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IDENTITY CONFUSION IN DOROTHY WEST'S *THE LIVING IS EASY*

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ABSTRACT

Literature is a media for conveying the authors' ideas and feelings to the payers, or it is a mean of relief for them to bare their souls. In this context, literature involves an enormous place in human life. In this regard, African American literature has an important place in American literature and culture. It is also one of the strongest pillars of the literature produced by black writers in the United States of America. African American literature goes and continues in the course of history as oral literature from generation to generation. Since African Americans' place changes gradually in the USA- due to racism in particular- their viewpoint of literature changes, too. African American history predates the foundation of the United States of America as an independent country, so their literature has deep roots, consisting of rich oral culture in poetry, including gospel music, blues, rap, and spirituals along with written poetry, and slave narrations. Although African Americans come from slave ancestors, they have been able to leave a deep effect on the literature of the United States when they are brought to the continent of America. African American literature is mainly based on autobiographical spiritual narratives, and before the American Civil War African Americans' literature consists of memoirs of people who escape from slavery. So, African American literature has witnessed the problem of racial discrimination in its existential aspect. But in the progress of time, black writers go deep into verbal literature and perform their own experiences. Dorothy West, in her novel *Living is Easy* criticizes the blacks who mimes the whites. When we scrutinize, it is possible to penetrate that the writer wants to reflect her own experiences via narration and criticizes her own past. Writing is a kind of purgation for West since she writes about herself. In this study, we aim to point out the impulses that foster Dorothy West's narration from a Freudian point of view.

Keywords: Afro-American Novel, Social Memory, Slavery, Racial Discrimination, Psychoanalytic

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DOROTHY WEST'İN THE LIVING IS EASY ADLI ROMANINDA KİMLİK KARMAŞASI

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ÖZ

Edebiyat, yazarların fikirlerini ve duygularını muhataplarına aktarmak için bir araç ya da içsel huzura varmalarını sağlayan bir rahatlama aracıdır. Bu bağlamda edebiyat insan hayatında çok büyük bir yer kaplamaktadır. Bu bağlamda Afro-Amerikan edebiyatı, Amerikan edebiyatı ve kültüründe önemli bir yere sahiptir. Aynı zamanda Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde siyahi yazarlar tarafından üretilen edebiyatın en güçlü ayaklarından biridir. Afro-Amerikan edebiyatı sözlü edebiyat olarak nesilden nesile tarihin akışı içinde devam edegelmiştir. Afrikalı Amerikalıların ABD'deki yeri -özellikle ırkçılık nedeniyle- giderek değiştiği için edebiyata bakış açıları da değişmektedir. Afro-Amerikan tarihi, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bağımsız bir ülke olarak kuruluşundan öncesine dayanır, bu nedenle edebiyatları derin köklere sahiptir; yazılı şiir ve köle anlatılarının yanı sıra gospel müziği, blues, rap ve spiritüeller de dahil olmak üzere şiirdeki zengin sözlü kültürden oluşur. Afrikalı Amerikalıların kökenleri köleliğe dayanmasına rağmen, Amerika kıtasına getirildiklerinde Amerika Birleşik Devletleri edebiyatı üzerinde derin bir etki bırakmayı başarmışlardır. Afro-Amerikan edebiyatı ağırlıklı olarak otobiyografik ruhani anlatılara dayanır ve Amerikan İç Savaşı öncesinde Afro-Amerikan edebiyatı kölelikten kaçan insanların anılarından oluşur. Dolayısıyla, Afro-Amerikan edebiyatı varoluşsal yönüyle ırk ayrımcılığı sorununa tanıklık etmiştir. Ancak zamanın ilerlemesiyle siyahi yazarlar sözlü edebiyatın derinliklerine inerek kendi deneyimlerini icra etmişlerdir. Dorothy West, *The Living is Easy* adlı romanında beyazları taklit eden siyahları eleştirir. İncelediğimizde yazarın kendi deneyimlerini anlatı yoluyla yansıtmak istediğini ve kendi geçmişini eleştirdiğini sezmek mümkündür. Yazmak West için bir tür arınmadır, zira kendisi hakkında yazmaktadır. Bu çalışmada Dorothy West'in anlatısını besleyen dürtüleri Freudyen bir bakış açısıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktayız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afro-Amerikan Roman, Toplumsal Bellek, Kölelik, Irksal Ayrımcılık, Psikanalitik

