Hattenhauer, Darryl. "The death of Janie Crawford: tragedy and the American Dream in 'Their Eyes Were Watching God.' (Special Issue: Varieties of Ethnic Criticism)." *MELUS* 19.1 (1994): 45+. *Diversity Studies Collection*. Web. 28 Feb. 2013.

In her tribute to Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker acknowledges that Hurston could sometimes be paradoxical. For example, her feminism and her ethnic pride seem not to correspond with her conservative politics. Not surprisingly, then, Hurston's autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road, has long been recognized as sometimes contradictory and often evasive. Robert E. Hemenway notes that "style in Dust Tracks becomes a kind of camouflage, an escape from articulating the paradoxes of her personality" (xxxviii). But it is not just her life and her narrative about it that are contradictory. Of her prose in general, Henry Louis Gates says that "hers is a rhetoric of division" (1990, 296). And of Their Eyes Were Watching God in particular, he characterizes the narration as "a divided voice, a double voice unreconciled" (294).

Similarly, recent scholarship on Their Eyes finds that this complex narrative is underlain by a subtext that subverts the surface text. Susan Willis argues that despite the text's apparent affirmation of black life, Hurston overlooks the realities of class:

She chooses not to depict the northern migration of black people,

which brought Hurston herself to New York and a college degree and

brought thousands of other rural blacks to the metropolis and wage

labor. In this, Hurston sets a precedent in black women's writing that

will leave unexplored the possibility of a black working-class culture

in this country. (48)

More specifically, Willis finds that Hurston's treatment of farm labor minimizes the effects of exploitation:

Janie and Tea Cake are really not inscribed within the economics of the

"muck." If they plant and harvest beans, they do so because they enjoy

fieldwork and because it allows them to live in the heart of southern

black cultural production. They are not, like many of the other migrant

workers, bowed down by debts and kids.... Janie, with a large inheritance

in the bank, need not work at all and Tea Cake, whose forte is

gambling, need never accept a job unless he wants it. (49)

Similarly, Jennifer Jordan argues that Janie, who is married to Eatonville's mayor and chief property owner, is a privileged bourgeois. For some, Janie even bears comparison with the canonical characters of the dominant culture's literary tradition, those Adamic isolatoes who leave home and venture into space. Michael Awkward, for example, notes that Janie "envisions herself as Adam--a signal creation without a mate" and outside of history (19). And James Krasner finds that "Janie's life story is built on the male model," (117). It seems fitting, then, that in her autobiography Hurston takes pride in her patrimony: "The village of Eatonville is still governed by the laws formulated by my father" (13). To these new departures in Hurston criticism, I will add that Janie is dying in the end, that she denies her impending death, that she is an eternal adolescent, that it is Janie more than Nanny who affirms the values of the dominant culture, and that Hurston has written a complex and ironic study of the psychology of denial.

As the literally rabid Tea Cake dies, he bites Janie on the arm. And he does it so severely that she has to pry his teeth out of her flesh. Yet there is no explicit statement to indicate whether or not Janie gets anti-rabies shots.(1) Either Hurston was so lacking in narrative ability that she suggested her protagonist's infection with rabies and then failed to resolve the situation, or Hurston made the resolution implicit. Several foreshadowings suggest the latter. The announcement of Tea Cake's death in the beginning (the first chapter in this flashback plot includes some events from the end of the story) imparts the fated quality of tragedy. In the beginning, Janie is returning from Tea Cake's death, and she conceives of her life as "a great tree in leaf with the things suffered" (20). She thinks of the tree as something that contains not only birth and growth but also decline and death: "Dawn and doom was in the branches" (20). Her death, which was implicit in her budding youth (because death is always implicit in the life cycle), is explicit in the branching off of her adult quest for love and freedom. Just as the narrator foreshadows Janie's death in the beginning of the text and in the beginning of Janie's life, the narrator suggests more specifically in the final pages that Janie's death is an outgrowth of her adolescence. The symbol of the mature leafy tree grows out of the symbol of the pear tree that the sixteen-year-old Janie expresses as a metaphor for her emerging sexuality. Not until the end of the novel does she see that death, not just sexuality, is implicit in nature. The growing tree, then, symbolizes both Janie's life as well as the narrator's plot.

