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A Quest for Self-realization

—An Archetypal Analysis of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

对自我的探寻

——《他们眼望上苍》原型分析

陈莹莹

指导教师姓名: 刘文松 副教授

专 业 名 称: 英语语言文学

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Synopsis

Many critics have explored various aspects of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the most acclaimed book by Zora Neale Hurston. In anthropological studies, Daphne Lamothe has found that the mythological archetype of the heroine Janie Crawford is the Goddess Erzulie in Voodoo. As a supplement to these anthropological studies, this thesis tries to analyze Janie's quest for self-realization in view of mythological and archetypal criticism together with Jung's psychological archetypal insights. Furthermore, the author tries to point out that Janie's quest embodies an archetype of American literature. The body of the thesis is structured as follows:

In Chapter One "*Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Archetypal Criticism," Hurston's life is surveyed, followed by a brief account of the novel and a general introduction of archetypal criticism. This chapter is a preparation for the following discussion.

Chapter Two "The Questing Heroine: an Archetypal Analysis of the Motif of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" focuses on the archetypal analysis of Janie Crawford's quest for self-realization in view of Joseph Campbell's theory of "monomyth." Resonating with the Bible and *The Odyssey*, the journey of Janie Crawford is a quest and initiation story that follows the general pattern of the tales illustrated by Joseph Campbell: departure, initiation, and return. As a female quest for self-identity, the quest of Janie is different from that of a male. Hurston has depicted a woman character who defies men and the world with power and daring. Assuming a position equal to that of the male hero, she challenges and subverts the patriarchal structures. Like the story of Psyche in the Greek myth of Amor and Psyche, Janie Crawford's tale is significant for her heroic questing and her internal growth that concentrates on the possibilities of female development and change.

Chapter Three "The Inward Journey: Janie's Growth toward the Masculine"

focuses on the psychological development of Janie in order to acquire a deeper understanding of her quest for self-realization. Janie's journey is more psychological than geographic. Through three marriages, Janie has been gradually transformed and has a new way of seeing herself and the world. The psychological development of Janie can be analyzed with Jung's theory of individuation. Jung contends that individuation depends on the masculine and feminine integration in the human psyche. Janie has challenged the sexual stereotype in her rebellion against the traditional wife role and reaches her individuation by gradually getting in contact with her "animus"--the masculine aspect of the psyche. Through the incorporation of the masculine, Janie has gradually achieved personality integration.

Written by an African-American writer, the novel also carries the theme of the typical American literature. Chapter Four "Janie's Quest as the Embodiment of the Archetype of American Literature" argues that Janie's story is an example of distinctive American experience and that Janie's quest embodies the archetype of American literature. Janie bears comparison with the canonical characters of the dominant culture's literary tradition, those Adamic isolatoes who leave home and venture into space, who have been considered as the archetype of American heroes.

Although the application of archetypal criticism takes us back to the beginning of humankind's oldest rituals and beliefs and deep into our individual hearts, it still has its limitations. This thesis is an effort to make use of the advantages of the archetypal approach to shed light on the deep psychological and ritual meaning of the journey of the heroine and to give the readers of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* a new reading perspective.

Key Words: Hurston; quest for self-realization; archetypal analysis

中文摘要

《他们眼望上苍》是佐拉·尼尔·赫斯顿的经典之作，近年来一直受到广泛的推崇和关注。在人类学研究方面，一些学者认为黑人宗教伏都教(Voodoo)中女神形象 Erzulie 是《他们眼望上苍》中女主人公珍妮的原型。作为对此人类学原型研究的补充，本论文从神话原型，心理学原型和美国文学的原型等角度分析珍妮探寻自我的历程。

第一章 “《他们眼望上苍》与原型批评” 对赫斯顿的生平，故事梗概，和原型批评的基本方法进行了简要介绍。

第二章 “对自我的探寻——《他们眼望上苍》母题分析” 用神话学家约瑟夫·坎贝尔的“单一神话”理论分析珍妮探寻自我的历程，指出此探寻历程符合一般的神话模式：出发，被传授奥秘和归来。通过分析指出珍妮的探寻是女性在父权社会对自我意识和自我实现的追寻。与希腊神话中的普赛克的故事相似，珍妮的故事反映了女性成长和自我实现的可能性。

第三章 “内心的旅程——向阿尼姆斯靠拢” 用荣格的心理学原型理论对珍妮的探寻历程进行进一步分析，指出珍妮的探寻历程实现了荣格所述的“个体化”进程。荣格指出，一个人如果要达到心理的完整或个体化，必须认识到自己心灵中的异己的亚人格成分，实现心灵的整合。在探寻过程中，珍妮对传统的僵化的性别模式进行了挑战，逐渐认识到心灵中异己的人格成分——荣格所述的“阿尼姆斯”，实现了“个体化”。