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1. INTRODUCTION

African American history dates to 16th century. Black people lead an ordinary and limited life in their enormous continent far before any turbulences take place. However, their poor, limited but happy life does not maintain as wanted because the nice atmosphere in Africa Continent is about break due to some quests of gold, power, and property of European countries such as England, Portugal, France, Netherlands, and Spain, which pave way a new continent- America- to be discovered and a trouble process to begin. Truth be told, “America was only several names for a dream dreamed in the first instance by Europeans” (Gray, 2011). Of these dreamer European countries, Spain takes the first place in search of wealth as it is home to many poor peasants and just recently unified as a modern nation state, meaning a wide need of money, gold, and land. On the other hand, in the East, the Ottomans conquer Constantinople, the eastern Mediterranean and control the routes Asia, causing a need of sea route. Due to this urgent need of route, Portuguese sailors work on a new route: the southern of Africa, a pure and untouched continent, which attracts the Spanish to sail long journeys across ocean- the symbol of eternity- and for the Spanish the eternal wealth. From then on, Spain gradually discovers and invades the continent. Spain’s wealth coming from the continent causes many European countries to sail this new world.

For this reason, in 1620, with a ship named Mayflower first English group sail to America, [a great wave of immigration begins from Europe to the North America] for good and various reasons such as to escape political pressures, to embark on adventures, to be able to benefit from rights and opportunities denied to them in their countries and to practice their religious beliefs freely. These colonizers are called Puritans. “If the American wilderness did not provide a hearty welcome for the colonists, it nevertheless offered a wealth of natural resources” (Curry, 2005). They established large colonies in newly invaded lands. In this new establishment many European landlords need much more manpower than before, which will initiate a long-lasting problem to be born: slavery. Notably, one of the reasons of the necessity of new manpower depends on the cause and effect of Colombian Exchange. “The Columbian Exchange refers to the exchange of diseases, ideas, food crops, and populations between the New World and the Old World following the voyage to the Americas by Christopher Columbus in 1492” (Nunn & Qian, 2010). “In this exchange, in which millions of people have died on different occasions, millions more have been forced to migrate, and many unfair exchanges have taken place, the world has entered a different era”¹ (Ser, 2023). Millions of people decease due to this exchange, and the landlords are obliged to seek for new manpower, aka slaves:

Deaths increased the need for labour, this need was met by migration, migration brought new diseases, and a cycle of few winners and dead losers ensued. The impact of imported diseases on Native Americans was devastating, making it difficult to grow crops. European settlers/invasers turned to the slave trade to meet the demand for labour to replace the dying Native Americans. This would lead to around 12,500,000 Africans being sold on slave markets between the 16th and 19th centuries (Ser, 2023).

During the 17th and early 18th centuries a great wave of emigration from Africa to America begins in brutal and inhumane conditions. “The entrance of European powers into the African continent during the colonial period changed Africa fundamentally” (Worger et al., 2010). Black people are captured and transported to America in any opportunity. They are treated like animals on board, and piled like woods regardless of men, women, or children. They face discrimination almost in every aspect in terms of colour, gender, and race as soon as they set foot in the continent of America. This horrible problem goes on many years and reaches a peak in the 20th century. They are excluded from the society and brought to lower positions with some laws. Jim Crow Laws are the most well-known and influential ones, which claim openly that black ethnicity is mean and disgusting, “which regulated social, economic, and political relationships between whites and African Americans, are passed principally to subordinate blacks as a group to whites and to enforce rules favoured by dominant whites on non-conformists of both races” (Kousser, 2023). Jim Crow Laws contain mainly racial segregation in the USA until the second half of the 20th century. They deprive African Americans of many human rights such as going to schools, getting on buses, going to theatres, and churches. With Jim Crow Laws, African Americans are forced to live as a second-class human status in American society. Unfortunately, this racial segregation between blacks and whites continues many years in the USA, causing great tension in social life.

