present time of the twenty-first century.

Through the use of actual time travelling, Butler aims to challenge the already established assumptions on gender roles and racial issues in the contemporary American society. By making connections between the past and present conditions, especially, of the African-Americans, Butler demonstrates how power domination including class, gender, and racial structures still continue under different forms that are not thoroughly questioned or examined in contemporary societies. Butler creates a narrative that connects fantasy, speculative fiction, Afrofuturism to African-American women's desire for visibility and voice. The novel appeals to a broader audience because of its bridging the genres and this leads to more visibility for African-American women and their writers in literature. Gaining visibility is significant while decolonizing oneself or one's community. It helps to assert agency and individuality/commonality against the oppressive forces.

Dana's written journal is her way of preserving her ideas and experiences for a broader audience. Since novel reveals in the beginning that she is a struggling writer before she meets Kevin, this may be the encouragement she needs to produce something that can be actually published and help her writing career. It also helps her to cope with her circumstances both in the past and the present better. Near the end, Dana says: *"Actually, I was looking over some journal pages I had managed to bring home in my bag, wondering whether I could weave them into a story"* (Butler, 2003: 244). Dana begins to see the benefits of the journals as well as the time travels in her contemporary life. She wants to share her side of the African-American cultural history with the others. Besides experiencing the traumatic conditions of the past, one needs to record it and allow the language to reach the others in order to achieve the success of the survival and also help others in their survival process.

Writing involves critical thinking, evaluation, and digestion of the lived experiences that Dana faces in the past. Following Alice's funeral, Dana asserts: *"Sometimes I wrote things because I couldn't say them, couldn't sort out my feelings about them, couldn't keep them bottled up inside me. It was a kind of writing I always destroyed afterward"* (Ibid., 252). This kind of writing is not meant to reach a larger audience but rather it is produced in order to process grief properly. Whether it is

addressed to a larger audience or helps to overcome difficulties in personal lives, writing serves as a means to help Dana survive emotionally when she encounters traumatic or violent experiences.

Dana's emotional growth is one of the most significant components of her survival in the past and writing about it acts as a catalysis that connects Dana's complicated process of resistance within the oppressive structures of the antebellum South. She is in danger because of her race as well as gender. For example, Dana stabs Rufus out of self-defense while struggling for her life. This defensive act demonstrates Dana's newly gained sense of individuality which enables her to gain power over Rufus and have control over her faith. She comes to a realization that with this final act she is no longer the "*slave to a man who had repaid me for saving his life by nearly killing me*" (Ibid., 177). Right after, she stabs Rufus, she loses her consciousness:

Something harder and stronger than Rufus's hand clamped down on my arm, squeezing it, stiffening it, pressing into it—painlessly, at first—melting into it, meshing with it as though somehow my arm were being absorbed into something. Something cold and nonliving.

Something [...] paint, plaster, wood—a wall. The wall of my living room. I was back at home—in my own house, in my own time. But I was still caught somehow, joined to the wall as though my arm were growing out of it—or growing into it. From the elbow to the ends of the fingers, my left arm had become part of the wall. I looked at the spot where flesh joined with plaster, stared at it uncomprehending. It was the exact spot Rufus's fingers had grasped. (Ibid., 261)

She finally returns to her own time for good but she bears the permanent marker of the past with her. To arrive home, she needs to lose a limb. In **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and **Kindred**, both women finally make it home with their new sense of healthy fragmented identities but they both need to lose something until they can make it home at the end. Both protagonists arrive at their homes after they complete their quests and change completely through the journey. While Janie Mae finds solitude at the end, Dana somehow still feels caught in the middle mainly because of her physical reminder which Butler intentionally left on her in order not to break the connection between her ancestral past and contemporary present. Peter G. Stillman argues that in Butler's imagined worlds

people are so involved in hierarchy and domination, so convinced of their own tightness, so scared, or so committed to maintaining their own arbitrary power that it can be disheartening to attempt to hope, think, and act in Utopian, promising, or novel ways. (2003: 16)

It demonstrates that the author uses Lillian S. Robinson's strategy for survival: "*Of course you use the Master's tools if those are the only ones you can lay your hands on*" (1987: 35). Dana informs her husband that: "*If I have to seem to be property, if I have to accept limits on my freedom for Rufus's sake, then he also has to accept limits [...] He has to leave me enough control of my own life to make living look better to me than killing and dying*" (Butler, 2003: 246). In colonialism, the colonizers claim the ownership of the Other, but the Other also possesses a voice and its discourse challenges colonialism. Even though it diminishes any possibilities of having a future for the property, the colonized always has an option of death. This dilemma is more complex to Butler. In an interview with Joan Fry, she says: "*I don't think that black people have made peace with ourselves, and I don't think white America has made any kind of peace with us [...] I don't think we really know how to make peace at this point*" (1997: 65).

