

**ASPECTS OF NARRATION AND VOICE IN
ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S
*THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD***

BY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS

in the subject

ENGLISH LITERATURE

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE


UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Mark Espin

November 2017

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Abstract

*Zora Neale Hurston is a significant figure in American fiction and is strongly associated with the Harlem Renaissance, the period noted for the emergence of literature by people of African-American descent. Hurston worked as a writer of fiction and of anthropological research and this mini-thesis will discuss aspects of her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, first published in 1937. While the novel traces the psychological development of the central female character, Janie Mae Crawford and, thus, demonstrates several features of a conventional Bildungsroman, the novel also contains some intriguing innovations in respect of narration and voice. These innovations imply that the novel can be read in terms of the qualities commonly associated with the Modernist novel. This contention becomes significant when it is understood that a considerable degree of critical responses to the novel have discounted these connections. The novel is widely accepted to be a story about a woman's journey to self-actualisation through the relationships she has with the men in her life. Much of the criticism related to the novel is based on this aspect of it, with many stating that Janie's voice is often silenced by the third-person narrator at crucial moments in the text and that, as a consequence, she does not achieve complete self-actualisation by the end of the novel. This thesis will examine the significance of the shifts between first-person and third-person narration and the manifestations of other voices or means of articulation, which give the novel a multi-vocal quality. The importance of this innovation will also be considered, particularly when it is taken into account that Hurston sought to incorporate some elements associated with the oral tradition into her work as a writer of fiction.*

Keywords

Bildungsroman

Character

Modernism

Multi-vocality

Narration

Omniscience

Point of view

Subjectivity

Voice



In his introduction to *New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a volume of critical essays on Zora Neale Hurston's second novel, Michael Awkward identifies two distinct points around which scholarship related to the novel has been based. The first concern has focused on Hurston's depiction of her protagonist Janie Mae Crawford's retaliation against the patriarchal system and the degree to which she manages to liberate herself. In relation to this, the second concern focuses on the manner in which Hurston uses the oral tradition of African American storytelling, an activity which Janie is not allowed to partake in in the earlier parts of the novel located in Eatonville while she is married to the town's mayor, Joe Starks. Having been repeatedly forbidden by her husband to participate in the storytelling events, Janie's quest in the novel is one which involves finding her own voice. Amidst criticism that Hurston's narrative choices - with their distinct emphasis on "black expressive principles" - consume Janie's voice in not allowing her to tell her own story, Awkward discusses readings such as those by John Callahan (1988) which offer a different response to this perceived flaw in the novel. This being that Hurston's novel should not be measured "against modernist conventions which fuel the work of Euro-American writers, but, rather, in terms of the quality of her incorporation of black expressive principles into the genre of the novel" (Awkward 1990: 16-20).

In her critical article, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Subversive Reading", bell hooks draws a parallel between both Hurston and Janie on the one hand, and the British modernist novelist, Virginia Woolf, on the other. Recalling Woolf's demands for a distinct socio-political and creative space for women writers, hooks states that this was similar to Hurston's own lifelong quest for a form of self-determination and that while she may not have succeeded in establishing this in her personal life, she succeeded in doing so for Janie in the novel, specifically, "a wide transformative space Janie calls 'home'" (hooks: 254). While this recognition of the significant aspect of self-liberation evident in Janie's pursuit of her

ambitions is compelling, hooks ignores another intriguing connection with Woolf, namely, the distinct elements of a modernist approach in the narrative structure of Hurston's novel. Similarly, Henry Louis Gates Jr., who may very well be the most influential figure in relation to African-American literature and who has written extensively about many writers of the Harlem Renaissance, had also made a connection with Woolf when he stated that Hurston "imitated the story-telling devices of the black oral tradition, so too is her lyrical novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, drawn after the manner of Flaubert and Woolf" thereby implying that Hurston's use of the oral tradition in the novel is modernist, and the two elements should not be viewed separately (Gates 1986: 58).

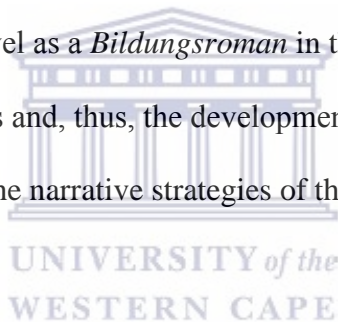
This implication that Hurston uses a modernist approach in her novel much like Woolf does, raises the argument that, upon examination, there are indeed correlations between modernist narrative strategies and those which Hurston uses in her novel. Furthermore, it can be argued that these narrative techniques should not be perceived as a flaw in terms of Janie's and other characters' development but rather as an enrichment thereof. Hurston innovatively constructs an interplay between first and third-person narration, as well as free indirect discourse. African-American dialect presents itself in the form of first-person narration as well as in the third-person narrator's idiom being increasingly coloured by the discourse of the characters by means of their linguistic rhythms, vocabulary, and symbolism. In addition, the frame serves to negate the plot of the novel by using a certain structure of diegesis and mimesis – the "representation of an action" and the "repetition of a character's words" (Gates 1988: 208) - at the beginning of the novel which is, in fact, the end of Janie's journey. However, Hurston's deployment of free indirect discourse and quoted monologue in the main narrative, or the story within the story, serves to disrupt the frame.

According to modernist theory, the narrative continuity of a novel is often disrupted as well as the coherence of the narrative language in terms of the traditional syntax and other

language structures. In addition, there is a frustration of narrative framing (Abrams 1999: 167; Erdinast-Vulcan 1994). As a whole, modernist writers sought alternatives to the “well-made plot, the rounded and life-like character, the knowable world wholly accessible to reasoned and rational enquiry” (Hawthorn 1985: 26-29). I attempt to show that it is evident that Hurston uses specific modernist narrative strategies in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and she has, unfortunately, not been credited sufficiently with an understanding of the qualities and developments associated with the genre. It is perplexing that in many critical responses to the novel, any associations that can be drawn between aspects of its narrative structure, the shifts in perspective and the use of the symbolic, on the one hand, and the most common features of the modernist novel, on the other, are avoided and, in some cases, discouraged. Malcolm Bradbury, for example, is a commentator and scholar who is noted for his work in defining the field of Modernism in literature. It is, therefore, significant that in his examination of the development of modernism in American fiction published in 1983, he fails to mention Hurston as an influential figure in twentieth-century American fiction or *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as an example of a novel which demonstrates some of the qualities of modernism. Acknowledging both her awareness of these qualities and, more pertinently, her application of some of these qualities in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is an important premise from which to argue against viewing the narrative strategies, presence of multiple voices as well as the instances of productive interplay between the literal and symbolic as weaknesses in the text which collectively silence Janie’s voice.

On the contrary, Hurston’s use of free indirect discourse in the novel, for example, innovatively dramatises Janie’s potential speech when she is yet unable to express herself and illustrates greater identification between narrator and figural consciousness. As Janie becomes more aware of her divided self - her inner and outer worlds - there is a marked decline in the linguistic separation between her and the narrator as the latter’s commentary

becomes infused with dialect and metaphor, representing Janie's lyrical idiom which is first presented to us by the metaphor of the pear tree. Therefore the narrative strategy is one manner in which Hurston rhetorically underpins Janie's development or *bildung* in the novel. It can be argued that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a novel which can be placed in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*. The novel begins with an ode to the horizon – a symbol of dreams and aspirations. This metaphor for the travel narrative is present throughout the novel, and represents the physical and emotional journey that Janie undertakes as each new location holds the promise of new hope for her. Abrams states that the *Bildungsroman* details “the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences - and often through a spiritual crisis - into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world” (1999: 193). Therefore, an argument claiming Hurston's novel as a *Bildungsroman* in the manner in which it traces the trajectories of Janie's experiences and, thus, the development of her sense of selfhood, would seem a credible one. Moreover, the narrative strategies of the novel enrich Janie's *bildung* in an unconventional manner.