Jim Crow is a stage name of Thomas Dartmouth Rice (May 20, 1808- September 19, 1860), an American performer and playwright who performs blackface and uses African-American vernacular speech, song, and dance to make fun of them. He plays a black, slave, and stupid character on the stage, trying to show and impose how being black is inferior, mean, and disgusting. During Jim Crow Laws period racial segregation is so clear and certain that even taps for students to drink water at schools are divided into three groups as ‘white-black-coloured’.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, this and subsequent references to Turkish works have been translated into English by me for the purposes of this study.

African Americans are called 'negro' or worse 'nigger', which is a humiliating word. In this dark atmosphere and pessimistic world black people are stuck and suffocate. Their memory is full of terrible scenes which they will not be able to forget easily. In order to get some fresh air and relief- a kind of mental masturbation in psychoanalysis- they begin to tell their experiences during slavery, the beginning of African American literature. Ahmet Sari states that most psychologists consider the act of creation as "A form of literary relaxation or consciousness-memory masturbation" (2008). Öztürk says, in a way, we can liken writing to confession and describes the work of art as a confession (1993). In one regard West experiences a state of inner purification during the creation process, and the work of art is a product of this purification. The adverse circumstances cause them to look for a way out, which results in "racism and equality, are very likely to be one of reasons of the development of African-American Literature" (Sobhi, 2016). Through their writings such as poems, and letters black people describe their daily lives before, during and after slavery. Although their writings are not regarded and accepted as authentic or literary works because of slavery system, they produce remarkable works and particularly in the first half of the 20th century play a significant role to be known and heard via a new movement: Harlem Renaissance.

In Harlem a new movement, that is a kind of revolt in a way and dubbed as Harlem Renaissance, begins. It is a historical movement for blacks to regain their freedom in terms of intellectual, cultural, and social life. It is also called as New Negro Movement, and it has influences on political development in African Americans lives. Until the end of the Civil War, most African Americans are enslaved and live in the South. But after the migration to the North, they begin to re-evaluate their identity, struggling for equality. Initially, they endeavour to solve the colour issue by removing the slaveholder offensive labels such as black, nigger, and negro- a Spanish word for black- so, they begin to use milder words such as coloured, as a euphemism for black or negro. In the early years, from the 1900s to mid-1930s Harlem is filled with many activities such as cabarets, nightclubs, theatres, newspapers, and music companies, all of which run by African Americans. During this period, poor blacks live in Harlem along with intellectuals, writers, artists, and wealthy blacks who could support them financially. In such a free, comfortable, and inspirational atmosphere, African American literature begins to flourish noticeably. Many great and important writers appear in the literature stage as Dorothy West. She holds an enormous part of the Harlem Renaissance, writing noticeable novels during this period.

2. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Dorothy West is an American novelist and short story writer. She was born on June 2, 1907, in Boston, Massachusetts, and died on August 16, 1998, in Boston, Massachusetts, the USA. She is best known for her novel *The Living is Easy*, and other many essays and short stories dealing with the upper-class of black families. She is the daughter of an ex-slave father who becomes a successful businessman after gaining his freedom. Her family live in a predominantly white neighbourhood along with an all-white school. Dorothy is the only dark-skinned student at school, while her cousins are light skinned and thought as white by other students. She is mocked and looked down as 'nigger'. These racial insults change her perception of life. So, West begins to write at a very early age, and publishes her short stories just at the age of eighteen as she says; "I used writing as an excuse for not going out to play. That was the beginning of my writing" (The JBHE Foundation, 1998).