That Janie will probably die is also foreshadowed when she and Pheoby discuss Janie's burgeoning romance with Tea Cake. Pheoby compares Janie to Annie Tyler, another wealthy middle-aged woman who took up with a younger man, but only to have him steal her money and leave her heart as empty as her pockets: "She had waited all her life for something, and it killed her when it found her" (179). And during the hurricane, when it appears that Janie and Tea Cake will drown, Tea Cake asks her if she regrets having gone with him, and she assures him that an early death would be a small price to pay for the prize of having Tea Cake's love for two years: "If you can see de light at daybreak, you don't keer if you die at dusk" (236). In addition, there is the dramatic irony of Janie thinking to herself that the dog which mortally wounded Tea Cake has (by taking her man) metaphorically killed her too: "That big old dawg...had killed her after all" (263). But more foreshadowing reveals that soon her death will probably be no longer just a metaphor. Doctor Simmons warns her that Tea Cake is "liable to bite somebody else, specially you, and then you'll be in the same fix he's in" (263). Moreover, Doctor Simmons testifies in court that "he found Janie all bit in the arm..." (276). And after Tea Cake's death, she tries to accept not only his passing but her own by imagining their reunion in heaven. The narrator, who often uses free indirect speech to paraphrase Janie's thoughts, states: "He would be thinking up new songs to play her when she got there" (281). The narrator also foreshadows the shooting of Tea Cake with the dramatic irony not only of his teaching Janie how to shoot, but also of his saying that there is "always some trashy rascal that needs a good killin'" (195).

Janie seems to be motivated partly out of unconscious self-destructiveness. First, she could have run away. In free indirect speech again, the narrator tells us that when Janie finds that Tea Cake has hidden a pistol, she realizes that flight is one of her options: "She could either run or try to take it away before it was too late" (270). Then she refuses to put Tea Cake in the hospital where he would be no danger to her. Next, she does not flee when she discovers the loaded revolver under his pillow. And finally, she does not unload his revolver, but instead turns the cylinder (which has three rounds in it) so that he will have to pull the trigger three times before it will shoot (the hammer will fall on an empty cylinder each of the first three times). This strategy is very risky because he might break open the revolver and discover that the cylinder has been rotated, which might in turn make him violent immediately. Accomplished with firearms, Janie knows that if he checks the cylinder, all he has to do is turn it so that it will fire the first three times he pulls the trigger. Janie, then, appears to be so overwrought both at the probable death of Tea Cake and at her own possible demise that she denies the existence of both of these tragic possibilities (thereby helping to ensure that both will come to pass). Her conscious mind resists fate insofar as she denies Tea Cake's death while nonetheless trying to arrange things so that she might die with him.

She could also be denying his hostility towards her. While she arranges the guns, she denies the need to flee: "Tea Cake wouldn't hurt her. He was just jealous and wanted to scare her" (270). And she tells herself that they will "laugh over it when he [gets] well" (270). Even when he points the pistol at her, she denies the threat: "Maybe he would point to scare her, that was all" (272). But recently Tea Cake has not only beaten her, but done so not because of any wrongdoing of hers but simply to show their acquaintances that he controls her.

This repeated denial points not only to certain character traits but also to previously overlooked themes. It is the cruelest of ironies that each has to die for loving the other. Thus the text undercuts its thematic veneer of romantic love. Rabies are often spread by vampire bats, and the behavior of rabies sufferers resembles that of a vampire: "The alertness, loss of natural timidity, abnormal sexual behaviour, and aggressiveness that typify clinical rabies represent a diabolical adaptation of virus to selected neuronal populations--neurons capable of driving the host in a fury to transmit the virus to another host..." (Kaplan 31). Thus while some critics have read this text as a tribute to romantic love, it appears to be more of a modern turn on the vampire narrative. Tea Cake bites Janie to take her with him. Just as the symbols of nature reveal the mind of the protagonist and the tragic quality of the plot, they also suggest more about the novel's theme. For just as the symbol of the tree presides over Janie's youth and death, the symbol of the horizon begins and ends the narrative. The narrator's meditation on the horizon at the start of the novel makes the romantic assertion not only that women are immune to the ravages of time but also that they achieve such immunity by denial--by blocking out unpleasant reality--and substituting dreams for it:

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come

in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of

sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation,

his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.

Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember,

and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the

truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.