第四章 “探寻——美国文学的原型主题” 通过对珍妮探寻历程的进一步分析，指出珍妮的探寻体现了美国文学的原型主题。美国文学传统中的主人公被称为“美国的亚当”，他们独自踏上冒险的征途，在“幸运的堕落”中获得生活的真谛。《他们眼望上苍》属于典型的美国成长小说，反映了美国文学的原型主题。

关键词：赫斯顿 自我探寻 原型分析

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Introduction

The feminist rediscovery of Zora Neale Hurston and her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is one of the most dramatic chapters in American literary history. When the novel was first published in 1937, it was criticized for being “out of step with the more serious trends of the times.” The much harsher critique came from the most influential black writer of the day, Richard Wright, the representative of the black social protest novel. He said that the novel “carries no theme, no message, no thought.” Owing to these harsh judgments, the novel was neglected for years and Zora Neale Hurston died in poverty and oblivion.

A decade after her death, children of the Civil Rights Movement began to appreciate the pride Hurston took in her representation of black lives in her books. In the Women’s Movement, feminists admired the strength and audacity of Hurston’s female characters. Alice Walker, a very important feminist writer today, embraced Hurston as a literary mother in essays including “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens” and “Looking for Zora.” From then on, Hurston and her works have been widely acclaimed by readers and critics. Nowadays *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is regarded as a “classic” among black literature and American literature.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston drew on her own experiences as a feminist Afro-American female to create a story about the quest and the magical transformation of Janie Crawford, from an unconfident young girl to a thriving woman. Janie experiences many

things that make her a compelling character who takes readers along as her companions, on her voyage to discover the mysteries and rewards life has to offer.

Many critics have explored various aspects of the novel. Feminists explore the heroism of Janie and regard the novel as a feminist text. Many scholars assert the importance of the orality and use of vernacular in the novel. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. examines the rhetorical strategies Hurston used and concludes that the narrative voice in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a legacy to Afro-American fiction.

Since Hurston studied anthropology as Franz Boas's student, critics have done some research on the implications of Hurston's anthropological studies in her fiction. Daphne Lamothe has found that the mythological archetype of the heroine Janie Crawford is the Goddess Erzulie in Voodoo. As a supplement to these anthropological studies, this thesis tries to analyze Janie's quest for self-realization in view of mythological and archetypal criticism together with Jung's psychological archetypal insights. Furthermore, the author tries to point out that Janie's quest embodies an archetype of American literature.

Although the application of myth criticism can take us back to the beginning of humankind's oldest rituals and beliefs and deep into our individual hearts, the archetypal approach still has its limitations. This thesis is an effort to make use of the advantages of the archetypal approach and to give the readers of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* a new reading perspective and to shed some light on the deep psychological and ritual meanings of the journey of the heroine.

This thesis is composed of four chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion.

In Chapter One “*Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Archetypal Criticism,” Hurston’s life is surveyed, followed by a brief account of the novel and a general introduction of archetypal criticism. Since a large part of this thesis is an archetypal analysis of the novel from the anthropological perspectives, it is necessary to present a general view of Hurston’s life as a writer and an anthropologist. Besides, the general introduction of the archetypal criticism is a good preparation for the later discussion.

Chapter Two “The Questing Heroine: an Archetypal Analysis of the Motif of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*” focuses on the archetypal analysis of Janie Crawford’s quest for self-realization in view of Joseph Campbell’s theory of “monomyth.” Comparing *Their Eyes Were Watching God* with other fairy tales, the thesis draws the conclusion that Janie’s quest for self-realization is an initiation story about individual maturation. Janie’s quest follows the general pattern of the tales illustrated by Joseph Campbell: departure, initiation, and return. The hero leaves the familiar environment and undergoes a series of tests and initiations along the way. Through trials and tests, heroes overcome the forces of darkness and bring a gift to their world that results in its transformation. As a female quest for self-identity, the quest of Janie is different from that of a male. Hurston has depicted a woman character who defies men and the world with power and daring. Assuming a position equal to that of the male hero, she challenges and subverts the

patriarchal structures. Like the story of Psyche in the Greek myth of Amor and Psyche, Janie Crawford's tale is significant for her heroic questing and her internal growth that concentrates on the possibilities of human development and change.