In 1920s, West appears in some noticeable journals such as *Saturday Evening Quill*, *Boston Post*, and *Opportunity*. West moves to Harlem and becomes an important writer of the Harlem Renaissance. She makes great contributions during the Harlem Renaissance and Great Depression by publishing her essays, short stories, and novels. This period is a turning point for black women in the North when compared with the ones in the South. Because in the South black women lack many human rights due to the remains of slavery while in the North black women such as Dorothy West have their own rights and even can become writers. Dorothy West's first novel, *The Living is Easy*, is published in 1948 when America emerges the war years- the World War II- but it is still haunted by the collapse of morale and financial crisis all around the country, which is reflected almost in all literary works of the era. It is a time of conflict both in Europe and in the USA, also regarded as a bloody period in the USA. The novel traces the story of Cleo Judson, the main character, from her childhood to her mature time. For this reason, it is a bildungsroman- coming of age- novel.

3. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATION AS A TREATMENT METHOD

Writing has a curing effect on human's soul. For this reason, many writers resort to writing as a treatment method. Through writing they take a deep breath and relieve in a way, by avoiding the gloomy atmosphere and the environment they live in. Because these writers cannot express themselves clearly-as many people may not be able to understand them- they use writing to cure their psychology and relieve their soul. They write pouring out their miseries out of their souls. Freud argues that the authors are able to conceal themselves very well in a work inspired by their experiences. Stating that Goethe skilfully hides himself in his works, Freud says: "Goethe was not only a great confessor, but also someone who meticulously concealed and hid himself despite the many autobiographical revelations in his works" (2013). They conceal themselves skilfully. Feeling suffocated, bored, and tired out of their gloomy atmosphere, the writers need to pour whatever inside their out, just as Berna Moran suggests: "The

artist feels the need strongly to express his/her inner excitement and feelings. It is like s/he needs to get rid of them. S/he embarks on the act of 'creation' with an unpreventable impulse and feels relieved when s/he expresses his/her feelings in his/her work(s)" (2022).

Accordingly, Dorothy West, who has an important position in the black society of the USA, shares a similar situation in her most notable work *The Living is Easy*. Being dark skinned and spending her childhood in a predominantly white neighbourhood, she has a gloomy and suffocating atmosphere even at her early age. She faces discrimination and racial insults, causing her to lead a four-walled life mostly. Not able to have a playful childhood with her white friends and light skinned cousins- because they are thought white- she resorts to writing as an excuse for not having to go out to play. From then on, writing becomes a company and cure for her gloomy inner life. A sole way to relieve herself. Writing is a shelter for West to purify herself. Most artists not only relax by writing but also find themselves in a process of creation. Peter Childs explains this state of relaxation that most famous writers achieve through writing as follows: "Freud's model of free association, which he used to enable patients to convey the thoughts passing through their minds uncensored, is reflected in the novels of many writers as the interest shown in the speech cure" (2010). The act of writing serves as a catharsis for West. Because catharsis is a concept that expresses personal purification, defined as; "The transmission of the emotional burdens that are stuck there by deviating from the wrong paths to normal paths and providing discharges from these paths" (Freud, 2013). Almost every work reflects its writer's inner or outer life. Through main characters, many writers try to pour out their accumulated feelings generally or autobiographically. In *The Living is Easy*, as the writer has experienced many unpleasant moments, she- through the main character, Cleo- tries to relieve her soul and mind by reflecting and expressing her inner life. Through writing she may reach an ultimate relief, just as Ahmet Sari states: "In the literary act, therefore, in addition to the pleasure in the individual's act of writing, there is of course also a self-executed therapy process, discharge, catharsis" (2008).