The end represents Dana's embodiment of the emergence of the past African-American history with the present. Even though Rufus is killed by Dana before he is able to rape her, in a way he becomes successful when he does not let go of her arm which results in Dana losing her arm to the past. Dana describes her feelings as

Something harder and stronger than Rufus's hand clamped down on my arm, squeezing it, stiffening it, pressing into it [...] melting into it, meshing with it as though somehow my arm were being absorbed into something [...] cold and nonliving. (Butler, 2003: 260-261)

She clearly describes the past haunting her to the present. In her book **Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination**, Avery Gordon states:

The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes

itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition. (2008: 8)

Dana needs to see the missing in presence in order to come to terms with her imagination and understand the reality of her experience in the antebellum South and in her present time. This fragmented body provides the most concrete evidence for her experience. Like a ghost, she can feel but cannot see the missing limb similar to her time travels to the past. Even with the solid example of the missing arm, the legal documents and the old newspaper articles that leave a lot of gaps after the final fire at the Weylin plantation, Dana and Kevin possess some degree of knowledge about the past but cannot fully comprehend it, either. At the end of the prologue, Kevin is not able to explain Dana's accident of amputation to the cops because he still does not know how it occurred. In return, Dana replies: "*Neither do I*" (Butler, 2003: 11). The novel ends with a question of the written history of African-Americans. Her prior knowledge about slavery and, even, her literacy are not able to help Dana in the antebellum South. In a way, Octavia Butler "*reminds us that there is more to truth and sanity than what survives in the official historical record*" (Vint, 2007: 251).

Even though many parts of Dana's story seems implausible, it is able to transfer the necessity of her time travelling episodes, the trauma these travels have caused in Dana and the healthy fragmentation the experience has left on her identity. As she is somewhat haunted by the past, "*[b]eing haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition*" (Gordon, 2008: 8). This "*transformative recognition*" enables Dana to decolonize her mind and recover from her amputated kinship. It is evident that before her time travels begin, Dana cannot get over "*the past in the politics of her relationship with Kevin, in her family's bible and the unfamiliar names of her ancestors, and the existing racism in a present-day 1976 society comfortable with the white liberal fantasy of a post-racial society*" (Rehak, 2015: 7). The narrative enables Dana to have the closest experience of slavery and the past African-American cultural history.

At the end of the novel, Dana and Kevin talk about the need to return to Maryland after all of the events that took place in the narrative:

I touched the scar Tom Weylin's boot had left on my face, touched my empty left sleeve. "I know," I repeated. "Why did I even want to come here. You'd think I would have had enough of the past."

"You probably needed to come for the same reason I did." He shrugged. "To try to understand. To touch solid evidence that those people existed. To reassure yourself that you're sane." (Butler, 2003: 264)

Kevin tries to assure Dana that the memory of the individuals, places, spaces, and events represents more than just connections to the past. They form complex bonds with the individual's identity and mind. Every aspect of the present is connected to the past. Kevin needs confirmation of inextricability of the past and present even through the nonlinear time and space.

In the Epilogue, they find out that the plantation has been destroyed during the fire that she had initiated while wrestling with Rufus. In the present day south, she and Kevin find proof in old newspaper archives. The articles include photos as well as advertisements of the slaves in the Weylin plantation. Younger Dana, before the trips in time and space, would hopelessly accept the new gained information about the people in the plantation without providing any critical thought. The older narrator, however, feels the sorrow of the lost ones as well as hope for the ones that are not mentioned specifically:

All three of [their] sons were listed [in the auction advertisements], but Nigel and Carrie were not. Sarah was listed, but Joe and Hagar [Alice's children and Dana's ancestors] were not [...] I thought about that, and put together as many pieces as I could [...] [Rufus's mother] might have taken both children. Perhaps with Alice dead she had accepted them. They were her grandchildren, after all, the son and daughter of her only child. She might have cared for them. She might have held them as slaves. But even if she had, Hagar, at least, lived long enough for the fourteenth Amendment to free her. (Ibid., 263)

This is a significant passage in terms of demonstrating Dana's creation of an alternative family history from the pieces of information she has along with her present

knowledge including official historical facts from the books she has read, commercial memory sources including television series, movies, and advertisements as well as her social experiences among various communities. She realizes that reaching a complete narrative of the facts is not possible but her personal experiences enable her to draw important conclusions and become a significant source of individual and communal memory. After her experiences, Dana becomes a source to generate her individual African-American women's experience in the United States.