So the beginning of this was a woman and she had come back from

burying the dead. (9)

Moreover, at the end, Janie says she's "been tuh de horizon" (284), and she elsewhere identifies Tea Cake with the horizon: he is "the son of Evening Sun" (281). Furthermore, in an ironic close to the scene in which the white women comfort Janie for ostensibly having to shoot Tea Cake, the narrator states, "So the sun went down" (280). Thus Tea Cake is born of the horizon; he is a kind of avatar of nature whom Janie hopes is a pollen bearing bee. In the final scene as she stares out at the dark horizon (which recalls her statement about dying at dusk), she is overtaken by a vision of Tea Cake "with the sun for a shawl" (286). Then come the last lines of the novel:

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. (286)

Here Tea Cake and the horizon are merged in the image of the shawl-like net, and she harvests them and drapes them over her shoulder in a Christian death image. But her revery is mocked to death by Time. She hasn't avoided the ravages of Time by denying death; she has not realized her dream by escaping into metaphors of nature. The pear tree has turned into the leafy "doom," and her fish-net horizon has yielded the dead body of her life's one great catch. Denying what she does not want to remember has not allowed her to realize her fantasy of romance and unfettered individuation. Her version of the American dream is not the truth.

The merging of the horizon with the image of Tea Cake in a shawl suggests a further ironic complication. It is remarkable for Janie to imagine Tea Cake wearing a shawl, which is a garment that she would more readily associate with an old woman. More specifically, it suggests Nanny. In Janie's final vision of nature, then, the pear tree has gone leafy, and her image of Tea Cake fuses with both the horizon and Nanny, which suggests the complex origins of Janie's values, attitudes, and aspirations. After Jody's death, Janie asserts that she has always hated Nanny for trying to make her live like whites. As we will see, Janie's charge is partially valid, for Nanny has spent much of her life with whites and passed along some of their traits to Janie. But we must distinguish between which of Nanny's values Janie maintains and which of Nanny's values Janie does not. For if aspects of African culture survive in Afro-American culture, certainly aspects of the dominant culture are present in Afro-American culture as well.(2)

Nanny hopes that Janie will avoid poverty. To that end Nanny arranges the marriage between Janie and Killicks, who is a farmer of moderate but adequate means. But Nanny does not thereby qualify as a white Negro. The desire for economic security is not strictly a white value. One would be hard pressed to demonstrate that Janie's African ancestors did not prefer at least a modicum of similar security for their young. Moreover, Nanny wants the economic security not so Janie can be like whites, but so she can be more independent of them: "Ah raked and scraped and bought dis lil piece uh land so you wouldn't have to stay in de white folks' yard..." (37). Thus what Nanny wants for Janie is the modest security of a farmer's wife, not the power and wealth of the new urban capitalist's wife. It is Janie who leaves Killicks the farmer for Starks the upwardly mobile capitalist politician--and stays with him for over twenty years. And it is not so much traditional black culture as it is modern white culture Janie affirms when she countermands the primacy of family by deciding that she will not tend Nanny's grave, and that she has no interest in finding her own mother. The high value that Janie places on doing what she wants rather than what family and society want is, of course, a strong part of the white American dream.

However, it is in part through Nanny that Janie acquires this largely white value of the primacy of the individual over family and society. Nanny states that although she could not realize her own dreams, Janie need not suffer such restriction: `It wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams.... But nothing can't stop you from wishin'...." "Nothin Ah been through ain't--too much if you just take a stand on high ground lak Ah dreamed" (31-32). Nanny's vague optimism about dreams and wishes on the high ground encourages the denial and wishful thinking in Janie's version of the American dream. But the specific dream of salvation through eros signified by Janie's pear tree fantasy is not attributable to Nanny, for it is Nanny who rejects romantic love, telling Janie to marry the farmer and forego the erotic temptations of the likes of "shiftless" (25) Johnny Taylor:

"Dat's de very prong all us black women gets hung on. Dis love! Dat's

just whut's got us uh pullin' and uh haulin' and sweatin' and coin' from

can't see in de mornin' till can't see at night." (41)

And individuation through romantic love is the white chimera to which that prong is anchored.