Zora Neale Hurston, born on 7 January 1891 in Notasulga, Alabama, was an African-American author, folklorist, and anthropologist whose novels and short stories reflect the passion she had for African-American and Caribbean folklore. As a young child her family relocated to Eatonville, Florida, which has since become famous because of its association with Hurston and which hosts the annual Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities. She initially attended Howard University and later went on to receive her BA degree from Barnard College. While attending Howard University she joined the staff of *The Stylus*, the literary club journal at the university and in which her first published story, *John Redding Goes to Sea*, appeared. Her affiliation with the journal resulted in many encounters with writers, playwrights and poets who later became associated with the Harlem

Renaissance. At Barnard College, Hurston was mentored by distinguished Columbia University anthropologist, Franz Boas, and this led to the start of her research in Southern American and Caribbean folk culture.

During her lifetime, Hurston published seven books spanning from 1934 to 1948 and various short stories, plays, and essays. The first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, is autobiographical in the sense that it revisits the relationship between Hurston's parents. Many of the circumstances, events and locations in the novel are factual and share direct correspondences with Hurston's autobiography. The novel serves as a warning about the despair and destruction that a lack of self-knowledge can cause as the main character, John, is ostracized from his community after his many infidelities eventually lead to his wife's death. Two of her books, *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Tell My Horse* (1938) are collections of folklore, ceremonies and rituals, and provide the foundation for many of the tales contained in her novels and short stories. The research for *Mules and Men*, which includes Hurston's exploration of voodoo, was conducted in the states of Florida and Louisiana in the American South.¹ She acts as a mediator and semi-fictional narrator of *Mules and Men*, while *Tell My Horse* owes its content to her travels in Jamaica and Haiti. Hurston's approach while conducting her research was more participatory in nature, as opposed to a more standard scholarly approach. Shortly after the publication of *Tell My Horse*, Hurston published *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), which is based on the biblical story of Moses. In the story, Moses leads African Americans from slavery to freedom and the text highlights the issues of leadership and self-determination. Next, Hurston's autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), takes the reader on a journey of her life through various locations in the US such as her birthplace in Alabama to Florida, New York and various Caribbean islands. Her final

¹ One example is that in New Orleans, Louisiana, Hurston was allowed to apprentice with the grand-nephew of a voodoo queen after lying naked, without food and water, for more than sixty hours, thus proving her devotion.

novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948), is a love story set in the town of Sawley in west Florida during post-war America. The narrative voice is mostly filtered through the main character, Arvay Henson Meserve, a white woman, and we learn of her anguish in her relationship with her chauvinistic husband, Jim. The reader is exposed to a white, privileged perspective and the views expressed about black people and race relations in it should, thus, be read from that position (King 2008).

The novel that is the subject of this mini-thesis is Hurston's second, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. It was published by J.B. Lippincott Company in 1937 and Hurston wrote it during her first trip to Haiti in 1936, while studying religion and folklore. The novel follows the story of Janie Mae Crawford through her childhood, adolescence, and subsequent marriages, giving an account of her psychosocial development as a black woman and the relationships which shape her. The narrative commences with Janie's return from the Everglades to Eatonville, Florida, in the 1920's. As a nearly forty year-old woman, Janie reflects on her transformation since the end of her marriage to her third husband, Vergible Woods, commonly known as Tea Cake, as she re-tells her story to her best friend, Pheoby Watson. These reflections are comprised of her previous experiences in childhood, adolescence, and subsequent years as she negotiates her grandmother's vision for her life with her own will to live life as an expression of her desires.

Janie's coming of age is signified by an intense awakening of consciousness when she is sixteen years old. The repeated metaphor of the blossoming pear tree in Nanny's backyard comes to symbolise Janie's recognition of options in her life such as the union of love and sexual intimacy. Her new found self-awareness is signaled to Nanny through her kiss with Johnny Taylor, an indolent youth who suddenly becomes attractive to Janie. This spurs Nanny on to marry Janie off to Logan Killicks, a man of notable wealth and property. Nanny's sexual exploitation as a slave and her daughter Leafy's rape by a schoolteacher

makes her afraid that Janie might suffer the same fate and she sees a marriage to Killicks as a means of providing security for her granddaughter. Janie reluctantly marries Killicks and, despite her efforts in making the best of a marriage devoid of any pleasure, her dejection induces a desire to look again for the wonderment she experienced beneath the pear tree. This is when Joe Starks enters her world. On his way to a town named Eatonville in order to be a “big voice” and described as a “cityfied, stylish dressed man with his hat set at an angle that didn’t belong in these parts”, who speaks for “change and chance”, he immediately intrigues Janie who is looking for a way out of her miserable marriage (Hurston: 37-39). He convinces Janie to marry him and relocate to Eatonville, where he is elected as the town’s first mayor.

Janie soon finds out that Joe’s yearning to be a “big voice” amongst the town’s people precludes her from expressing herself naturally. He reveals himself to be a power-hungry chauvinist who keeps Janie working in the store he owns in order to control her. After seventeen years of a marriage marred by emotional and physical abuse, and dominated by an intense desire for freedom, Janie finally stands up to Joe by publicly humiliating him in his own store. Having been unceremoniously stripped of his armour of power, Joe soon falls ill and dies leaving Janie with all his worldly possessions.

After enjoying life on her own for a while, Janie meets a drifter named Vergible Woods, also known as Tea Cake. Despite being younger and possessing much less than her, she soon finds herself falling in love with a man who allows her to be more independent in the world: “Somebody wanted her to play. Somebody thought it natural for her to play” (128). Even as she wrestles with her emotions, trying to convince herself that Tea Cake was only after her money just like many other men after Joe died. These doubts are expressed in the following brief reflection of her thoughts: “[s]he couldn’t make him look just like any other man to her. He looked like the love thoughts of women” (142). They soon marry and head off to the Everglades wetlands to work in the swamp picking beans and Janie

experiences the happiest moments in her life so far. However, after a hurricane causes the big Lake Okechobee to flood, Tea Cake gets bitten by a rabid dog while trying to save Janie from drowning. The disease causes a crippling paranoia which leads him to attempt to kill Janie but she shoots him fatally in an act of self-defence. After being found not guilty for murder, she returns to Eatonville to tell her story.

Their Eyes Were Watching God, as well as four other books by Hurston, was published after the era of broader artistic expression and experimentation during the New Negro Renaissance, or Harlem Renaissance. During this period a number of key writers of African-American descent came to the fore, including Richard Wright, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes and Nella Larsen. Hurston is also associated with this group of writers but is commonly regarded as an outsider, having come from the South rather than being from the north-east industrial cities in and around New York state. This outsider status was reinforced by her return to the South where she pursued her studies in anthropology. Hurston is often referred to as one of the most dynamic and talented writers to emanate from the Harlem Renaissance, yet many times she seemed to be at odds with her contemporaries with regards to the kinds of literary works that should be produced during the era (Harrison 2012: 143). It is worthwhile to focus on the principles of the movement in order to get a sense of the motivation behind the works being produced, and thereafter to look at Hurston's place within the Renaissance. She moved to New York in 1925, the year which culminated in the release of the anthology which would become the manifesto of the Harlem Renaissance, *The New Negro*. Edited by Alain Locke, it includes Hurston's short story *Spunk*, along with the works of other authors associated with the renaissance such as Claude McKay, Hughes, Anne Spencer, Jean Toomer, and Cullen. Also included in the anthology is an essay by Locke identifying the hope and optimism of the Renaissance, as well as proclaiming the new path

which the intellectual African-American leadership must proceed upon in order to change the reality for the black masses.

