

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the early 20th century, Zora Neale Hurston was “one of the most famous authors in the Harlem Renaissance” (Wikipedia.org: Harlem Renaissance). I choose her because she has an important role in American Literature by influencing such writers as “Toni Morrison and Alice Walker”. Her works were significant because she was able to “break into the secret societies and they are called ‘women’”(The Official Zora Neale Hurston Website). Most of her works are about a prototypical black woman who is clearly facing and undergoing life harder than men.

Another American great writer is Toni Morrison who was named as one of "The 30 Most Powerful Women in America" by Ladies' Home Journal in 2001 (Wikipedia.org: Toni Morrison). She is a perfect match for Hurston since her works were influenced by Hurston and they come from the same race. She was “the first African American to be so honored and also marks the validity of the black women’s voice” (Gutherie vii). I choose these two black women because both have the same issues to be exposed: freedom and womanhood.

The works that I will analyze are Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Toni Morrison's Beloved. From their works, I learn a lot about being a black woman and how they have to deal with their lives. Both raise the protagonists' desire to be free from the world which is dominated by men. Women have had a long and difficult struggle to gain freedom and possessions. Whether black or white, women still face similar struggles. They both have a dream to be free.

The fictions Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston and Beloved by Toni Morrison share a similar background, yet different endings of the story. I choose the protagonists since they are the most important characters in the novel and they lead the story to different concepts of freedom.

In Their Eyes Were Watching God, the protagonist, Janie, is a woman who denies gender stereotypes and unequal treatment toward women. She is married three times to find her true love and acceptance from men. Eventually, she "needs freedom and an expansion of her horizons more than she needs love" (Domina). She needs freedom more because Janie has become "an object" to her husband and that is not something that she is willing to stand (Their Eyes Were Watching God: Comprehension and Analysis Blog). She is looking for a freedom and she gets it after Tea Cake, her third husband, dies.

In Beloved, the protagonist, Sethe, is a proud and independent woman who is extremely devoted to her children. Unwilling to let her children have the physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual trauma she endured as a slave at Sweet Home, she attempts to murder them in an act of "motherly love and protection" (Sparknotes.com: Beloved Toni Morrison, Character List). She tries to find her

own freedom by protecting her children with a controversial act such as killing the children, so that they will not be slaves like her. She is looking for freedom, but she does not have it until the end of the story.

The aim of this thesis is to understand what kinds of **freedom** that the protagonists want. The importance of freedom is not purely restricted to political and economic domain of countries, important though it is. Freedom is connected to individuals who make up families; it matters to families which make up communities and villages and it matters to societies and local and national institutions all over the world. Since the two novels that I have read reflect the movement of women towards freedom, I would like to analyze them using the feminist approach.

In literature, theory is “an excellent tool for reading beneath the lines” (Guerin 117); therefore, it will be best to find the specific reasons that cause the protagonists’ actions and conflicts and their effects upon the protagonists through theory. In order to achieve a better understanding, I try to analyze the protagonists to reveal the concepts of freedom in both novels using the feminism theory by **Simone de Beauvoir**. Beauvoir is a French feminist and philosopher; she is now “best known for her detailed analysis of women's oppression and a foundational tract of contemporary feminism” (Wikipedia.org: Simone de Beauvoir). In Beauvoir’s rejection of the traditional concept that woman is weak, it is expressed once again the essential feminist idea that a woman has the same nature as man does, and is like him a free and creative being.

By using the feminist approach, I will find the freedom that both protagonists in these works are looking for. The freedom that I analyze in here is

freedom from spouse-control and **freedom from guilt**. Thus, considering that both works are prominent works of literature conveying feminism, I decide to discuss them.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems are stated as follows:

1. How do the protagonists help the revelation of freedom?
2. What kinds of freedom do the protagonists fight for?

Approach: Feminism by Simone de Beauvoir

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. To reveal the use of the protagonists in revealing the protagonists' concept of freedom.
2. To show what kinds of freedom the protagonists fight for.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The research used for writing this thesis is library research. First I read Their Eyes Were Watching God and Beloved as the primary texts. Then, to support my study, especially in accordance with the topic of my study, I perform research for additional information, which is done through secondary reading from some books such as Contemporary Women's Fiction, and Feminism. Finally, I also read and compile some texts that are taken from the internet. All of the information and knowledge that are gathered are then used to analyze the novel. Finally, I draw some conclusion from the research I have made.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis consists of five chapters. The thesis starts with the Acknowledgements. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problems, the Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two consists of the theoretical background; Chapter Three is the discussion of Their Eyes Were Watching God. Chapter Four is the discussion of Beloved. The last chapter is Conclusion. The thesis ends with a Bibliography and an Appendix, which consists of Summaries of the two novels and Biographies of the Authors.