

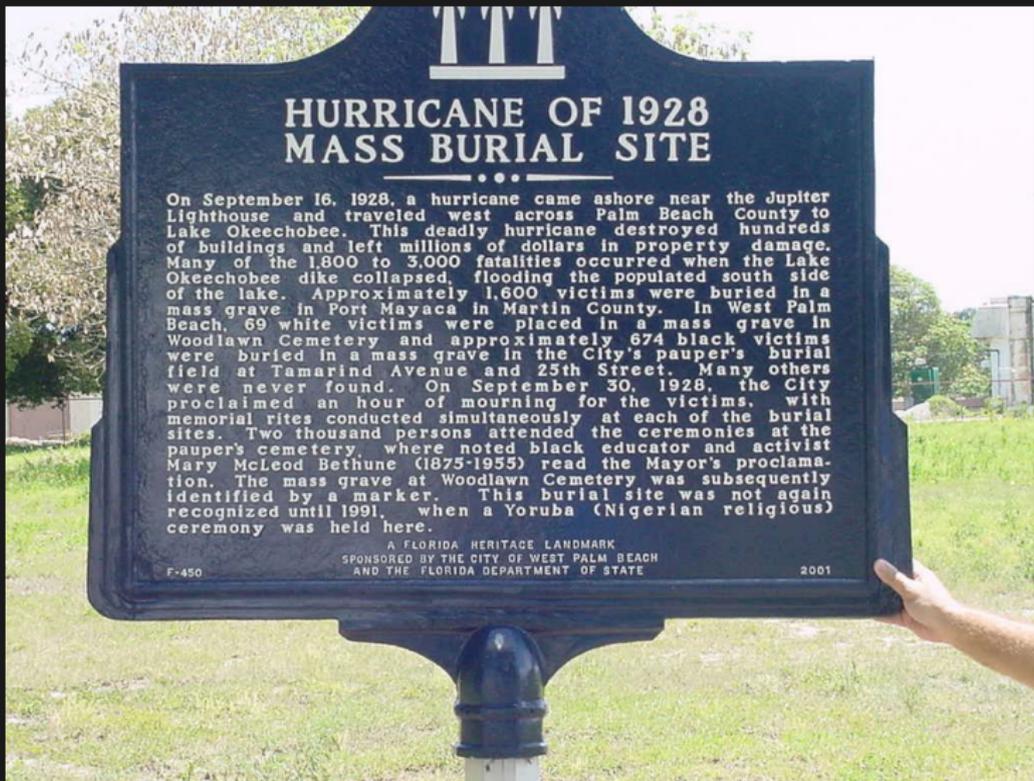
Early Twentieth-Century Fiction
e20fic19.blogs.rutgers.edu

Prof. Andrew Goldstone (andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)
Office hours: Murray 019, Thursdays 11:30–1:30 or by appointment

November 21, 2019. Hurston (4).

review

- ▶ feminist Bildung plot, ambivalent episode
 - ▶ “Who perceives?” as ethical question
 - ▶ communal and individual voices (again)
 - ▶ matter-of-factness about suffering
- ▶ social visions: Eatonville, muck, storm



HURRICANE OF 1928 MASS BURIAL SITE

On September 16, 1928, a hurricane came ashore near the Jupiter Lighthouse and traveled west across Palm Beach County to Lake Okeechobee. This deadly hurricane destroyed hundreds of buildings and left millions of dollars in property damage. Many of the 1,800 to 3,000 fatalities occurred when the Lake Okeechobee dike collapsed, flooding the populated south side of the lake. Approximately 1,600 victims were buried in a mass grave in Port Mayaca in Martin County. In West Palm Beach, 69 white victims were placed in a mass grave in Woodlawn Cemetery and approximately 674 black victims were buried in a mass grave in the City's pauper's burial field at Tamarind Avenue and 25th Street. Many others were never found. On September 30, 1928, the City proclaimed an hour of mourning for the victims, with memorial rites conducted simultaneously at each of the burial sites. Two thousand persons attended the ceremonies at the pauper's cemetery, where noted black educator and activist Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) read the Mayor's proclamation. The mass grave at Woodlawn Cemetery was subsequently identified by a marker. This burial site was not again recognized until 1991, when a Yoruba (Nigerian religious) ceremony was held here.

A FLORIDA HERITAGE LANDMARK
SPONSORED BY THE CITY OF WEST PALM BEACH
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F-450

2001

Historical marker (2001) of 1928 mass grave, West Palm Beach. National Weather Service Memorial Web Page for the 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane.

<https://www.weather.gov/mfl/okeechobee>

title drop

They sat in company with the others in other shanties, their eyes straining against crude walls and their souls asking if He meant to measure their puny might against His. They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God. (160)

after the storm

“Don’t dump no white folks in de hole jus’ so.”

