

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction
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Office hours: Monday 2 p.m., or by appointment

April 15, 2021. Hurston (4).

review

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

All gods who receive homage are cruel. All gods dispense suffering without reason. Otherwise they would not be worshipped. Through indiscriminate suffering men know fear and fear is the most divine emotion. It is the stones for altars and the beginning of wisdom. Half gods are worshipped in wine and flowers. Real gods require blood.

Mrs. Turner, like all other believers had built an altar to the unattainable—Caucasian characteristics for all. (145)

[Janie:] “We’s e uh mingled people and all of us got black kinfolks as well as yaller knfolks. How come you so against black?” (141)

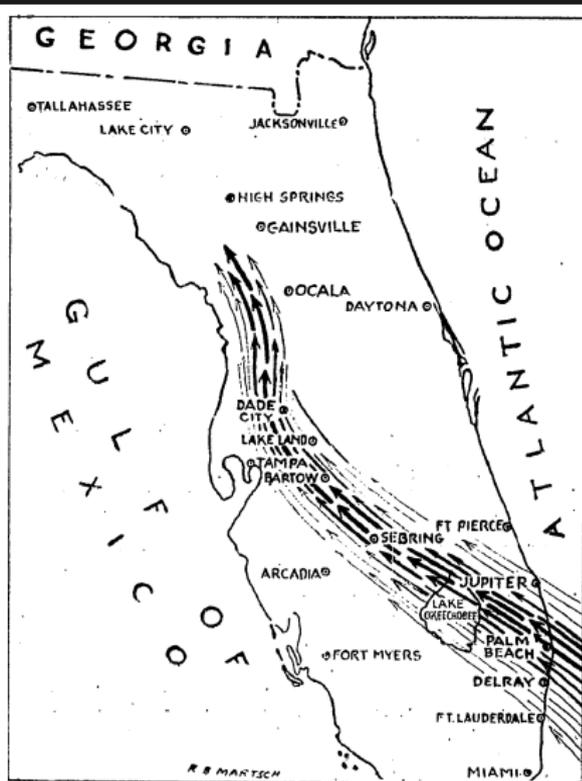
no easy answers

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; qtd. by [happychat](#))

What if Eatonville could see her now in her blue denim overalls and heavy shoes? The crowd of people around her and a dice game on her floor!... The men held big arguments here like they used to do on the store porch. Only here, she could listen and laugh and even talk some herself if she wanted to. She got so she could tell big stories herself from listening to the rest. (134; qtd. by NY).

Discussion

- ▶ What are some of the differences between life in Eatonville and on “the muck”?



Path of the Hurricane in Its Sweep Across Florida.

FLOOD MENACE IN FLORIDA

Rising Waters Add to the Storm Damage Above Miami District.

24 DROWN IN OKEECHOBEE

Nearly Every Building in West Palm Beach Damaged—Improved Hospitals Overflow.

HURRICANE VEERS NORTH

Warnings of Its Approach Are Issued in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina.

With the hurricane sweeping north-westward through Florida last night, leaving a trail of wreckage and deaths along the eastern coast, Tampa escaped damage by a veering of the storm to the north.

Known dead in Florida, from 1,500 to 3,000, with no possibility of an accurate check ever being made. In Porto Rico, 210 reported dead. In St. Croix, Virgin Islands, six reported dead.

Homeless: In Florida, 15,000; in Porto Rico, 400,000.

Injured: In Florida, 185; in Porto Rico, 2,771.

Ill: In Florida, 191; in Porto Rico, 20,000.

In the seven counties in Florida where the storm caused great damage, 17,500 persons have registered with the Red Cross as desiring assistance in some form to rehabilitate themselves.

The number of persons under Red Cross care in these seven counties follows: Palm Beach 12,822, Martin 800, Okeechobee 110, Dade 375, Broward 1,125. Total, 15,232.

"Red Cross Sums Up Hurricane Results," *New York Times*, September 30, 1928.