4. IDENTITY CRISES IN *THE LIVING IS EASY*

The Living is Easy, setting mostly in Boston between 1914-1919, traces the story of Cleo Judson, the protagonist, whose life parallels with the writer's. Cleo was born in the South, a predominantly slave neighbourhood. She is depicted as beautiful and young, and the eldest of four sisters. However, living in such a predominantly slave neighbourhood means danger, racial insults and sexual abuse for light skinned and charming black girls, which can clearly be seen in West's life: "Light skinned and considered very beautiful, West's mother was sent north by her parents who were concerned that their daughter was vulnerable to sexual abuse by white men in the South" (The JBHE Foundation, 1998). Living in an oppressed and imprisoned in the South causes Cleo to change her direction and style of her life as well as her character. She gets more interested in wealth and freedom. Her approach and behavior towards man- maleness- changes at a very early age. Because of the male dominant society, she feels hatred and superiority towards man, making her a bully and an arrogant she-wolf against patriarchy. She thinks- and in general, for all women- she has to be smart, strong, and independent: "A woman had to think all the time. A woman had to be smart" (West, 1982). She even pities and looks down on man, thinking that man is inferior to woman: "What was there to being a boy? What was there to being a man? Men just worked. That was easier than what women did. It was women who did the lying awake, the planning, the sorrowing, the scheming to stretch a dollar" (West, 1982).

In addition to her prevailing desire for being independent- from anything or anyone- she thinks she needs to be independent financially as well. To be freer and gain her life, she moves to the North, a much more democratic and hopeful neighbourhood than the South. She moves to Massachusetts to work as a maid in the homes of white female benefactors. But the colourful and elite life in the North attracts her a lot. She is fascinated now by such a flamboyant atmosphere. So, from then on, she tries hard and does anything to have such a life and raise her children, too in that soothing, promising environment. At the age of nineteen, she gets married a far older man than her. Her husband, named Bart, is also black and from the South. He is a wealthy and successful businessman, known as 'The Banana King'. They have a five-year-old daughter, named Judy. Cleo, in fact, does not love her husband. She just uses him as a tool to reach her own goals and have elite social life among other black families in Boston because her husband is rich and a good provider for the family, and he seems to be content by saying to Cleo: "You know it's my pride to be a good provider" (West, 1982). Cleo is very passionate for being rich such that when she was a little girl, she cheats her sisters for taking their coppers (West, 1982). She deceives and treats her husband badly, even calls him 'nigger' although she is also black, and furthermore treats her husband as an enemy of her (West, 1982).

Dorothy West intends to touch the black people's negative approach towards their own race in *The Living is Easy*. Although she is negro, Cleo hates negroes which can be reflected in her subconscious, as social pressure can make one hate himself/herself. At the same time, black people are uncomfortable when one of their own walks confidently and upright because s/he is black and, to them, they cannot walk like a white person. When Cleo visits poor side of Boston the men and women look at her with hate. They do not want her to walk with her head erect. For a black is a black, their thoughts run, and as no-account as the next (West, 1982). We learn Cleo's same

approach from the novel as such: "Cleo seemed a light in the gathering gloom. She was southern, she was coloured. From what Miss Boorum had read of southern coloured people they were devoted to what they quaintly called 'my white folks' and quite disdainful of their own kind, often referring to them as 'niggers'" (West, 1982). To Frantz Fanon it is inferiority to insult one's own race for not being white, he says: "As poor is the man who preaches hatred against whites, so poor is the black man who thinks of whitening his race" (1996). Cleo fails to realise that by emulating whites in this way, she actually insults and humiliates her own self and her own race. This is because she is an individual who considers herself superior to her racial peers. "To Bart's embarrassment, that his wife considered herself too good for them" (West, 1982). In this context, Cleo's behaviour can also be overlapped with Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity. He describes hybridity as follows: "Hybridity is the sign of the efficiency of colonial power, of its variable powers and immutability; it is the strategic reversal of the process of domination through denial. Hybridity is the re-evaluation of the appropriation of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (2016).