For Janie is greatly influenced by white America. She is, of course, an octoroon. And she is raised with whites in an environment where not only the whites but also the blacks (with their high value on light skin, straight hair, etc.) affirm white standards. Yet before the white jury frees her, she fears the white jury as alien: "What need had they to leave their richness to come look on Janie in her overalls?" (274-75). But Janie is richer than many of the whites: she has inherited Jody's home and store, and she collects rents on his real estate holdings (141). And after the verdict of innocent, Janie regards them as "the kind white friends who had realized her feelings" (280). No wonder Killicks tells her, "You think youse white folks by de way you act" (51). For her sense of her importance reflects the same exhibitionistic rhetoric of the Calvinist dominant culture. Where the whites continually prate about the eyes of the world watching as they carry the shining beacon of sacred self-interest on their mission into the new promised land, Janie imagines herself and her errand in similar terms:

She had been getting ready for her great journey to the horizons in

search of people; it was important to all the world that she would find

them and they find her.... She had found a jewel down inside herself and

she had wanted to walk where people could see her and gleam it

around. (138)

If the dominant culture has been criticized as immature and narcissistic, if the typical protagonist in the novels of the dominant culture is childish, if Rip Van Winkle presides over the birth of the dominant culture's literary imagination by preceding Huckleberry Finn and Natty Bumppo into the territories, if Huckleberry Finn can not grow up, if Henry Fleming confuses self-interest with brave altruism, if Jay Gatsby holds true to an adolescent vision, if George Babbitt dreams of escape with the fairy maiden or Tannis Judique or his nature guide and confuses himself with his teenage son, then Janie Crawford takes her place in the long Adamic line of America's eternal adolescents. For throughout her life Janie's mission is to realize her adolescent fantasy of the pear tree. When she goes fishing with Tea Cake after midnight, she feels "like a child breaking rules. That's what [makes] Janie like it" (155). No wonder that Tea Cake tells her, although she is over forty, that she looks like "uh lil girl wid her Easter dress on" (150) and that she acts like "uh lil girl baby all de time" (268). No wonder Pheoby tells her, "You looks like youse yo' own daughter" (14), for one does not have to be a white male to be a middle-aged puer aeternus or to have a platonic conception of oneself. And no wonder she gets along with the similarly adolescent Tea Cake, who exhibits traits that in other contexts we would associate with the darky stereotype: he works sporadically, has no ambition, spends freely (especially after he has just cleaned out his bride's purse), is rootless, beats his wife, gets in fist fights and knife fights, and cares mostly for sex, music, parties, and gambling. As such, he resembles Johnny Taylor, the object of teenaged Janie's affection.

The white dominant culture's influence on Janie has further implications. When Janie tells herself just after Jody dies that she has hated Nanny all her life, the narrator notes: "She hated her grandmother and had hidden it from herself all these years under a cloak of pity" (137-38). While Janie maintains her illusion of freedom by denying that Nanny still influences her, Janie pretends that she is just as free of Jody. The narrator shows that in Janie's mind Nanny constricted the horizon and choked Janie with it: "Nanny had taken the...horizon...and pinched it in to such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter's neck tight enough to choke her" (138). But the end of the story does not validate Janie's impulse for freedom. Rather, it merges Tea Cake and Nanny with the horizon image: Tea Cake becomes part of the horizon that chokes her. Indeed, victims of hydrophobia suffer from a constriction of the neck and throat muscles.

Similarly, her hopes for her relationship with Jody also suggest this deterministic view of the tragic impossibility of Janie's quest. Janie agrees to go with Jody because he speaks "for far horizon" (50). And when this Adamic heroine walks down the road to join Jody, she is overcome by "a feeling of sudden newness and change..." (54). This image of rebirth through departure also appears when she is on the road and "waiting for the world to be made" (25). Her penchant for the mobility of the American dream contrasts with what Nanny would have her do. In alleging her hatred for Nanny, Janie correctly assumes that leaving Killicks for Jody is inconsistent with Nanny's wishes, but it violates only Nanny's wish that Janie marry Killicks; it affirms Nanny's advice that Janie have a dream and follow it. Janie says, "Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means tuh live mine" (171). But living her own life in a way Nanny would not have wanted becomes her desire largely because Nanny gave her the value of following her "wish." Thus Janie unwittingly affirms what her elders taught her even as she negates it. (Or as Sacvan Bercovitch paraphrases Melville, the contradictions are made to correspond.) She now tries to blame Nanny for the twenty years of brow beating under Jody, but it was Janie's own desire to run away with him. It is no longer the farm but the city that informs the American dream, and Nanny wants Janie to avoid the white folks's yard by going to a black man's farm. It is Janie who decides to stay in the new version of the white folks's yard, Jody's white house.

