

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

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November 15, 2017. Hurston (2).

review: orality

“Yo’ Nanny wouldn’t harm a hair uh yo’ head. She don’t want nobody else to do it neither if she kin help it. Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it’s some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don’t know nothin’ but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don’t tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see.” (14; qtd. by “grownkid”)

review: orality

She slapped the girl's face violently...

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review: narration

- ▶ narrator (who tells?) vs. focalizer (who perceives)?
- ▶ frame: external narrator, external focalizer
- ▶ inner story: in *fabula* told by Janie but in text by EN
 - ▶ EN1 [EF1] [CF2]
 - ▶ CF2: Janie, townspeople, Jody... (“layering of voices”—“JC”)
 - ▶ sometimes free indirect discourse blurs the lines

free indirect (I)

Janie noted that while he didn't talk the mule himself, he sat and laughed at it...Joe would hustle her off inside the store to sell something. Look like he took pleasure in doing it. Why couldn't he go himself sometimes? She had come to hate the inside of that store anyway. That Post Office too. People always coming and asking for mail at the wrong time....

But Joe kept saying that she could do it if she wanted to and he wanted her to use her privileges. That was the rock she was battered against.
(54)

In order to include the narrator's own thoughts, it must be written in indirect discourse. (“Ari G.”)

free indirect (I)

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She was twenty-four and seven years married when she knew. (71; qtd. by “Dana W.”)

free indirect (2)

At the newel post Janie whirled around and for the space of a thought she was lit up like a transfiguration. Her next thought brought her crashing down. He's just saying anything for the time being, feeling he's got me so I'll b'lieve him. The next thought buried her under tons of cold futility. He's trading on being younger than me. Getting ready to laugh at me for an old fool. But oh, what wouldn't I give to be twelve years younger so I could b'lieve him! (105)

The thing made itself into pictures and hung around Janie's bedside all night long. Anyhow, she wasn't going back to Eatonville to be laughed at and pitied. She had ten dollars in her pocket and twelve hundred in the bank. But oh God, don't let Tea Cake be off somewhere hurt and Ah not know nothing about it. And God, please suh, don't let him love nobody else but me. (120)

who will speak?

It is the great merit of Miss Hurston's work that she entered into the homely life of the southern Negro as one of them and was fully accepted as such by the companions of her childhood. Thus she has been able to penetrate through that affected demeanor by which the Negro excludes the White observer effectively from participating in his true inner life.

Franz Boas, [preface](#) to Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935), in *Folk Tales*, 3.

“I god, where’s de Mayor?” (34)

She thought back and forth about what happened in the making of a voice out of a man. (87)

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“Mah wife don’t know nothin’ ’bout no speech-makin’.” (43)

“When you pull down yo’ britches, you look lak de change uh life.” (79)

which side is Hurston's narrator on?

Let the old hypocrites learn to mind their own business, and leave other folks alone. Tea Cake wasn't doing a bit more harm trying to win hisself a little money than they was always doing with their lying tongues. (126; qtd. by "ReadingHalfAsleep")

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"Evenin', Mis' Starks. Could yuh lemme have uh pound uh knuckle puddin'* till Saturday?" (98)

feminist questions: the plot

She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman. (25; qtd. by [Mat W.](#) et al.)

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- ▶ Discussion: what is this novel doing with the coming-of-age plot? be specific.

next

- ▶ finish the novel
- ▶ no commonplacing required