He begins by referring to the manner in which African Americans were perceived in the previous generations following slavery, namely the Reconstruction period and thereafter.

Locke states that “the Negro has been more of a formula than a human being – a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be ‘kept down,’ or ‘in his place,’ or ‘helped up,’ to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden” (Locke 1925: 1). Similarly, according to Locke, the intellectual black person, having had to petition against, firstly, the stereotypes created by the white subjugators and, secondly, the benefactors, did not have the chance to develop a sense of understanding of self and society. He expressed his frustration at what he deemed was Hurston’s inability to create more psychologically intricate characters and her lack of examination of the socio-economic milieu in her works. He affirmed Hurston’s talent at storytelling, yet claimed that she had not yet “come to grips with motive fiction and social document fiction”, resulting in oversimplified works (Locke 1938).

However, a shift transpired in the manner in which African Americans perceived themselves; a movement away from the “psychology of imitation and implied inferiority” towards greater respect and dependence on self. He especially emphasised the importance of the avant-garde intellectual African-American leadership during this era who, spiritually, experienced the same physical change as the migrant masses as the latter moved further North. Nonetheless, he regards those engaged in scholarly activities as well as art, poetry and literature as having the advantage of understanding the new movement better than the masses, ensuring a more enlightened leadership (2).

Richard Wright is regarded by many as a highly influential figure in the Harlem Renaissance and his novels are often cited as the primary instances of a counter-narrative to

the fictional depictions of black people by white writers. No other review, however, possessed as much vitriol in its assessment of Hurston's novel than that of Wright's while writing for the *New Masses*:

Miss Hurston can write; but her prose is cloaked in that facile sensuality that has dogged Negro expression since the days of Phillis Wheatley...Miss Hurston voluntarily continues in her novel the tradition which was forced upon the Negro in the theater, that is, the minstrel technique that makes the 'white folks' laugh...The sensory sweep of her novel carries no theme, no message, no thought. In the main, her novel is not addressed to the Negro, but to a white audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy. She exploits the phase of Negro life which is 'quaint,' the phase which evokes a piteous smile on the lips of the 'superior race' (1938: 25).

Wright's curious malice towards Hurston has been discussed on different platforms throughout the years. King (2008: 113) put it down to an "inferiority complex" and a bias towards literature which criticised an oppressive society at the time, as well as a desire to curb Hurston's creativity. Gates and Burton (2011: 471) posit that Wright and Hurston's polarised positions on art present a few important (and strongly articulated by Wright, at least) issues around the nature of African-American art at the time. Firstly, the issue of art being a means to achieve wholeness versus wholeness being the norm for the artist. Wright's view was that the black individual, having been violently ripped from his or her mother continent, Africa, can find a means to being an organically whole human being through art. Hurston, on the other hand, perceived herself to already be whole and her art being an expression of her completeness. Another issue related to this is of the main motivation or force behind determining the type of art which is created and consumed. Is it the artist or the

audience? Hurston believed the former while Wright was decidedly on the side of the latter, which undoubtedly had an influence on the way he perceived Hurston's work.

A dramatic waning of interest in Hurston's work coincided with her disappearance from the literary and cultural scene in the later years of her life and it was not until more than ten years after her death in 1960 that her life and work regained any prominent attention. In comparison with this long period of neglect, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is now regarded as a very important novel and has been canonized as a classic text in American fiction. Hurston too, has been valorised as an influential figure by a significant number of writers, including Alice Walker, Toni Morrison and Zadie Smith.

The renewed interest in Hurston's work can be credited, especially, to Walker who considers Hurston to be her most important literary predecessor.² In two essays published in her, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1983), she describes the value that she places on Hurston's work. In her Foreword to the 1990 edition of the novel, Mary Helen Washington, an intellectual in the field of African-American studies, claims that, "with that inscription (on Hurston's grave) and that essay, Walker ushered in a new era in the scholarship on *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (1990: x). In one of her essays Walker states that Hurston was clearly more insightful than she has generally been given credit for and that as a novelist she had "a sense of black people as complete, complex, *undiminished* human beings" (Walker 1983: 85). She goes on to say that she was troubled when reading the "misleading, deliberately belittling, inaccurate, and generally irresponsible attacks on [Hurston's] work" and concludes that, in her view, Hurston was attacked for being an outspoken woman by people who were not used to this trait in women at the time (86). Although *Their Eyes Were Watching God* received a relative amount of praise after its initial publication, it is the nature

² Walker's essay 'Looking for Zora' relays her journey to Florida where she visited Hurston's unmarked grave and spoke to people who remembered her, and people who did not. She took a marked interest in Hurston's works and wanted to revive them. On this journey she purchased a tombstone for Hurston's grave with the inscription: "Genius of the South".

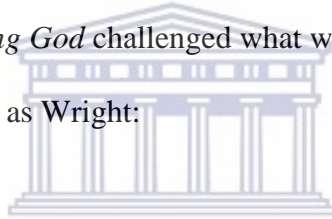
and the scope of the criticism to which it was subjected that is an intriguing topic of discussion.

In contrast to Hurston's critics who thought that her writing was not political enough or lacking in protest, Smith's introduction in the 2007 reprint of the novel sees Hurston as "essential universal reading because she is neither self-conscious nor restricted" (2007: xx). Hurston was set apart from her contemporaries mainly by her position as both an insider and an outsider of the Renaissance which invited their criticism of her fiction and lifestyle. She started attending Barnard College in 1925 and was mentored by Boas from Columbia University, focusing her research on southern and Caribbean folk culture. Having been raised in the South and educated in the urban landscape of the North, anthropology provided the appropriate medium through which Hurston could unite the two branches of her life as both observer and participant. Subsequently, these folk tales garnered through the methods of anthropology were infused in her fiction and nonfiction.

Having grown up in Eatonville, an all-black town, Hurston's experience of being part of this culture of independence, fostered a sense of confidence. More than this, though, it cultivated a sense of African Americans as being whole and anchored in their own lives without the overwhelming discrimination which her contemporaries experienced more pointedly and which they sought to address in their work. In Eatonville, the people may be able to live their lives and create their own spaces to explore their creativity by means of folk tales which were centred around and for themselves. This is not to say that she was unaware of the dominant racist milieu, as is evident in many instances within *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

In *The Cambridge Introduction to Zora Neale Hurston*, Lovalerie King examines all of Hurston's work, both non-fiction and fiction. King discusses the texts themselves and the critical reception afforded each one of them. In the latter instance she records that *Their Eyes*

Were Watching God was received in quite negative terms by stating that “ the black literary establishment largely panned the novel (and Hurston) for many of the very characteristics that bring it praise from contemporary critics” (King: 112). King describes the novel as a “quest narrative” which traces “a young woman’s spiritual, emotional, and physical journey toward self-actualization” (57). She goes on to draw attention to the instances in the novel where the oral tradition is incorporated into what she calls its “organic nature” (60). In reflecting upon the initial reception of the novel, she states that those who were critical of it, “lacked the insight that historical distance, social innovation, and great strides in literary criticism and theory have brought to contemporary criticism of her work” (114). This difficult relationship with those critical of the novel, some of who were key figures in the Harlem Renaissance, is expanded upon by King. According to her, Hurston’s characterization of Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* challenged what was understood as an unwelcome if not taboo subject for writers such as Wright:



Janie’s quest for knowledge through experience has more to do with her desire to expand the meaning of black female respectability – to include the full expression of her sexuality. At the time, such an insistence represented a radical turn for a black female protagonist. Hurston’s choice to represent an erotic young black female character flew in the face of prescriptive advice from the black literary establishment to avoid subject matter that reinforced the dominant image of the wanton, licentious black woman. The tendency had been to draw silence around black female sexuality as a response to an automatic stigmatization of black female sexuality (King 2008: 59).