The white influence on Janie makes her feel and act superior. As we have seen, Killicks tells her that she acts like white people. And when Janie returns after losing Tea Cake, she walks right past Pheoby and her friends, clearly snubbing them. Minutes later Pheoby goes to her and says, "You always did class off" (169). Janie denies it by saying, "Jody classed me off. Ah didn't" (169). Yet when Jody tells her that she will be "the bell-cow" (66), superior to the other women in the town, Janie does not object. It is only after he prevents her from giving a speech that she objects, and then it is to complain not about her status on the pedestal, but about him deciding for her. Later when he will not let her join in the gossip session on the porch with the townsfolk, she claims that she resents it. Yet when she comes back to Eatonville, she avoids this same crowd of people. In addition to denying to herself and Pheoby that she "classes off," she lies to Pheoby on another occasion. When Janie pretends to be seriously considering her suitors but is actually stalling them, the narrator reveals that Janie's protestations of carefulness are insincere: "Such things take time to think about, or rather she pretended to Pheoby that that was what she was doing" (143). The truth is that Janie enjoys being the propertied widow on the white porch.

For she prides herself on being moneyed. When it first appears that Tea Cake, after stealing her money, will not return, she contrasts herself to Annie Tyler. The narrator states: "She wasn't going back to Eatonville to be laughed at and pitied. She had ten dollars in her pocket and twelve hundred in the bank" (179). And upon her return to Eatonville after Tea Cake's death, Janie says, "They don't need to worry about me and my overhalls long as Ah still got nine hundred dollars in de bank" (18). Furthermore, after she falls out of love with Jody, she stays with him for fourteen more years because he is her meal ticket. Janie says, "Maybe he ain't nothin', ...but he is something in my mouth" (118). Or as the narrator puts it, Janie gets "nothing from Jody except what money [can] buy..." (118). From the beginning, it is partly the promise of wealth and leisure that induces Janie to marry Jody. He tells her, "You come go wid me. Den all de rest of yo' natural life you kin live lak you oughta" (50). "You is made," he says, "to sit on de front porch and rock and fan yo'self and eat p'taters dat other folks plant just special for you" (49). Moreover Janie is attracted to him because he looks as prosperous as a wealthy white man: "Janie took a lot of looks at him and she was proud of what she saw. Kind of portly like rich white folks" (56). Thus her sin of pride that goes before her fall is already developing here. Before her fall, Janie does not understand that some human aspirations are impossible. When Janie says "no matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you" (138), she does not realize the futility of her longing; she keeps chasing the pear tree on the ever-receding horizon, borne back ceaselessly into the past, not realizing until the end the truth of Lige's dictum that "if a man ain't got no bounds he ain't got no place to stop" (100). Janie exhibits the dominant culture's belief that there are no borders on human aspiration--that one can be whatever one wants to be, that one can have it all. After she inherits Jody's wealth, she rejoices that she will "have the rest of her life to do as she please[s]" (137) rather than the rest of her life to do what she should. For the dominant culture declares that there is no difference.

In the end, Janie is at least partly aware of her fall. She says she is going to make "comparisons" (284), and her image of the budding tree gone leafy implicitly suggests her likeness to her tragically fallen mother, who was called "Leafy" (35, 36). She might also compare herself to what she would have become had she stayed with Killicks: a wealthy widow. She might also compare herself to what she might have become if she had run off with Johnny Taylor: a bigot like Mrs. Turner, or a beggar like Mrs. Tony, or the dying widow that she is (for shiftless Johnny Taylor is akin to shiftless Tea Cake). She might even realize that old Killicks feared the faithlessness of his young lover just as Janie feared the faithlessness of hers. As she symbolically grooms herself for death by combing the road dust out of her hair and washing it from her feet, she laughs a little, perhaps realizing how much she has come to compare with Killicks and his stinky feet, which she wanted him to wash before he lay himself down to sleep. And perhaps she laughs too at the irony of washing her feet when she will soon, like Tea Cake, suffer the ravages of hydrophobia.

She might also recall her statement that "it's so many people never see de light at all" (236) and be thankful that, as she conceives of it, she sees the light at last: her fate is to wait and see if God's will is to take her life. When Tea Cake, Motor Boat and Janie seek shelter from the hurricane, they are enclosed in darkness: "They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God" (236). Janie says, "Ole Massa is coin' His work now. Us oughta keep quiet" (235). Soon Tea Cake will ask of the dog that bites him, "Wonder where he came from?" (247) An aphorism from Lige may again be the answer "[God] made nature and nature made everything else" (101). Similarly, Janie questions God when she learns that Tea Cake has rabies; she looks to the sky for some sign, some answer as to whether Tea Cake will live. On the next page, the answer comes from Doc: no serum is available; they will have to wait for it to come from Miami.(3) When Janie says that it is too cruel "to kill her through Tea Cake," she implies that the agent of the action is God, acting through nature. Thus she regards the rabies as God's will. God has freed Motor Boat from seemingly certain death, and yet He has inflicted Tea Cake with rabies. And by trying to deny Tea Cake's fate--in trying to deny what she regards as God's will--she has contracted rabies. But by waiting to see if God's will is that she die and thereby rejoin Tea Cake, she accepts her fate even as she denies it--denies it to herself and to her audience, Pheoby and the townsfolk. That is what she means when she tells Pheoby that all people "got tuh go tuh God" (285).