“Whut tuh do ’bout de colored folks? Got boxes fuh dem too?” (171)

69 white people buried in Palm Beach’s Woodland Cemetery

674 black people buried en masse in vacant lot in W. Palm Beach

Perhaps 6000 dead, of whom 80% were black field workers

Corpses were not just found in wrecked houses. They were under houses, tangled in shrubbery... (170)



LOADING BODIES OF THOSE WHO PERISHED IN THE EVERGLADES INTO TRUCK
AT BELLE GLADE

<https://www.weather.gov/mfl/okeechobee>

aftermath

“Hey, dere, y’all!”... (170)

Discussion

How does race shape the storm aftermath? Where do Hurston’s emphases fall in this episode, and why?

social vision (further)

The novel maps south Florida's powerful economic position within an extended Caribbean—or alternatively, an extended South—characterized by transnational migrant labor.

Martyn Bone, “The (Extended) South of Black Folk,” *American Literature* 79, no. 4 (December 2007): 773.

social vision (further)

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Martyn Bone, “The (Extended) South of Black Folk,” *American Literature* 79, no. 4 (December 2007): 773.

Since Tea Cake and Janie had friended with the Bahaman workers in the 'Glades, they, the “Saws,” [i.e., people from Nassau], had been gradually drawn into the American crowd. (155)

One of the Bahaman boys stopped by Tea Cake's house in a car and hollered....

“De crow gahn up, man.”...

“If Ah never see you no mo' on earth, Ah'll meet you in Africa.” (156)

the end?

It was the meanest moment of eternity. A minute before she was just a scared human being fighting for its life. Now she was her sacrificing self with Tea Cake's head in her lap. (184)

reader's position (I)

And twelve more white men had stopped whatever they were doing to listen and pass on what happened between Janie and Tea Cake Woods, and as to whether things were done right or not. That was funny too....

Then she saw all of the colored people standing up in the back of the courtroom. Packed tight like a case of celery, only much darker than that. They were all against her, she could see. (185)

“Gentlemen of the jury, it is for you to decide whether the defendant has committed a cold blooded murder or whether she is a poor broken creature, a devoted wife trapped by unfortunate circumstances who really in firing a rifle bullet into the heart of her late husband did a great act of mercy.” (188)

reader's position (2)

reader's position (2)

74/Ms.

IN SEARCH OF ZORA NEALE HURSTON

BY ALICE WALKER



On January 16, 1959, Zora Neale Hurston, suffering from the effects of a stroke and writing painfully in long-hand, composed a letter to the "editorial department" of Harper & Brothers inquir-

three hundred brown skins, three hundred good swimmers, plenty guavas, two schools, and no jailhouse." Of course I cannot see the guavas, but the five lakes are still there, and it is the lakes I

Ms. 3 (March, 1975): 74. Page image: Douglass Library, Rutgers.

the universal aunt

“I am Zora Neale Hurston’s niece, and I would like to have a marker put on her grave...”

By this time I am, of course, completely into being Zora’s niece, and the lie comes with perfect naturalness to my lips. Besides, as far as I’m concerned, she is my aunt—and that of all black people as well. (Walker, 78)

the forgotten dead (again)

But the “circle” [on the mortician’s map of the gravesite] is over an acre large and looks more like an abandoned field. Tall weeds choke the dirt road and scrape against the sides of the car....

“I don’t know about y’all,” I say, “but I don’t even believe this.”... This neglect is staggering. (Walker, 79)

“She *didn't* have a pauper's funeral!” he [Dr. Benton, who knew ZNH] says with great heat. “Everybody around here *loved* Zora.”

“We just came back from ordering a headstone,” I say quietly...“but to tell the truth I can't be positive what I found is the grave. All I know is the spot I found was the only grave-size hole in the area.”...

“Do the weeds still come up to your knees?”

“And beyond,” I murmur. This time there isn't any doubt. Dr. Benton feels ashamed. (Walker, 87)

how to canonize your aunt

BOOKS IN PRINT

Zora's papers can be found in the library at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and in the James Weldon Johnson Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University. (A biography of Zora, by Robert Hem-enway of the University of Kentucky, will be published late this year.)

Jonah's Gourd Vine, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1971: hardcover, \$5.95; paperback, \$2.95. (A novel, originally published in 1934.)

Their Eyes Were Watching God, a Fawcett Premier Book, Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1972: paperback, 95 cents. (Originally published in 1937, this novel is Hurston's masterpiece.)

Mules and Men, Harper & Row Perennial Library, Harper & Row Publishers, 1970: paperback, \$1.50. (Originally published in 1935, this book is a folklore classic.)

Dust Tracks on a Road, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1971: hardcover, \$5.95; paperback, \$2.95. (Originally published in 1942, this is Hurston's autobiography.)

BOOKS NOT IN PRINT

(but check public libraries)

Moses, Man of the Mountain (novel), J. B. Lippincott Co., 1939.

Tell My Horse (folklore), J. B. Lippincott Co., 1938.

Seraph on the Suwanee (novel), Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.

Walker, 89. Page image: Douglass Library, Rutgers

reader's position (3)

“Lawd!” Pheoby breathed out heavily, “Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus’ listenin’ tuh you, Janie. Ah ain’t satisfied wid mahself no mo’. Ah means tuh make Sam take me fishin’ wid him after this. Nobody better not criticize yuh in mah hearin’.”

“Now, Pheoby, don’t feel too mean wid de rest of ’em ’cause dey’s parched up from not knowin’ things.” (192)

next

- ▶ Tagore, “The Postmaster” (Sakai: two translations)
- ▶ commonplacing: group A. Narrator’s relation to Ratan.