Zora Neale Hurston’s

THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD

Music-Oriented/Sound/Voice Quotes

“Janie full of that oldest human longing – self revelation” (Hurston 9).

“It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again. What? How? Why? This singing she heard had nothing to do with her ears” (Hurston 14).

“She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the painting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her” (Hurston 15).

“She was seeking confirmation of the voice and vision, and everywhere she found and acknowledged answers” (Hurston 15).

“With kissing bees singing of the beginning of the world! … Where were the singing bees for her?” (Hurston 15).

“Nanny closed her eyes and nodded a slow, weary affirmation many times before she gave it voice” (Hurston 17).

“Nanny half sung, half sobbed a running chant-prayer over the head of the weeping girl” (Hurston 20).

“While Davis chanted a traditional prayer-poem with his own variations, Joe mounted the box that had been placed for the purpose and opened the brazen door of the lamp” (Hurston 61).

“We’ll walk in de light, de beautiful light / Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright / Shine all around us by day and by night / Jesus, the light of the world” (Hurston 61).

“They, all of them, all of the people took it up and sung it over and over until it was wrung dry, and no further innovations of tone and tempo were conceivable” (Hurston 61).

“When God had made The Man, he made him out of stuff that sung all the time and glittered all over. Then after that some angels got jealous and chopped him into millions of pieces, but still he glittered and hummed. So, they beat him down to nothing but sparks but each little spark had a
shine and a song. So they covered each one over with mud. And the lonesomeness in the sparks make them hunt for one another, but the mud is deaf and dumb. Like all the other tumbling mud-balls, Janie had tried to show her shine” (Hurston 121).

“Dat’s whut you say now, but two months mo’ and you’ll sing another tune” (Joe; Hurston 122).

“She heard somebody humming like they were feeling for pitch and looked towards the door. Tea Cake stood there mimicking the tuning of a guitar. He frowned and struggled with the pegs of his imaginary instrument watching her out of the corner of his eye with that secret joke playing over his face. Finally she smiled and he sung middle C, put his guitar under his arm and walked on back to where she was” (Hurston 134-135).

“Evenin’ folks. Thought y’all might lak uh lil music this evenin’ so Ah brought long mah box” (Tea Cake; Hurston 135).

“Then Tea Cake went to the piano without so much as asking and began playing the blues and singing, and throwing grins over his shoulder” (Hurston 136).

Mentions the jook on page 142

“After a while there was somebody playing a guitar outside her door. Played right smart while. It sounded lovely too. But it was sad to hear it feeling blue like Janie was. Then whoever it was started to singing ‘Ring de bells of mercy. Call de sinner man home.’ Her heart all but smothered her” (Hurston 161).

“Then everybody began to holler at the music because the man couldn’t play but three pieces. So Tea Cake took the guitar and played himself. He was glad of the chance because he hadn’t had his hand on a box since he put his in the pawn shop to get some money to hire a car for Janie soon after he met her. He missed his music” (Hurston 165).

“All night now the jooks clanged and clamored. Pianos living three lifetimes in one. Blues made and used right on the spot. Dancing, fighting, singing, crying, laughing, winning and losing every hour. Work all day for money, fight all night for love” (Hurston 176).

“The way he would sit in the doorway and play his guitar made people stop and listen and maybe disappoint the jook for that night” (Hurston 177).

“Some where there to hear Tea Cake pick the box; some came to talk and tell stories, but most of them came to get into whatever game was going on or might go on” (Hurston 179).

“For instance during the summer when she heard the subtle but compelling rhythms of the Bahaman drummers, she’d walk over and watch the dances. She did not laugh the ‘Saws’ to scorn as she had heard the people doing in the season” (Hurston 186).
“’And dey makes me tired. Always laughin’! Dey laughs too much and dey laughs too loud. Always singin’ ol’ nigger songs!’” (Mis’ Turner; Hurston 189).

Booker T. Washington references on page 190.

“Beans running fine and prices good, so the Indians could be, must be, wrong. You couldn’t have a hurricane when you’re making seven and eight dollars a day picking beans. Indians are dumb anyhow, always were. Another night of Stew Beef making dynamic subtleties with his drum and living, sculptural, grotesques in the dance. Next day, no Indians passed at all” (Hurston 206).

“Some rabbits scurried through the quarters going east. Some possums slunk by and their route was definite. One or two at a time, then more. By the time the people left the fields the procession was constant. Snakes, rattlesnakes began to cross the quarters. The men killed a few, but they could not be missed from the crawling horde. People stayed indoors until daylight. Several times during the night Janie heard the snort of big animals like deer. Once the muted voice of a panther. Going east and east. That night the palm and banana trees began that long distance talk with rain… A thousand buzzards held a flying meet and then went above the clouds and stayed” (Hurston 207).

“’If Ah never see you no mo’ on earth. Ah’ll meet you in Africa’” (‘Lias; Hurston 208).

“Somebody tried to say that it was a mouth organ harp that John was playing, but the rest of them could not hear that. Don’t care how good anybody could play a harp. God would rather hear a guitar” (Hurston 209).

“Muck-boy woke up and began to chant with the rhythm and everybody bore down on the last word of the line: Yo’ mama don’t wear no Draws / Ah seen her when she took ‘em Off / She soaked ‘em in alcoHol / She sold ‘em tuh de Santy Claws / He told her ‘twas against de Law / To wear dem dirty Draws’” (Hurston 209).

“Then Muck-Boy went crazy through the feet and danced himself and everybody else crazy” (Hurston 209).

“Everything in the world had a strong rattle, sharp and short like Stew Beef vibrating the drum head near the edge with his fingers. By morning, Gabriel was playing the deep tones in the center of the drum… Louder and higher and lower and wider the sound and motion spread, mounting, sinking, darking” (Hurston 210).

“Common danger made common friends” (Hurston 219).