Through her education and position within the Harlem Renaissance, and her rural southern upbringing in an all-black town, she was able to bring about the expression of black

lives as ones centred around *wholeness*. Her work focuses on relationships between men and women and incorporated folk culture as an affirmation of black creativity in a space which is not explicitly reactionary towards but undoubtedly influenced by white supremacy. She also utilised innovative narrative strategies as a means of expressing identity as a fluid phenomenon. This is what set her apart from her contemporaries but also united her with them in the realm of the avant-garde, “enlightened leadership” to which Locke refers to in *The New Negro*.

Their Eyes Were Watching God is a narrative structured around Janie relating her story to her friend, Phoeby, while they are seated on the porch of Janie’s home. The latter has returned to Eatonville, the village set up by her second husband, Joe Starks. She had left here after meeting a younger man, Tea Cake, and went with him to live in the Everglades. Phoeby is keen to find out about Janie’s experiences while she was away from Eatonville and the narrative begins when Janie relates these experiences. Janie, however, does not restrict the telling of her life experiences to this particular sequence of events and the narrative reverts back to Janie’s childhood and the years she spends being reared and nurtured by her grandmother, Nanny. The narrative, thus, has a circular shape in that it begins and ends with Janie and Phoeby sitting on the porch. A large part of the narrative consists of Janie’s first-person narration in the form of her direct telling of events and experiences to Phoeby and, as a consequence, the reader is involved as a witness who overhears the story being related. In addition, though, there is the presence of a conventional third-person narration that provides a more panoramic view of significant moments in Janie’s narrative. There is, therefore, an interesting interplay between Janie’s candid first-person narration and the descriptive and evocative narration of the third-person narrator. The novel in fact begins with the latter which provides an introduction which sets in place a recurring symbol of the journey as a thread which is carried through the narrative:

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men. Now women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly (Hurston 1937: 1).

The panoramic view of the third-person narrator at the beginning of the novel provides a basis for the theme of journey, specifically Janie's journey. For example, Janie's dream - her wish to attain self-actualization in a society in which she is restricted as a young African-American female - is the truth she seeks to attain and eventually does, and she gains the wisdom which she shares about the porch sitters at the end of her journey: "They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh themselves" (258). Hurston's narrator, thus, presents an authoritative view of mankind and specifically the motives of the characters in the novel by setting out this broad theme. It is from this omniscient view of the narrator that the rest of the novel unfolds: "So the beginning of this was a woman and she had come back from burying the dead" (1). The narrative structure in the frame also serves to set up another central feature of the novel, that of the oral tradition. This is achieved, in this instance, by means of the people on the porch in Eatonville – the porch being the centralized location for storytelling:

Seeing the woman as she was made them remember the envy they had stored up from other times. So they chewed up the back parts of their minds and swallowed with relish. They made burning statements with questions, and killing tools out of laughs.

It was mass cruelty. A mood come alive. Words walking without masters; walking together like harmony in a song (2).

On the surface level, the narrator is referring to the porch's tendency to create stories which Janie, in previous circumstances as Mayor Joe Starks' wife, was prohibited by her husband to indulge in but still enjoyed nonetheless. Yet on a deeper level, the narrative structure is being hinted at in the sentence "Words walking without masters; walking together like harmony in a song." The novel contains many instances of free indirect discourse, adding an interesting dimension to the novel by amplifying the novel's effect of what Gates refers to as a "speakerly text" (1988: 181). This narrative technique will be explored more in depth when examining the shifts in narration in the story within a story.

Returning to the novel's frame, Hurston sets up a dichotomous relationship between third-person and first-person narration or telling and showing. Telling entails the narrator providing a commentary or summary about events in a novel, whereas showing involves the narrator's apparent temporary disappearance from the novel which allows a less mediated presentation of speech by the characters thereby leaving the reader with more room to reach their own conclusions (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 108). Thus, whereas the omniscient narrator is able to provide a commentary on the novel's themes and motivations for a character's behaviour, the first-person narration of the porch is left unmediated, resulting in the porch speaking for themselves:

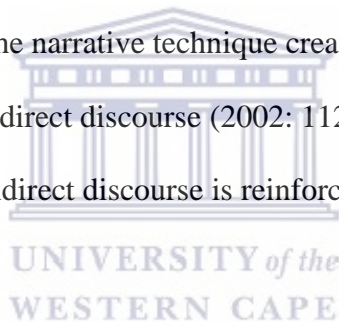
What she doin' coming back here in dem overhalls? Can't she find no dress to put on?
– Where's dat blue satin dress she left here in? – Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her? – What dat ole forty year ole 'oman doin' wid her hair swingin' down her back lak some young gal? – Where 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? – (Hurstun 1937: 2)

The amalgamation of voices in this extract bring to the fore the communality of the porch, much like a chorus in classical Greek drama. Here the porch comments on Janie's return, not knowing where she has been or what she has been through in the year and a half since she left Eatonville to be with Tea Cake. Their assumptions about her money and Tea Cake are all flawed and this illustrates the limitations of the characters' minds via their direct discourse, contrasting their limited knowledge with the narrator's omniscience. Yet, Hurston uses this technique in the frame to consequently expand on the details which the porch raises with their questions in Janie's story within a story. With regards to their reference to Janie's clothes, for example, they raise a significant point as her clothing is a symbol of her *Bildung* throughout her journey. For example, as Mayor Joe Starks' wife she is ordered to dress up to signify her status as the mayor's wife but, on the other hand, Joe's jealousy drives him to make her cover up her plentiful hair (referenced throughout the novel as a prominent symbol of her beauty and potential freedom) with a head rag while she is working in his store. Later on in the novel, once she becomes cognizant of her divided self and consequently adjusts her behaviour accordingly, she is careful to align her dress to her social standing. For example, after Joe dies Janie's clothing colour is a noticeable feature and supposed indicator of her grief to the community but in reality she had moved on with her life a long time ago. However, once Tea Cake dies of rabies Janie has already reached a stage in her life where she is allowed and encouraged to be herself and thus her clothing reflects this transformation: "No expensive veils and robes for Janie this time. She went on in her overalls. She was too busy feeling grief to dress like grief" (254). Thus Janie's development in the novel speaks to

the issues raised by the porch by filling in the gaps which are present in their inaccuracies. The frame, thus, is used as a tool which “serves on the order of plot to interrupt the received narrative flow of linear narration of the realistic novel”, thereby making it a modernistic feature in the novel. This narrative strategy also allows Janie to “recapitulate, control, and narrate her own story of becoming, the key sign of sophisticated understanding of the self” which is the fundamental aspect of her development in the novel (Gates 1988: 185).