From the narrative, it is suggested that Dana's memories and knowledge of the past is far off from the reality that she had witnessed in the alternative spaces that she has visited in her time travel episodes to the past. Once she processes her experiences, her new found knowledge destabilizes her present life. It is these exact aspects from the past that jeopardized her physical survival between the time travel episodes. Since Dana lacks the reality of the past, the narrative is built on her recollection of her actual heritage and the involved complications. At the end, she realizes that it is no use of "*letting yourself pull away from [the past]*" or to just "*let go of it*" (Ibid., 17), as it was advised to Dana by Kevin. Similar to Afrofuturistic thinking, Butler asserts that erasure of the past cannot lead to the composition of a better future. The novel suggests that it is important to have a critical outlook of the past and the memories in order to possess control of the body and mind in any given time and space. While in the process of becoming a subject, Dana becomes more fragmented in terms of soul and body. She realizes the importance of language and the surrounding community in survival. She even passes beyond the Law of the father using the language and breaks free from the colonizing binaries.

CONCLUSION

This study on the development of Afrofuturism's decolonizing aspect through the examination of proto-Afrofuturistic novels of Zora N. Hurston's **Their Eyes Were Watching God** and Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** as well as the Afrofuturistic novel of Octavia Butler's **Kindred** focus particularly on the use of alternative spaces and the body and language ability of the protagonists to suggest that the core elements of Afrofuturism includes colonial roots, healthy fragmentation of the self and moving beyond the law of the greater authority. Initially, the dissertation has sought to clarify the aspects of Afrofuturism and proto-Afrofuturism. Afterwards, the focus has been shifted to the use and purpose of alternative spaces and how they are evaluated within the selected novels. The dissertation has also focused on the development of body and language abilities of the protagonists and their correlation on the decolonization of the self.

The analysis of alternative space use in all three novels

has shown that while enabling the protagonists to have an autonomous understanding of the self as well as the surrounding communities, the created literal and figurative spaces do not always provide positive experience. This realistic aspect of the spaces enables protagonists to eventually have a healthy fragmentation. The fragmentation is described in rather psychological terms in the proto-Afrofuturistic novels. And it evolves into literal fragmentation in the Afrofuturistic novel of Butler. With the inclusion of alternative spaces that help protagonists to express themselves, the analysis has focused on the decolonization of protagonist's mental and physical beings as African-American individuals, especially the women. The use of Soja's spaces that are more related to the social construct of society and Bhabha's space of enunciation for the individualistic aspect of the protagonists' characters, the study has focused on how spaces affect the perspective of the African-American individuals of not only themselves and their own race but of the white domination and race as well.

The analysis has also highlighted the use of technology in the novels. In proto-Afrofuturistic novels, technology is still not fully compatible with the African-Americans. The digital divide is stressed and the only way to overcome the difficulties

and operate with technology with success is through the isolation from the surrounding communities. In Afrofuturism, on the other hand, African-Americans succeed at avoiding the digital divide and can work with technology for their own needs and improvements. Even though it was not so from the beginning, technology has become the strongest tool for Afrofuturists to create alternative pasts, presents and futures for the African-Americans. Contrary to the generalized assumption that was not feasible until the 1950s-60s, Afrofuturists, such as Butler, highlight the inevitability of technology in today's and tomorrow's world and how it is a necessity for African-Americans to cope with the technological developments in order to decolonize themselves from the dominant white culture.

This study has asserted that Hurston's and Ellison's proto-Afrofuturistic novels lack the appropriate use of technology. The analysis has addressed how Hurston favors conceivableness over technological progress within her portrayal of African-American spaces among white dominated world. In Hurston's novel, the plot includes very little technological input in the African-American settlements in the South of the US in 1920-30s. Instead, the novel includes the use of storytelling and imagination to further advance the African-American circumstances. At one point in the narrative, Janie Mae becomes a master in telepathic communication. This skill allows her to see the thoughts of the others including her husband Joe. She uses her newly acquired sensibility to reveal her husband's mental oppression on her and the surrounding community that includes the town's people. The realization enables her to stray away from the psychological effects of Joe's colonization of her mind. Once she becomes aware of how her husband's thoughts really operate, she learns not to take an offensive stance. Through the use of folklore and storytelling in Eatonville and the Everglades, Hurston presents a vernacular technology that defines the traditional experience of African-Americans as part of a networked consciousness which can be associated with the concepts of W.E.B. DuBois' nation within a nation and Frantz Fanon's double-voicedness.