When we look at Bhabha's definition of hybridity above, we can see that Cleo, in a sense, tries to take over a power like the power of the white. The fact that she endeavours to take everyone in her neighbourhood under her control and rule them, and that she goes further and uses the term 'nigger', which is used by whites to humiliate the black people, to her own poorer racemates confirms this thesis. In this context, we can say that in the depths of Cleo's soul there is perhaps a thought of wanting to be white. Fanon expresses that blacks have always nourished this feeling and that they burn with the desire to become white one day: "From the darkest corner of my soul, from the darkest corner of my soul, which is as black as my face, from the darkest back shadow of my black-striped consciousness, a desire breaks out, a sudden desire to be white" (1996). And that is why some characters in the novel behave as if they are white (West, 1982). Although Dorothy West does not mention an overt identity crisis in her novel, Cleo's identity crisis is related to her inability to maneuver herself into the whites and her inability to completely isolate herself from the members of her own race. Mehmet Ali Çelikel explains the postcolonial identity in-between as follows: "Postcolonial migrations, of course, are far from being smooth and are a process that brings cultural and identity crises for both the immigrant and the host culture" (2011). Cleo, as an immigrant from the South, reflects this identity crisis and ambivalence in her personality as she is caught between two cultures and two races and emulates white people.

Cleo spends most of her time to have her own personal benefits, especially using her husband as a means or money supplier. Her marriage is not for sexuality or a man to protect her since for Cleo; "Men were nothing but stomach and other things" (West, 1982). She tells her husband at the night of their marriage that she is not born to lick the boots of anybody living (West, 1982), and to her sister that she ought to thank God she has got Cleo to look after her (West, 1982). This expression shows us that Cleo is so full of herself. The only reason why she marries is to have a feeble husband that she can manage and control, which can be seen as a sign of blossoming of the feminist approach in her subconscious. But when witnessing Cleo's behaviours towards her husband, we can see that this approach has already settled in her life. Even though she is married and mother, she does not fit into the true woman concept of the 19th century. She is no longer the angel in the house. She wants to raise her daughter according to the elite and ostentatious life in the North, despising her own black nation: "Judy was nearing school age. She had no intention of sending her to school in the South End. Whenever she passed these schools at recess time, she would hustle Judy out of sight and sound. 'Little knotty-head niggers,' she would mutter unkindly, while Judy looked shocked because "nigger" was a bad-word" (West, 1982).

As seen above, "*The Living is Easy* focuses primarily on the lives of Cleo and Bart Judson, southern blacks who migrated North in search of the American dream of wealth, success, and fame" (Jones, 1999). It can also be categorized as a satiric picture of Boston's 'counterfeit bourgeoisie,' its black middle class, and as a novel that indicts black society artificially modelled on false white values (Rodgers, 1992), which is emulated by southern blacks. Cleo's being so keen on wealth and freedom leads her to a wrong and mannerless way of life; "Along with her racial denial and class elitism" (Sanders, 2002), for which she can do anything to achieve. She tries to create her own dominant world in which she can rule as she wishes. Even during her childhood, she observes how her father is unable to manage and protect the family under the same roof. Subconsciously, Cleo hates her father due to his poor incapability and incompetence, as he cannot protect and secure his daughters like a real and ideal father, which also causes her to belittle maleness, hate men and grow up, in a way, as a roaring wild beast. She hates his father because he marries with another women after her mother passes away. "She couldn't bear the thought of the women who had taken Mama's place, and she tried to turn her sisters against her" (West, 1982). From then on, she behaves like a man, rises to boast, and bully against even men not to fall. She resists every trouble. She is seen as the boss of everybody around her. The men are tools and the other for her, whom she uses to get what she wants. She forces her husband to move to a larger house. The moment she persuades her husband- with some tricks and lies- for the big house in Boston, she calls her sisters with their children- but leaving behind their husbands- to come over in the summertime of the year 1914. Even though her sisters are married to the husbands they love and settle in various places out of Boston, Cleo manages to bring them under her own roof (control), which causes them to be estranged from their husbands because Cleo sees their husbands as humble 'niggers' (West, 1982).

