

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

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November 13, 2017. Toomer, concluded; Hurston (1).

review

- ▶ linkage and wholeness (cane, purple, the sun)
- ▶ the alienated artist-figure (Paul, Kabnis...)
- ▶ moments of blockage are also moments of potentiality

beauty and violence

Kabnis wants to hear the story of Mame Lamkins. He does not want to hear it. It can be no worse than the shouting. (“Kabnis,” 124)

The method by which Mrs. Mary Turner was put to death was so revolting and the details are so horrible that it is with reluctance that the account is given...

Walter F. White, “The Work of a Mob: An Investigation by Walter F. White, Assistant Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in Brooks and Lowndes Counties, Georgia,” *Crisis* 16, no. 5 (September 1918): 222. [Modernist Journals Project](#).

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Then they remember the words, and begin to shift them about in sentences. (125)

Demagogues may storm and saints may plead, but America will remain a grotesque storm-center, torn by passion and hatred, until our democratic pretensions are replaced by a socialized reality.

Jean Toomer, "Reflections on the Race Riots," *New York Call*, August 2, 1919. fultonhistory.com.

Lewis: An artist in your way, arent you, Halsey?

Halsey: Reckon I am, Lewis. Give me th work and fair pay an aint askin nothin better. Went over-seas an saw France; an I come back. Been up North; an I come back. Went t school; but there aint no books whats got th feel t them of them there tools. Nassur. An I'm atellin y. (137)

Zora Neale Hurston



- 1891 b. Alabama
- 1919 Howard University
- 1924 first publication
- 1925 Barnard; studies anthro. under Boas
- 1925 appears in *New Negro*
- 1926 *Fire!!* (w/ Hughes and Thurman)
- 1927 folklore research in Florida
- 1931 "Hoodoo in America," *J. Am. Folklore*
- 1931 theatre and concert work
- 1934 *Jonah's Gourd Vine*
- 1935 *Mules and Men* (folk stories)
- 1937 *Their Eyes*
(written in Haiti on a Guggenheim)
- 1942 *Dust Tracks on a Road* (memoir)
- 1950– increasing poverty and obscurity
- 1960 d. Florida
- 1975– revival

Renaissance

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation*, June 23, 1926: 694.

writing back

The answer lies in what we may call THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF UN-NATURAL HISTORY. This is an intangible built on folk belief. It is assumed that all non-Anglo-Saxons are uncomplicated stereotypes.... They are lay figures mounted in the museum where all may take them in at a glance. They are made of bent wires without insides at all. So how could anybody write a book about the non-existent?

Hurston, “What White Publishers Won’t Print” (1950), in *Folk Tales, Memoirs, and Other Writings*, ed. Cheryl A. Wall (New York: Library of America, 1995), 951–52.

The American Negro exhibit is a group of two. Both of these mechanical toys are built so that their feet eternally shuffle, and their eyes pop and roll. Shuffling feet and those popping, rolling eyes denote the Negro, and no characterization is genuine without this monotony. One is seated on a stump picking away on his banjo and singing and laughing. The other is a most amoral character before a share-cropper's shack mumbling about injustice. Doing this makes him out to be a Negro "intellectual." It is as simple as all that. ("White Publishers," 952)

I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes.... No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.

Hurston, “How It Feels To Be Colored Me” (1928), in *Folk Tales*, 827.

dialect anew

“What she doin coming back here in dem overalls? Can’t she find no dress to put on?—Where’s dat blue satin dress she left here in?—Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her?—What dat ole forty year ole ’oman doin’ wid her hair swingin’ down her back lak some young gal?—Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid?—Thought she was going to marry?—Where he left her?—What he done wid all her money?—Betcha he off wid some gal so young she ain’t even got no hairs—why she don’t stay in her class?—” (2)

whose speech?

“Nanny...got de land and everything and then Mis’ Washburn helped out uh whole heap wid things.”

Pheoby’s hungry listening helped Janie to tell her story....

It was a spring afternoon in West Florida. Janie had spent most of the day under a blossoming pear tree in the back-yard....It stirred her tremendously. How? Why? It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again. What? How? Why? This singing she heard that had nothing to do with ears. (10)

discussion

They sat there in the fresh young darkness close together....

Time makes everything old so the kissing, young darkness became a monstrous old thing while Janie talked. (7)

On this last page of the first chapter, what is the relation between the narrative idiom and the characters' idioms? Compare your commonplace entries to think about whether this relation is uniform across the novel.

Quick search results

No dictionary entries found for 'monstropolous'.

Did you mean:

- [obstropolous](#)
- [monopolous](#)

Check your search and try again.

GO

Widen search? Find 'monstropolous' in: » [phrases \(0\)](#) » [definitions \(0\)](#) » [etymologies \(0\)](#) » [quotations \(0\)](#) » [full text \(0\)](#)

language and power

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“Folkses, de sun is goin’ down. De Sun-maker brings it up in de mornin’, and de Sun-maker sends it tuh bed at night. Us poor weak humans can’t do nothin’ tuh hurry it up nor to slow it down. All we can do, if we want any light after de settin’ or befo’ de resin’, is tuh make some light ourselves. So dat’s how come lamps was made.” (45)

language makes language

Davis chanted a traditional-prayer poem with his own variations....

Mrs. Bogle's alto burst out in:

*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*

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. (45–46)

participant-observer?

But sometimes Sam Watson and Lige Moss forced a belly laugh out of Joe himself with their eternal arguments. It never ended because there was no end to reach. It was a contest in hyperbole and carried on for no other reason. (63)

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next

- ▶ Hurston at least through 138
- ▶ add to your commonplace entry: specific comments on narration in the passage you chose