Ellison's novel, on the other hand, includes many technological details which the unnamed narrator has failed to operate with. The technology seems to be not compatible with the African-Americans in the white dominated society in the 1950s. The unnamed narrator gains the autonomy and the skills to use technology to his own

benefit only after his isolation from society. Isolation from society in an alternative space gives the narrator a sense of liberty and strength to overcome the difficulties of outside. Living underground presents him with endless possibilities that would be hard to implement in reality such as, wiring the entire ceiling, the walls, and, possibly, the entire floor.

Living underground helps him gain a new perspective that enables him to realize various aspects of the Afrodiasporic existence and the complicated connections of strings that are closely associated with the American reality. The underground place acts as if it is a spaceship or a time travel booth that enables him to live outside of the ordinary reality. Precisely what Kodwo Eshun calls ideal subject for Afrofuturism, the unnamed narrator starts to get exposure to various forms of consciousness that is thought to be the beginning towards the formation of an improved, equalitarian, and multiracial future.

The analysis has highlighted the aspects that differentiate between the proto-Afrofuturistic and Afrofuturistic works. In **Kindred**, Butler's using time travel and mixing genres enable her to create a narrative that can move across time and space while exceeding the limitations of the genres. The novel includes a detailed overview of the past, the twentieth century's present and a brief view of possible futures. The advantage of writing in Afrofuturism that includes other genres presents itself as having a less restricted area to construct a narrative on. By positioning an African-American woman protagonist as the questing figure who travels across time and space to cure the cultural memory loss on African-American heritage, Butler creates a space in the narrative that she can openly discuss and reevaluate the racial and sexual oppression along with domination in American societies in various times and spaces. She weaves the past and present with slave and historical narratives along with fantasy, speculative fiction, and science fiction aspects of Afrofuturism. Creating a narrative that connects various genres together allows a platform for a broader debate on the issues raised by the author.

Moving beyond the restrictions of the genres also enables Butler's protagonist to reach beyond the Law of the father. One of the most important moments in the novel occurs when Dana refuses to obey the expected role of the African-American woman and denies the law of the father/great grandfather. By moving beyond the law, Janie

Mae reaches to a new level where she can create alternative histories as well as futures. In the proto-Afrofuturistic novels, the protagonists interchangeably move between the Imaginary and the Symbolic but do not attempt to pass beyond the Law. Alienation and loss are the two of the most significant concepts that initiate the growth of the protagonists among the orders. The study has also analyzed these concepts in the light of Frantz Fanon's double-voicedness in terms of decolonization of the self.

The losses in the novels eventually lead to the revelation of the protagonists' language abilities. The use of words is the solution to the silencing of the other, especially for the African-Americans. In three novels, the protagonists either narrate their stories to other characters in the novel or write their experience down. All writers in the study have shown that language cannot be a fixed entity. In their novels, Hurston, Ellison, and Butler demonstrate the valuable multiplicity of language and how it is not easy to obtain its use in communicating with the others. The analysis has attempted to discover how the protagonists in the novels have difficulty with language due to their inadequate awareness and colonized mindsets. Even though the protagonists in the novels are portrayed in distinct social surroundings and geographical spaces from one another, they all feel alienated due to their rhetorical illiteracy. In all the novels, the protagonists eventually grow out of their understanding of only literal meanings of language and become articulate masters of their literacy. Along with the newly acquired sense of autonomy, the protagonists decolonize their mind and body to create alternative forms of histories and futures.

As the disillusionment from the experiences of loss occur, the protagonists become better at using their oratory skills to express their thoughts on themselves as well as on others. While in Hurston, the thoughts include only the African-American aspects, in Ellison, the aspect of how African-Americans view the whites as well as themselves are stressed upon. As Fanon asserts different perspectives on how whites and African-Americans view one another in **Black Skin, White Masks**, Ellison, too, presents various perspectives. He is among the pioneers who present the African-American opinion on whites during the 1950s. As an Afrofuturist, Butler not only provides different perspectives but also has the protagonist act upon her own perspectives on the whites as well as the slave community of the antebellum South.

The analysis has also focused on the alienation and the double consciousness of the body. The African-American body including various surrounding communities and interracial relations has been highlighted. While the alienation in the proto-Afrofuturistic novels mainly stems from the lack of recognition of the self, in Butler's novel, the alienation of the characters is associated with fragmentation and displacement. In Hurston and Ellison, fragmentation occurs through psychological terms whereas in Butler, there is a literal fragmented body which leads to the protagonist's displacement. This displacement enables Dana to decolonize herself both physically and mentally. In all three novels, the effects of the surrounding communities in this decolonization process are stressed thoroughly. The analysis has stressed upon mainly the negative impacts of the surrounding communities in the proto-Afrofuturistic novels (with the exception of the Everglades in **Their Eyes Were Watching God**). The Everglades in Hurston and the slave community in Weylin plantation in Butler both help the protagonists find solace and comfort with their own selves. These surrounding communities empower the women protagonists' assertion of their own identities and become more autonomous.