While the first half of the frame presents a dichotomy between first and third-person narration in order to illustrate the opposition between character limitation and narratorial omniscience, the bulk of the novel presents a more complex relationship between the narrative techniques which illustrates Janie’s *bildung* and also introduces the third form of narration, mainly free indirect discourse. Rimmon-Kenan states that the orthodox definition of free indirect discourse is that the narrative technique creates the effect of being a combination of both indirect and direct discourse (2002: 112). This view of the unique qualities of what is termed free indirect discourse is reinforced by Dorrit Cohn who states that:



Imitating the language a character uses when he talks to himself ... casts that language into the grammar a narrator uses in talking about him, thus superimposing two voices that are kept distinct in the other two forms. And this equivocation in turn creates the characteristic indeterminateness of the narrated monologue’s relationship to the language of consciousness, suspending it between the immediacy of quotation and the mediacy of narration. (1979: 105-106)

Hurston’s narrative strategy of using free indirect discourse is meant to create a sense of drama within the text. In her essay “The Characteristics of Negro Expression” she expands on the linguistic contribution of African Americans to the English language as “highly

dramatized” and “highly adorned” (1934: 55-56). In Janie’s case, in particular, the technique is used to illustrate the division she has within herself and her initial inability to express her true self to the outside world. This is achieved by dramatizing her potential speech by means of free indirect discourse. Her potential mimesis, thus, is dramatized by the narrator’s diegesis. This takes place when Janie is retelling her life story beginning with her childhood and moving onto her adolescent years, an integral phase in her life in which she experiences an awakening within herself:

She had been spending every minute that she could steal from her chores under that tree for the last three days. That was to say, ever since the first tiny bloom had opened. It had called her to come and gaze on a mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. 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 her ears. The rose of the world was breathing out smell. It followed her through all her waking moments and caressed her in her sleep. It connected itself with other vaguely felt matters that had struck her outside observation and buried themselves in her flesh. Now they emerged and quested about her consciousness. (Hurston 1937: 14)

In this passage the narrator controls the text as Janie is not yet able to verbalize her sensual experience underneath the pear tree. Yet the instances of free indirect discourse dramatize her experience as though Janie has spoken the words herself. Whilst the narrative commentary begins with the literal descriptions of “barren brown stems” and “glistening leaf-buds”, as we get closer to the effect this has on Janie’s psyche, the language shifts to the figurative as illustrated in the phrase, “snowy virginity of bloom”. This metaphor of purity and innocence,

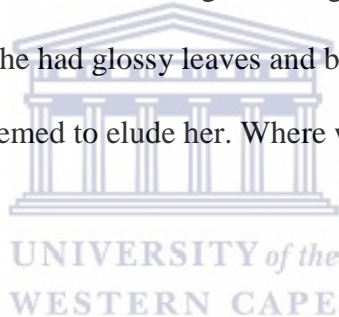
implying the beginning of new life, is what intrigues Janie and illustrates her burgeoning consciousness and sexuality. The narrator's comment "It stirred her tremendously" proceeds to move us closer to Janie's psyche. Following this, the dramatization of her feelings are represented by the sentences rendered in free indirect discourse which begin with the questions: "How? Why?" These queries are represented as though they have been verbally expressed by Janie but the lack of quotation marks shows us that these words are indirectly represented. Janie's thoughts and desire to understand the regeneration of the pear tree is further embedded in the sentence: "It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again." This simile serves as the beginning of Janie's figurative and lyrical idiom in the novel. Then further dramatization of her experience "What? How? Why? ... The rose of the world was breathing out smell." The figure of inside and outside, Janie's divided self, is first presented here as the metaphorical "rose of the world" which "struck her outside observation and buried themselves in her flesh." It is from this point onwards that Janie's self becomes divided between her inner world in which she seeks to fulfill her desires as represented by the metaphorical and natural, and her outer world in which she is restricted from being natural.

As mentioned previously, Janie is not able to verbalize her thoughts or rather, the narrator does not allow her to. Instead, Janie's thoughts are made immediate by this narrative technique using the figurative language we begin to define as Janie's. The questions in the passage represent a pivotal moment of enquiry of which the answers revealed to Janie will define her relationships with others through the metaphor of the pear tree and the horizon. Ultimately, the search for the answers to these questions will also lead her to find herself through the unification of her divided self. It is therefore significant that these pertinent questions are expressed in free indirect discourse as it creates a sense of greater identification between the narrator and Janie's consciousness, which emphasizes the immediacy and

centrality of this experience in her life. As the passage continues, the transition between indirect and free indirect discourse further illustrates the relationship between the narrative strategies:

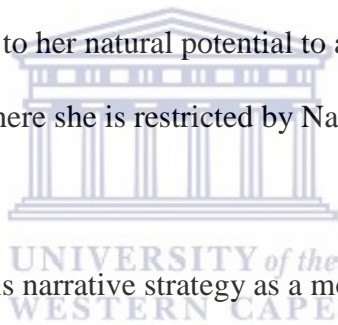
She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid Oh to be a pear tree – any tree in bloom! With kissing bees singing of the beginning of the world! She was sixteen. She had glossy leaves and bursting buds and she wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to elude her. Where were the singing bees for her?

(14-15)



This passage illustrates the revelation of life and love to Janie as the “inaudible *voice* of it all”, hence Janie is being spoken to on a personal and metaphysical level while she herself does not yet have a voice. This “inaudible voice” is encompassed by the figurative language of the narrator; imbued with personification when describing the pollination of the pear tree which strikes Janie so profoundly. Phrases such as “alto chant of the visiting bees”, “panting breath of the breeze”, “ecstatic shiver of the tree”, and “the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace” humanize the pollination process thereby making it more connectable to Janie. This displays, once again, the closeness between the narrator and Janie in this moment when the character is granted a revelation which defines her journey throughout the novel. The sensuality and emotiveness of the language of personification lead to the

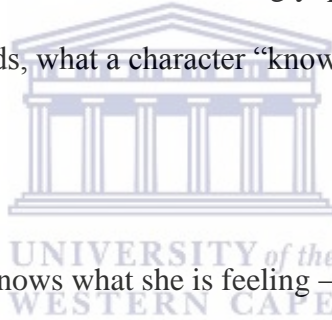
rhetorical climax of the exclamatory phrase, “So this was a marriage!”. The rendering of this phrase in free indirect discourse is significant because, as in the previous passage, there is an identification with Janie while also signifying the importance of her notion of marriage as natural and organic. She finally experiences this desired naturalness with Tea Cake while, in contrast, her marriage to Joe Starks is stiff and strained. Janie realizes this early in her second marriage, after Joe is elected as mayor of Eatonville: “... it jus’ looks lak it keeps us in some way we ain’t natural wid one ‘nother.” Likewise, the second exclamatory phrase in the passage, “Oh to be a pear tree – *any* tree in bloom!” dramatizes Janie’s yearning by making it more immediate through free indirect discourse. In addition, by using the metaphor “to *be* a pear tree” instead of a simile “to be *like* a pear tree”, and by saying that she has “glossy leaves and bursting buds” illustrates Janie’s identification with and internalization of the pear tree and all nature. It also alludes to her natural potential to achieve self-actualisation just as the pear tree does but in getting there she is restricted by Nanny, Logan Killicks, and Joe Starks (61-62).



In an attempt to situate this narrative strategy as a modernist one which underpins Janie’s development, Gates defines the manner in which free indirect discourse is used in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as a “diegesis that tries to pass for a mimesis”. Essentially, Hurston uses the technique as a means to topple the barrier between first and third person narration. Gates postulates that Hurston’s unique manner of free indirect discourse in the novel can be seen as an “equation” in which “direct speech equals narrative commentary; representation of an action equals repetition of that action; therefore, narrative commentary aspires to the immediacy of the drama.” This strategy also “underscores, preserves, and seems to celebrate” Janie’s pursuance of her own consciousness through the rhetorical strategy of illustrating her division, which Gates perceives as modernistic (1988: 208).