Although she does not like the crowded way of life of the South, she desires to set her own colony with her sisters and live in the same house. She says: "I have missed ever since I left the South. Mama and Pa and my three sisters made a good-size family. As long as I am the boss of the house, I don't care how many people are in it" (West, 1982). Because of her father's being a weak character and provider- although her father is the closest and the first man in her life- Cleo hates all men. And just because of this situation she separates her sisters from their husbands though they love them, which can be regarded as a feminist approach of Cleo that tries to save her sisters from male hegemony and control since "She felt no fear, feeling only the power beneath her and the power inside her..." (West, 1982). In fact, we have a utopian approach here: women can live and survive without men. With Cleo's approach, the writer tries to show the readers that Cleo has a dominant feminist nature and hates her father, husband, and thus all men. Her sister Charity criticizes Cleo for not writing a word to her father for a long time as follows: "Cleo, sometimes I do believe you got a devil in you somewhere. Serena told me it hurt Pa's feelings you never once wrote him all these years" (West, 1982). She is a very sordid woman that although Bart devotes himself to his family, he is not seen as a real man but provider (West, 1982). At this new house, Cleo goes on controlling and managing all the members around her, including her own husband. This situation is realized by Cleo's daughter and her nieces. They see clearly that there is only one manager at this place: "Even Vicky and Penny talked about her more than they talked about their own mothers. They never said anything nice, but they said a whole a lot. It was funny, but Cleo was the boss of everybody. It was like she was the boss of the house. Papa wasn't" (West, 1982).

Cleo is such a dominant and bossy character that even little children can see that clearly. In the end, she does whatever she has in her mind, ignoring everybody around her- regardless of her father, husband, or anybody else- which shows the powerful aspect of her matriarchy. While black women in the South live still slave lifestyle and lack of even basic human rights, in the North black women have almost every opportunity beyond their basic rights. Women, like Cleo, can have what they want, they even can manage the house in the North, where she thinks she can live freely and manipulate her family (nation) for her sake. She even tries to change her sisters, despising their former lives. She manipulates them by making them live with her, which causes their marriages to ruin. She forces them to live as little Bostonians. She wants all her family to lead a steady and elite life in the North for her own name. However, her sisters are alienated and estranged from their husbands and homes. Cleo, while talking Charity, says that her husband is a dog and when she separates from him, all she will lose is a nigger (West, 1982). After all the manipulation of Cleo, they are trapped between two fires. Nevertheless, they are torn apart now because of Cleo's ambition and desire of control even though they can live with their husbands happily in a way, which can be as the best sign of her feminist aspect.

Cleo's sisters represent the dependent women. Because each of her sisters needs her in a way. They are limited due to poor financial conditions. Of her sisters, Charity feels empty without her husband- although he is not an ideal one- she devotes herself to eating as if she would never eat and have food enough. Lily accepts the dependence and tries to please Cleo's husband- as he is rich- which shows she is in need can be controlled easily. But Serena is not like them. Despite Cleo, she struggles both for her own independence and love. Serena faces many barriers such as gender and social problems, but she never gives up shaping her life as she wishes. On the other hand, Cleo interferes in and tries to arrange her daughter's tutor Thea's life, who comes from a poor family- her father has bankrupt and dies- according to her own wish. Because Cleo is a master manipulative, and she also wants to be admired. The hidden reason underlying Cleo's desire for such control is her desire to see in herself the ability of whites to rule. She desires for whole control over everything and everyone. But eventually, she ruins her husband's life- also her own life- because of her over manipulation. She dries her husband's blood to a certain extent, as she always reshapes herself through her husband's financial support. Because her husband is just a simple tool and the other for her. She regards him just as a source of financial support, nothing else. But despite her husband's financial support and his trying to be an ideal provider for his family, Cleo is still unsatisfied because she thinks being married to a man is the same thing as being his slave, which shows how arrogant she is. Nevertheless, she bears her husband for his money since, up to her, money is the measure of independence (West, 1982).