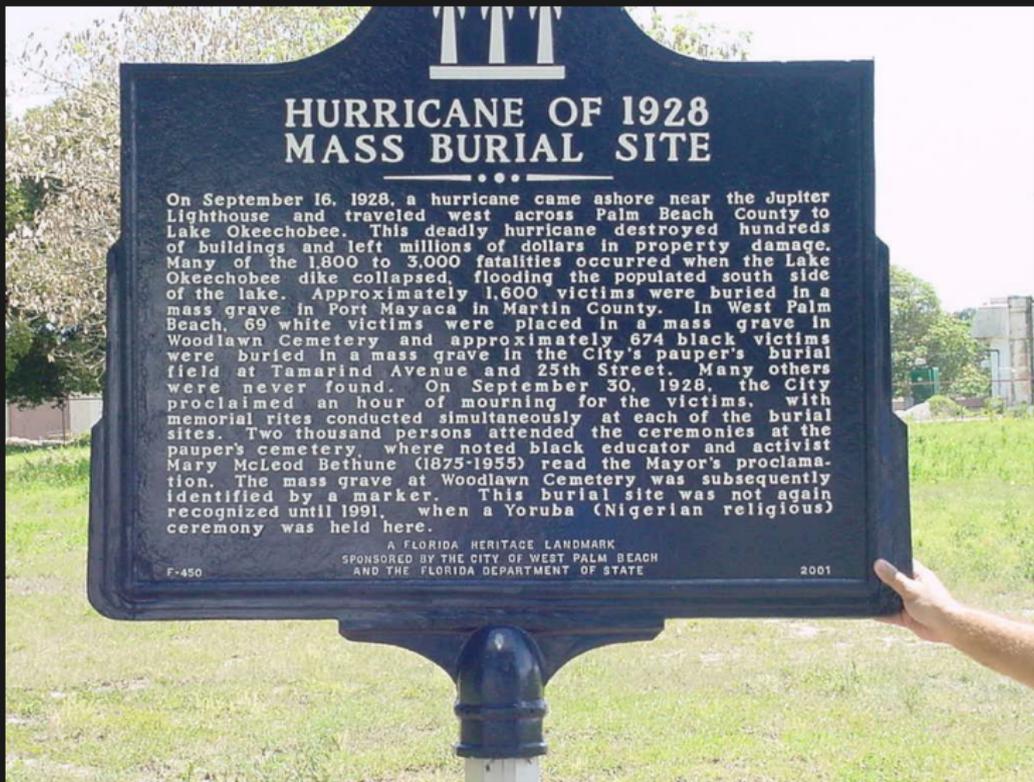
BIG HURRICANE TOLL LAID TO DROWNINGS

Miami Mayor, Here, Says Wind
Alone Killed Less Than 12%
of 1,500 Florida Victims.

LAKE OKEECHOBEE BLAMED

Government Will Be Asked to Build
\$5,000,000 Canal to Control
Waters of "Death Trap."

Of the toll of 1,500 deaths in the recent Florida hurricane, less than a dozen were actually killed by the storm itself, and the others were drowned by the overflowing of Lake Okeechobee, according to Everest G. Sewell, Mayor of Miami, who is stopping at the Waldorf, where he arrived yesterday. The Mayor characterized the lake as a "death trap," and said that had proper precautions been taken, the loss of life from the storm would have been negligible.



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
AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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>



SCENES AT PALM BEACH

GLS' BATHS
NEAR ALBA HOTEL
FLAGLER DRIVE AT PENNSYLVANIA
HOTEL.

ROYAL POINCIANA GROUNDS
AUSTRALIAN PINE WALK
ROYAL PALM WAY

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



TRUCKS CARRYING COFFINS TO
THE EVERGLADES

EVERGLADES IN VICINITY OF BELLE
GLADE UNDER WATER

PLACE IN BELLE GLADE WHERE A LARGE
NUMBER OF BODIES WERE FOUND

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

Ten feet higher and as far as they could see the muttering wall advanced before the braced-up waters like a road-crusher on a cosmic scale. The monstropolous beast had left his bed. The two hundred miles an hour wind had loosed his chains. (161)

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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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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.