To further illustrate the cohesion between narrator and figural consciousness, the rendering of Janie's psyche in the passages above is known as consonant psycho-narration. Rendering consciousness in this manner is "of particular relevance to the narration of those levels of consciousness that cannot be clearly shaped into verbal patterns by the fictional mind itself" (Cohn 1978: 29). In particular, narrative mediation is significantly useful when delivering an erotic event "with its singularly simultaneous involvement of psyche and soma" (46). One of the biggest advantages of psycho-narration is that it is verbally independent from the articulation of the character herself:

Not only can it order and explain a character's conscious thoughts better than the character [herself], it can also effectively articulate a psychic life that remains un verbalized, penumbral, or obscure. Accordingly, psycho-narration often renders, in a narrator's knowing words, what a character "knows," without knowing how to put it into words (49).



It is evident that although Janie knows what she is feeling – a connection with the natural environment which acts as the catalyst to her conscious awakening - she is yet unable to verbally express herself. The psycho-narration of the indirect discourse and the free indirect discourse produce a continuous flow from narrator to Janie's consciousness as both narrative strategies utilize figurative language which becomes known as Janie's idiom throughout the novel. The use of figurative language represents, what Gates calls Janie's "potentially lyrical self" (1988: 211). As the novel progresses she begins to develop her metaphorical literacy to a greater extent while still being controlled by the narrator's idiom of standard English:

She knew things that nobody had ever told her. For instance, the words of the trees and the wind. She often spoke to falling seeds and said, 'Ah hope you fall

on soft ground,' because she had heard seeds saying that to each other as they passed (Hurstun 1937: 33).

Another aspect of Hurston's use of free indirect discourse in the novel is that, in addition to rhetorically expressing Janie's divided self, it also allows for an insertion of other voices, which further expands on illustrating Janie's division. An example hereof is when Nanny marries Janie off to a man she does not love for fear that her granddaughter will follow the same destructive path as her mother, Leafy. What follows is Janie's attempts at rationalizing this forced marriage:

There are years that ask questions and years that answer. Janie had had no chance to know things, so she had to ask. Did marriage end the cosmic loneliness of the unmated? Did marriage compel love like the sun the day? In the few days to live before she went to Logan Killicks and his often-mentioned sixty acres, Janie asked inside of herself and out. She was back and forth to the pear tree continuously wondering and thinking. Finally out of Nanny's talk and her own conjectures she made a sort of comfort for herself. Yes, she would love Logan after they were married. She could see no way for it to come about, but Nanny and the old folks had said it, so it must be so. Husbands and wives always loved each other, and that was what marriage meant. It was just so. Janie felt glad of the thought, for then it wouldn't seem so destructive and mouldy. She wouldn't be lonely anymore (28).

The transitions between indirect and free indirect discourse again illustrate Janie's divided self as well as the irony of her decision to marry Logan. Her faulty conclusion is rendered in free indirect discourse: "Yes, she would love Logan after they were

married.” This statement is derived from a substitution of Nanny and the elders’ assertions in place of Janie’s life inexperience. This narrative technique illustrates Janie’s youthful naivety when it comes to love. It is necessary to remember that she had not been granted any answers to her experience underneath the pear tree. The potentiality of her life had been revealed to her but she does not yet know how to embark on her own fulfilling journey: “She was seeking confirmation of the voice and vision, and everywhere she found and acknowledged answers. A personal answer for all other creations except herself. She felt an answer seeking her, but where?” It is because of this lack of a “personal answer” that Janie turns to the assurance of Nanny. The instances of free indirect discourse alter between Janie’s thoughts and Nanny’s assertions: “She could see no way for it to come about, but Nanny and the old folks had said it, so it must be so. Husbands and wives always loved each other, and that was what marriage meant. It was just so.” This narrative strategy rhetorically illustrates the way in which Nanny’s desire for Janie to be married to Logan Killicks, a man of property, overtakes Janie’s uncertainty. Janie had only just discovered her own desires and has not been given a chance to explore these. In addition, Logan does not fit her view of what love is: “The vision of Logan Killicks was desecrating the pear tree ...” Thus her questions, also rendered in free indirect discourse, “Did marriage end the cosmic loneliness of the unmated? Did marriage compel love like the sun the day?” represent her search for natural love. The presence of Nanny’s voice provides a compelling motivation for Janie to decide that marriage to Logan would lead to love. This conclusion stands in contrast to the revelation of natural and organic marriage she received underneath the pear tree. Nanny’s audible voice has overpowered the “inaudible voice of it all” that was revealed to Janie. Therefore the presence of Nanny’s voice in a passage about a far-reaching decision that Janie has to make and in the form

of free indirect discourse is an innovative narrative technique which illustrates the control and authority she has over Janie's young life. Janie's outer self is about to embark on a journey that has been forced upon her and so, in order to lessen the harsh contrast between her inner and outer world, Nanny's words are substituted in the absence of her own knowledge.

The functions of indirect discourse and free indirect discourse in the above passage work together not only to represent Janie's divided self but to also produce a greater distance between Janie and the narrator in this passage. The narrator's indirect discourse serves to qualify Janie's decision by telling us that it was made "out of Nanny's talk and her own conjectures". In addition, the thought of loving Logan made it easier for her to act upon something which would otherwise be "destructive and mouldy." Janie is still too young and naïve to make these important decisions by herself. Therefore the role of free indirect discourse, then, is to illustrate Nanny's authority over Janie, who is as yet still an unspeaking subject. Nanny's quasi-slave narrative rendered in direct discourse has the effect of silencing Janie even further and, in the absence of her own voice and answers, she substitutes her grandmother's desires as her own albeit not entirely. There is also a sense of irony in the statement, "She wouldn't be lonely anymore." These aspects of narration result in a distancing technique which communicates that the narrator is not supportive of Janie's decision as it will inevitably lead to her unhappiness but it is a necessary part of her journey: "The familiar people and things had failed her ... She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman" (34).

Gates refers to the presence of a double voice in passages such as the one above. This is particularly noticeable when there is both indirect and free indirect discourse in a single passage. He states that: "Bivocalism ... or the double-voiced utterance, in which two voices

co-occur, is the text's central device of naturalization, again serving to reinforce both Janie's division and paradoxically, the narrator's distance from Janie" (1988: 209).

The narrative technique of free indirect discourse not only functions to illustrate Janie's division but, conversely, how she is developing even in the instances when she is not yet speaking for herself. This begins when she is still married to her first husband, Logan Killicks, and starts to realize the futility of her situation:

Janie turned from the door without answering, and stood still in the middle of the floor without knowing it. She turned wrongside out just standing there and feeling. When the throbbing calmed a little she gave Logan's speech a hard thought and placed it beside other things she had seen and heard. When she had finished with that she dumped the dough on the skillet and smoothed it over with her hand. She wasn't even angry. Logan was accusing her of her mama, her grandmama and her feelings, and she couldn't do a thing about any of it. The sow-belly in the pan needed turning. She flipped it over and shoved it back. A little cold water in the coffee pot to settle it. Turned the hoe-cake with a plate and then made a little laugh. What was she losing so much time for? A feeling of sudden newness and change came over her. Janie hurried out of the front gate and turned south. Even if Joe was not there waiting for her, the change was bound to do her good (43).