Chapter Three "The Inward Journey: Janie's Growth toward the Masculine" focuses on the psychological development of Janie in order to acquire a deeper understanding of her quest for self-realization. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is more concerned with the psychological rather than the geographical adventure of Janie. In the novel Hurston has given us a complete trajectory of the Janie's psychic development. Janie has grown up to be an independent woman through three marriages. Both her first two husbands have suppressed her self-awareness. Only with Tea Cake, her third husband, does Janie at last "bloom." The psychological development of Janie can be analyzed with Jung's theory of individuation. Jung contends that individuation depends on the masculine and feminine integration in the human psyche. Janie has challenged the sexual stereotype in her rebellion against the traditional wife role and reaches her individuation by gradually getting in contact with her "animus"--the masculine aspect of the psyche.

Written by an African-American writer, the novel also carries the theme of the typical American literature. Chapter Four "Janie's Quest as the Embodiment of the Archetype of American Literature" argues that Janie's story is an example of distinctive American experience and that Janie's quest embodies the archetype of American literature. Janie bears comparison with the canonical characters of the dominant culture's

literary tradition, those Adamic isolatoes who leave home and venture into space, who have been considered as the archetype of American heroes.

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Chapter One *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Archetypal Criticism

1.1 Zora Neale Hurston as a Writer and Anthropologist

Zora Neale Hurston's novel is closely related to her own experience. On January 7, 1891, Hurston was born in the tiny town of Notasulga, Alabama. She was the fifth of eight children in the Hurston household. Her father John was a carpenter, sharecropper, and a Baptist preacher; and her mother Lucy, a former schoolteacher. Within a year of Zora's birth, the family moved to Eatonville, Florida, a town, which held historical significance as the first incorporated black municipality in the United States. As a child, she listened to the "lying sessions" of the men on a store front porch and the richness and singularity of black folklore would permeate all her work.

Hurston attended high school at Morgan Academy (now known as Morgan State University) in Baltimore from which she graduated in June, 1918. The same year she entered Howard University from which she received an Associates Degree in 1920. The following year, her first published story, "John Redding Goes to Sea," appeared in the college literary magazine *The Stylus*. "Drenched in Light" (1924) and "Spunk" (1925) were published in the magazine *Opportunity*. The early 1920s marked the beginning of Hurston's career as an author.

In 1925, Hurston headed to New York, just as the Harlem Renaissance was at its crest. She enrolled in Barnard College to study under Franz Boas, the father of anthropology. While there, Hurston married an old Howard boyfriend named Herbert Sheen, but the marriage was short-lived. After graduation, Zora returned to her hometown Eatonville to collect folklore as material for her blossoming writing career. She emerged from Barnard College as a part-time writer and a full-time anthropologist, and Dr. Boas found grant money to support his student while she spent four years in the field gathering folklore, which provided models or precedents for the work she was doing. Zora's study of anthropology has greatly influenced her later writing.

She received her B.A. in 1927 and continued to write a play, *Great Day*, which was published in 1928, followed in 1930 by "Dance Songs and Travels from the Bahamas" and the third act of *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life in Three Acts*, a play written in collaboration with Langston Hughes. "Hoodoo in America" was published in 1931. Her first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, loosely based on the life of her parents, was published in 1934. With a Rosenwald Fellowship in 1934, Hurston traveled throughout the South collecting folklore. The result of her research was the publication of *Mules and Men* (1935), an anthropological study of black American folklore that was published as a major contribution but criticized for its lack of political perspective.

In 1939, Hurston published *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, and her autobiography, *Dust Tracts on a Road*, was published in 1942 and won the 1943 Annisfield Award. In 1948, *Seraph on the Suwanee* was

published, her final novel and the only one depicting the lives of whites. Hurston wrote for various magazines in the 1950s, but her increasingly conservative views concerning race relations alienated her from black intellectual circles. A recluse in her later years, she died on January 28, 1960, in a welfare home in Fort Pierce, Florida.

Hurston's most artistically successful fiction is *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), a novel about a woman who tells her own story of identity and love. As Hurston reveals in her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, much of the story is based on a love affair she herself had experienced: "The plot was far from the circumstances, but I tried to embalm all the tenderness of my passion for him in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (210-211). She showed her philosophy on how a person should live his life and get the most out of it. Besides her passion, Hurston has written her own experience into the novel. In her autobiography she wrote: "I had stifled longing. I used to climb to the top of one of the huge chinaberry trees which guarded our front gate, and look out over the world. The most interesting thing that I saw was the horizon. [...] It grew upon me that I ought to walk out to the horizon and see what the end of the world was like" (*Dust Tracks on the Road*, 27). Zora set up a similar situation in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* where the heroine contemplates, explores and achieves the horizon. Through her character, Zora's childhood dream becomes a reality.

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