After listening to Janie's story of the quest, Pheoby says that she is not satisfied with her life anymore and adds that the solution is to get her husband to take her fishing. It was after a fishing excursion that Janie fell in love with Tea Cake. Thus Janie, a tragic heroine whose journey has been even more psychological than geographic, realizes that she cannot explain to Pheoby the complexity of her journey: "Pheoby, you got to go there to know there" (285). She repeats this idea when she tells Pheoby that people "got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves" (285). And they also have to find out about dying--about the "doom" implicit in nature and life. And this tragic truth, Janie has learned, is something no one could have told her, and something she cannot tell anyone. Thus Janie is not the narrator for two reasons: she cannot admit the truth, and she will no longer be alive to tell it.

Notes

(1.) With rabies, the incubation period is often two to four months. There have been numerous cases in which the incubation period lasted many months, even years. A study of 235 cases found an incubation period of over ninety days in 38% of the victims. Moreover, a bite on the arm (such as Janie's) is associated with a longer incubation period. During the incubation period, the victim is almost always symptom free (Kaplan 21 48). Thus it is not only possible but likely that if Janie contracted rabies from Tea Cake, she would not yet have symptoms upon her return to Eatonville.

(2.) Recently, students of ethnic literature have revised the separatism that characterized the early efforts to revise the canon. For example, Barbara E. Johnson points to "the ineradicable trace of Western culture within Afro-American culture" (42). Similarly, Henry Louis Gates notes that "black literature shares much with, far more than it differs from, the Western textual tradition" (The Signifying Monkey xxii). In fact, Gates believes that his immersion in black culture was not only a help but a hindrance in his effort to understand black literature: "I had to step outside my culture" (Figures In Black 236). Deborah McDowell argues that separatists treat black and female as timeless, ahistorical, essential categories "yielding an indigenous critical methodology" separate from the Western tradition (54). Likewise, William Boelhower contends that "advocates of the multi-ethnic paradigm now often repeat the essentialist errors of their mono-cultural predecessors in attempting to trace out a blueprint of clear and distinct and ultimately reified ethnic categories" (20). Ethnic separatism, then, resembles the puritan and Adamic separatism of the dominant culture.

As a solution, Werner Sollors charges us to look not at difference but at the identities between ethnic traditions: "Ethnic literary history ought to increase our understanding of the cultural interplays and contacts among writers of different backgrounds, the ethnic innovations and cultural mergers that took place in America; and the results of the critical readings should not only leave room for, but actively invite, criticism and scrutiny by others (`outsiders' or `insiders') of the texts discussed" (Beyond Ethnicity 14-15). The influence of Marxists, structuralists, and historicists have led scholars to understand that hegemony enmeshes not only the empowered but the unempowered. For example, Jan Gorak states that Althusser and Levi-Strauss "presented culture in terms of a `system' or an `apparatus' structured like a language that maintained a class dominance by inserting itself into the perceptual and conceptual processes of both the exploited and the dominant groups" (79). Similarly, Dearborn shows that the critiques by minorities and feminists often employed the same rhetoric and values of the ideology to which they objected (93). For example, African Americans internalized various aspects of Christianity. As Sollors states, "In Black Culture and Black Consciousness (1977), Lawrence Levine, after surveying hundreds of songs, arrives at the conclusion that the `most persistent single image the slave songs contain is that of the chosen people'" (Beyond Ethnicity 47). Sollors adds that "Bigger Thomas, who explicitly rejects the minister's Jesus, becomes, as Keneth Kinnamon has suggested, a suffering black Christ crucified by white America" (Beyond Ethnicity 53).

(3.) It is possible that the doctor does not care if Janie or Tea Cake succumbs. Since the serum does not arrive, perhaps he doesn't really send for it.

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