Janie does not verbally retaliate against Logan's harsh insults against her but rather, her thoughts are represented by the narrator. This takes place by means of the instances of free indirect discourse which interrupt the passage throughout. This narrative technique dramatizes Janie's thoughts as she is in the process of leaving Logan to run off with Joe Starks. The narrator comments that Janie turns "wrongside out" in Logan's kitchen as though her inner self is being exposed in the outer environment of the kitchen as she thinks and feels

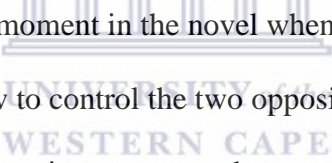
her way through Logan's insults. The transitions between narrative commentary and Janie's thoughts rhetorically mirror this displacement of her inner self into the outer environment. The first transition between indirect and free indirect discourse takes place after she has first worked through her emotions and then thought about Logan's insults: "she dumped the dough on the skillet and smoothed it over with her hand. She wasn't even angry." This transition from her action to her thought interrupts the flow of the narrative commentary as Janie's thought is revealed. The next transition is from free indirect back to indirect discourse: "Logan was accusing her of her mama, her grandmamma and her feelings, and she couldn't do a thing about any of it. The sow-belly in the pan needed turning." These transitions illustrate Janie's quiet acceptance of her situation as she continues to perform her role as Logan's wife in his kitchen preparing his beloved corn-bread and sow-belly. This acceptance has come about by the fact that Janie knows that "marriage did not make love" and is bolstered by Joe's proposition with the opportunity for "change and chance". Logan's insults function as the final straw and give Janie the encouragement she needs to leave him (34-39).

The next transition is as follows: "Turned the hoe-cake with a plate and then made a little laugh. What was she losing so much time for?" This transition represents Janie's next step after she has resigned herself to the fact that her marriage is loveless and Logan will continue to berate her for as long as she remains in her unhappy circumstance. The movement from the narrative commentary on her action, to her "little laugh", and finally to her thought illustrates Janie's process of change which spurs her into action to leave. The question, though, becomes her answer as she feels a "sudden newness and change", her moment of transformation. The last sentence in this passage: "Even if Joe was not there waiting for her, the change was bound to do her good." This sentence gives us an important clue to the true reason why Janie leaves with Joe. He does not "represent sun-up and pollen and blooming

trees” to Janie which is the nucleus of the desire she is seeking. But “he spoke for far horizon” which still intrigues her as it presents her with the opportunity to flee her marriage and start anew in a town which is still in the process of being built. The metaphor of Eatonville as something new, something which is still in progress, and particularly a place where “colored folks was buildin’ theirselves”, represents Janie’s *Bildung*. Thus, it presents a significantly desirable prospect to Janie who wishes to have “flower dust and springtime sprinkled over everything” in her life. After Nanny’s failure to give Janie the answers she needs, she has now become a woman who is seeking to build herself. That she could potentially leave by herself “if Joe was not there waiting for her” is an important concept to grasp because it illustrates that Janie’s development is not solely dependent on her relationships with the men in her life but rather they provide the pathways she journeys on to gain experience (39-44).

By not having Janie verbally respond to Logan’s insults, Hurston’s narrator gets the opportunity to rhetorically illustrate Janie’s psychological journey by means of representing the consequences of her turning “wrongside out” and exploring her feelings and thoughts in Logan’s kitchen which is part of his much prized sixty acres of land, the place of her unhappiness. The transitions between the narrative commentary on Janie’s actions in the kitchen and her thought processes subtly denote her inner self being metaphorically present in the kitchen. The two selves do not co-exist for long before her inner self takes over and spurs her on to leave the kitchen and Logan’s world behind. In terms of narrative technique illustrating Janie’s advancement, a comparable passage, one in which Janie gets physically assaulted by Joe, as opposed to the verbal assault she receives from Logan, also has the narrator silencing Janie’s direct discourse by representing her thinking process in a blend of indirect and free indirect discourse:

Janie stood where he left her for unmeasured time and thought. She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her. Then she went inside there to see what it was. It was her image of Jody tumbled down and shattered. But looking at it she saw that it never was the flesh and blood figure of her dreams. Just something she had grabbed up to drape her dreams over. In a way she turned her back upon the image where it lay and looked further. She had no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man, neither any glistening young fruit where the petals used to be. She found that she had a host of thoughts she had never expressed to him, and numerous emotions she had never let Jody know about. Things packed up and put away in parts of her heart where he could never find them. She was saving up feelings for some man she had never seen. She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them (96-97).



This passage represents a pivotal moment in the novel when Janie becomes aware of her inner and outer self as well as how to control the two opposing sides in order to prevent them from mingling. In contrast to the previous passage, the narrator accompanies Janie as she delves into her inner self, exploring her feelings after Joe violates her outer self by physically assaulting her. In the previous passage the narrator does not reveal the course of Janie's thoughts after Logan insults her, with only the instances of free indirect discourse revealing Janie's conclusion. However, in this passage the reader is transported into Janie's mind by the narrator in a blend of free indirect and indirect discourse in order to shed light on Janie's feelings in this significant moment in her life.

In the first sentence, the narrator comments on Janie's action as she "stood where [Joe] left her for unmeasured time and thought" which recalls the previous passage in which she "stood still in the middle of the floor without knowing it." In both passages Janie does not

verbally retaliate against her husband's actions but rather the focus is on her thoughts being represented and both passages illustrate significant moments in her unhappy marriage. After the first sentence the narration is a blend of free indirect discourse and indirect discourse as the narrator transitions between reporting Janie's thoughts and yielding to the thoughts without inserting any reporting syntax. Often these transitions take place within a sentence, a technique which illustrates the proximity of the narrator to Janie in this significant passage. There is an example of this transition in the second sentence: "She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her." The transition to Janie's internal reflection shows the narrator substituting her own words for Janie's feeling by using the metaphor of the store, the place of Janie's unhappiness and conflict with Joe. While Janie herself is not equating her inner self with the store, the metaphor is an indicator of Janie's lyricism and is significantly used by the narrator to illustrate how far Janie's silence has reached within her as she "learned to hush" around Joe. It is important to remember that the store is where Joe thrusts his wife into when he wants to prevent her from engaging in porch and greater Eatonville activities, particularly story-telling activities. The narrator then journeys along with Janie into her inner self to "see what it was." Janie's feelings about Joe is represented by presenting her image of him as something which has been existing on a shelf within her, quite like an ornament. The narrator's substitution of Joe's image as an ornament illustrates the fragility of his armour and also how hollow he actually is beyond the outer exteriority of his big voice. This metaphor pertaining to Joe's image is, of course, a precursor to the selfsame image being annihilated by Janie in the same store which now represents her inner self: "she had cast down his empty armor before men and they had laughed, would keep on laughing." Janie's realization that Joe "never was the flesh and blood figure of her dreams" is the transformative moment in the passage which connects to her thought in the previous passage: "Even if Joe was not there waiting for her, the change was bound to do her good." This

moment of realization is also represented in a transition from narrative commentary to Janie's thoughts (95-107).

The second stage of Janie's transformation in this passage comes about in the sentence rendered exclusively in free indirect discourse: "She had no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man, neither any glistening young fruit where the petals used to be." The dramatization of this moment without narrator mediation shows the significance and centrality of the pear tree metaphor again being referred to. This of course brings to mind Janie's defining experience underneath the pear tree: "She had glossy leaves and bursting buds ..." as well as her feeling when she leaves Logan to run off with Joe: "From now on until death she was going to have flower dust sprinkled over everything." The passage ends with the last two sentences in free indirect discourse: "She was saving up feelings for some man she had never seen. She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them." The foregrounding of this definitive moment for Janie in the narrative technique of free indirect discourse again portrays the significance of this transformation. Rhetorically she is allowed to reach these important conclusions by herself as she learns how to identify her divided self, which is the first step in her journey towards unifying her two selves later in the novel. With regards to the narrative technique Gates states that:

...free indirect discourse, as manifested in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is a dramatic way of expressing a divided self. Janie's self, as we have seen, is a divided self. Long before she becomes aware of her division...free indirect discourse communicates this division to the reader. After she becomes aware of her own division, free indirect discourse functions to represent, rhetorically, her interrupted passage from outside to inside (1988: 207).