In the Everglades, the focus of the narration is on the whole of the community which consists of migrant workers. In the slave community of the antebellum South, however, Butler focuses specifically on individual slaves. She focuses on how each of the slaves affects the protagonist's growth closely. While Lacan's orders—mainly the mirror stage in the Imaginary and fragmentation in the Symbolic orders—has helped with the analysis of ego formation, Fanon's emphasis on the communal actions towards decolonization has facilitated to view the greater aspect of the novels in terms of African-American communities. Through Lacan and Fanon, the complex modes of thinking of African-Americans were accentuated contrary to the general assumption about the shallowness of African-Americans in terms of history and thinking.

From the analysis of the interracial relations in the novels, the anxiety seems to be still present in the US up until the end of the twentieth century. In Hurston's novel, the thought of such a relationship is not even suggested since it is completely unlikely to even consider the acceptance of it. The only contact between white men and African-American women occur in an event of a rape or master/slave relationship. In none of the occurrences, the consent of African-American women matter. In Ellison's novel,

the idea of interracial couples slowly develops but it is still too early to bluntly speak about it in public. The thought is still not accepted by the majority of society even well after the post-slavery era. The novel mentions relationships that occur between white females and African-American males but these associations are mainly temporary escapades. The most obvious example is provided through the use of a poster called “*After The Struggle: The Rainbow of America’s Future*” in which there is an African-American male figure next to a white couple and in front of them, there are interracial children. The idea of an interracial couple that was once a thought becomes real in Butler’s **Kindred** but soon it is understood that the uneasiness of the subject still prevails in the beginning of 1980s. The protagonist Dana and Kevin are not able to convince either of their families to accept their union. Their co-worker also presents a similar approach which is a demonstration of the general stance of society towards interracial couples of white and black Americans.

The analysis presents the inclusion of the political aspect of Afrofuturism as a dispersive feature. Within the imperialism and capitalism of today’s world, racism and colonialism are still present and Afrofuturists—and proto-Afrofuturists—have produced works to enunciate the presence of a political economy that includes space/land, human machine/labor, body and language and create alternative forms of reality that often include going beyond the state of human. Afrofuturists argue that humans as beings do not possess any freedom from the limitations that are enforced by the society or the nature. They believe that with the use of technology and science, it is possible to become post-human entities that withhold more possibilities as well as capacities than humans. The change begins with the creation of alternative bodies as well as identities. By creating different forms of humans such as androids, cyborgs and other mixed human forms, Afrofuturists create new spaces that lead to more freedom in terms of space, behaviors, beliefs and movement. Newly created identities can pass the restrictions that are applicable to humans, especially the minorities and African-Americans. There is no law that these newly found identities are bound to. Due to the use of such identities, scholars have associated Afrofuturists with advocating posthumanism in their works.

Further analysis can be conducted on how these newly found identities are associated with the posthumanist point of view of Afrofuturists since the philosophical

stance of posthumanism is interested in how change itself is represented. Apart from humanism which supports change occurring through the autonomous and intentional acts of humans, posthumanists argue that change occurs through forces that humans do not possess a complete agency over. They reject the dualism of nature versus culture. They rather argue that humans are interwoven with their surroundings. A possible study may question perspective's belief of how humans are dependents of their surrounding environments, tend to take action for change by means of communication that follow series of habits, logic, and influence and, finally, whether or not they possess any uniqueness as humans or are merely part of a larger system that constantly evolves.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Tuğba Akman Kaplan 1987 yılında İstanbul’da doğdu. Lise eğitimini Kanada’da William Lyon MacKenzie Collegiate Institute’te tamamladı. Ön lisans eğitimini Monroe Community College’da tamamladıktan sonra 2006 yılında SUNY Geneseo’da lisans eğitimine başladı. 2010-2012 yılları arasında Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans Programını tamamladı. 2012 yılında Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat Anabilim Dalı’nda doktora çalışmalarına başladı. 2011 yılından itibaren özel üniversitelerin hazırlık bölümlerinde Öğretim Görevlisi olarak görev almaya başlamıştır. Ahmet Kaplan ile evli olup Buğra ve Kayra isimlerinde iki oğlu vardır.