During war years- WWI- everything goes wrong. With the arrival of the war, the economy gets upside down. Mr. Bart's banana shipments are affected badly. Now, money-hungry Cleo is face to face with devastating financial support. She still expects support from her husband and tries to get money from her husband, which shows she does not have a real sight even on a black day. She is still looking for someone around her to use and manipulate next. The only thing she realizes and cares about is that she is still dependent on her husband although she treats him- and has always treated until this hard time- like dirt and tool. Despite Cleo's hatred towards whites, she is forced to consent to her sister Charity accepting a cookery offer made by a white man because her financial power, that is, her freedom, will be taken away with the deterioration of her husband's business. Before this, she says the following about the man who makes this offer to her sister: "Who does that white man think he is coming to my house to look for a cook? Why do you want to say 'sir' to white trash?" (West, 1982). So, at the end of Cleo's story, it can clearly be seen that she has struggled in vain. Because all her struggles, dreams for an elite life and

female domain end up with disappointment. She is frustrated but desperate as she loses almost everything that she desires most. The elite life that she thinks is in the North is gone now. Even her only child Judy sees that her mother is not a true mother or boss. "Judy was beginning to see that Cleo was the boss of nothing but the young, the weak, the frightened. She ruled a pygmy kingdom" (West, 1982). Judy thinks that her mother is just the boss of the poor and feeble people, who are dependent on her in her tiny kingdom.

5. CONCLUSION

The mood of this book is frustrating, tedious, and disappointing to read, but it still can be read- and must be read- by the society, as it reflects the lifestyles of black people in that era. While even black men are slaves and treated like beasts in the South, as a woman and writer, Dorothy West rises and revolts against the male hegemony. She both writes and while writing she tries to show- however utopian it is- even a black woman can manage and control her husband, and house. Because, beyond an ambitious and manipulative female character's life, there is a national issue here- just for being dark-skinned. Through Cleo, the writer has tried to show how a woman of the unwelcomed and despised nation struggles to survive and prevail in a new environment, which she thinks is more democratic and liveable than where she comes from. From her childhood until maturity, she has always been an enduring female character, but she is misguided by the flamboyant atmosphere in the North, as her husband's- through whom she situates her place in society- business falls and is about to go bankrupt. Moreover, she draws all the good, weak, and poor people from the top to the bottom, destroying their lives.

Cleo is the ultimate image of the enduring and disappointing image of black matriarchy. She also represents the bridge between the blacks and whites, the South, and the North. She transforms herself- and, therefore, her family members- into a new irreversible shape by manipulating, exploiting, and ignoring them for her own personal benefits. Throughout the novel, we see a very patient fighter, who, even at the beginning of her childhood is aware of all her dreams. There is a growing middle class of African Americans in Boston, north of America, which is fascinating to African- Americans in the South who suffer from the harsh and pitiless system of slavery. Witnessing all these sufferings, Cleo escapes the poverty and brutal racism, which is quite natural for someone living under pressure. To come all her dreams true, she needs a total financial power. So, she marries a wealthy man, regardless of his age, nation, or colour, as she only cares about his financial status through which she can rise and prevail in society. He is conservative but not an ideal husband or father because he is easily manipulated and used by her dominant wife. Through him, Cleo arranges her sisters to her house, which is hired by her insisting, in Boston where most of elite blacks and whites live side by side.

On the other hand, the writer portrays Cleo neither so good nor so bad or despicable. She depicts Cleo's struggle to recapture her freedom both in body and soul from pressure, which is quite normal and reasonable. But what is noticeable about Cleo is her manipulative, ignorant, and selfish attitudes while seeming helpful towards the people around her. For instance, her yearning for her sisters is far greater than her concern for them. As she wants to create her own feminist lifestyle, -which has settled in her subconscious- she applies such a way to start build the core of her feminine social structure, starting from her own family, as a requirement of the feminist approach. And towards the end of the novel, it is clearly seen that she has used them to empower her own position in her husband's newly hired house. In the end, Cleo appears to get what she wants, but with the collapse of her husband's business, she collapses and falls, too, which brings out the reality that her dream of dominant female utopia fails and thus becomes dystopic without her husband's financial support. All of what reflected throughout this book can be considered as an expression of the writer that she wants to cry out subconsciously.

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