When compared, the narrative progression in these two passages discloses an interesting pattern. In the instances of Janie's verbal silence, the narrative technique of both passages portray the progressive nature of her inner self. As a young seventeen year-old girl in Logan's kitchen, the narrator exerts control over the process of Janie's thoughts and not much revelation is granted except the instances of free indirect discourse which negate mediation of Janie's most necessary thoughts which spur her on to leave Logan. The narrator rhetorically renders these thoughts in a manner which illustrates Janie's as yet less sophisticated and inexperienced inner self by instead focusing on narrative commentary representing her actions in the kitchen. The lack of figurative language, an indicator of Janie's lyrical idiom, is another sign of her lack of 'inner self' presence in the passage. Although her inner self is alluded to by means of the narrative commentary that she turns "wrongside out" no intensive investigation is granted by the narrator.

On the other hand, as a twenty four year-old woman who has been married to Joe for seven years, Janie's developing experience and sophistication in metaphor is illustrated by the narrator's investigation of her thought process. The separation between narrator and character is less obvious in this passage due to the blend of narrative techniques, often in one sentence. Janie's advancement as a result of being able to distinguish between her inner true self and outer Mrs Mayor Starks self is further indicated by the abundance of figurative language in the passage: "her image of Jody tumbled down and shattered", "something she had grabbed up to drape her dreams over", "blossomy openings", "glistening young fruit", thoughts and emotions "packed up and put away in parts of her heart where he could never find them." These metaphors are often interspersed with the narrative commentary.

There is a marked decline in the linguistic separation between the narrator and Janie after this passage. For example, the narrator subtly starts to refer to Joe as "Jody", which is Janie's nickname for her husband: "She bathed and put on a fresh dress and head kerchief and

went on to the store before Jody had time to send for her.” In various instances in the novel, Janie’s growing unification of her two selves is rhetorically represented by this decline as Hurston employs various narrative techniques to highlight this progression. For example, there are various occasions when we spy smatterings of dialect in Janie’s thought utterances, such as this passage which occurs when Janie thinks about Tea Cake’s gambling and how people in Eatonville may criticize him and her if they knew:

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. Tea Cake had more good nature under his toe-nails than they had in their so-called Christian hearts. She better not hear none of them old backbiters talking about *her* husband! Please, Jesus, don’t let them nasty niggers hurt her boy. If they do, Master Jesus, grant her a good gun and a chance to shoot ‘em. Tea Cake had a knife it was true, but that was only to protect hisself. God knows, Tea Cake wouldn’t harm a fly (168).

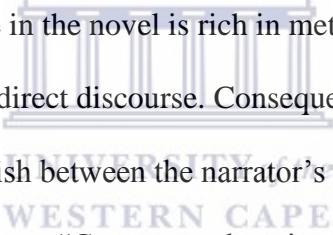
Janie’s dialect peeps through in the form of words such as “hisself”, “than they was”, “nasty niggers” and “‘em”. Janie’s syntax is also admitted into the text for example: “She better not hear none of them old backbiters talking about *her* husband!” Along with her emotion the phrase “none of them” sounds more like the language she would use in spoken language rather than standard written English which would be “any of them”. Hurston’s narrative techniques in the novel display a particular tension between written and oral language, “a sense of new foundations being laid against an old wall.” Many times the characters’ oral language occupy the narrative space in the form of their thoughts, vocabulary, symbolism and rhythms. “Though maintaining the third person, [Hurston] approximates the transcription techniques of contemporary writers who have broken out of the frame.” (Jones 1991: 134-

135) Specifically, through free indirect discourse in the novel, Hurston combines the style of both oral and written language.

Gates states that “It is an utterance that no one could have spoken, yet which we recognize because of its characteristic ‘speakerliness,’ its paradoxically written manifestation of the aspiration to the oral.” By the time Janie has met Tea Cake, her thoughts, fears and dreams are represented in free indirect discourse which is “idiomatic, but standard, English.” Although the oral form of language is evident in the above passage, the narrator does not permit Janie’s idiom to be fully expressed in black vernacular as though the “narrative commentary cannot relinquish its proprietary consciousness over Janie as freely as it does for other characters” (1988: 208, 211).

Furthermore, the character’s rhythms invade the narrative even when the character’s thought processes are not being represented. For example, an analysis of the following two passages personifying death illustrates firstly, Janie’s potential metaphorical language: “So Janie began to think of Death. Death, that strange being with the huge square toes who lived way in the West. The great one who lived in the straight house like a platform without sides to it, and without a roof.” Then later on in the novel, the same imagery of death occurs again but this time around it is not Janie’s thought but the narrator’s commentary: “And then again Him-with-the-square-toes had gone back to his house. He stood once more and again in his high flat house without sides to it and without a roof with his soulless sword standing upright in his hand.” This is an indication of how Janie’s idiom is infecting that of the narrator’s, and this takes place increasingly as she progressively moves towards self-actualization (Hurston 1937: 112-224). Janie’s last passage at the end of the novel, after she had completed the retelling of her story to Phoebe, features the narrator’s highly lyrical commentary as well as free indirect discourse:

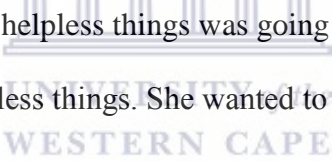
The day of the gun, and the bloody body, and the courthouse came and commenced to sing a sobbing sigh out of every corner in the room; out of each and every chair and thing. Commenced to sing, commenced to sob and sigh, sighing and sobbing. Then Tea Cake came prancing around her where she was and the song of the sigh flew out of the window and lit in the top of the pine trees. Tea Cake, with the sun for a shawl. Of course he wasn't dead. He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see (258-259).



It is evident that this final passage in the novel is rich in metaphor in both the narrative commentary as well as the free indirect discourse. Consequently, it becomes a bigger challenge when trying to distinguish between the narrator's utterances and Janie's. The rhythm and metaphor of the sentence, "Commenced to sing, commenced to sob and sigh, sighing and sobbing" and Tea Cake's "sun for a shawl" reminds us much of Janie's lyrical idiom. She is no longer a divided self as she gathers all her life experiences, symbolized by the horizon, and claims all of it as her own as the metaphor "draped it over her shoulder" illustrates. Yet, the reference to her soul seems to suggest that her two selves still exist, only now they exist alongside each other. Earlier in the novel Janie's "soul crawled out from its hiding place" due to the freedom her life with Tea Cake grants her and now, at the end, she calls "in her soul to come and see." As the soul is the nucleus of her inner self, it can now exist outside herself as well, extending one part of the self into the other. Thus the resolution of her divided self has been attained. The narrative technique in this passage highlights this

progress as we see in the metaphor and rhythm of the text. There is no suggestion of Janie's dialect but the representation of her thought processes is compelling enough to communicate this resolution. Rhetorically, Hurston's narrator has also attained a resolution between the linguistic structures in the novel – diegesis and mimesis – by infusing the standard with the rhythm of dialect (172).

When Janie starts mentally challenging Joe and the other residents of Eatonville, the narrator allows Janie's thoughts to be foregrounded by means of quoted monologue. In these moments of conflict between her inner and outer selves and potential conflict between herself and others, Janie's inner speech illustrates her momentary separation from the narrator whose empathy is usually displayed in the instances of free indirect discourse in the novel. For example, in the moments when Janie cautions herself to not cause any conflict between herself and others, the narrative technique of quoted monologue gains control of the text:



A little war of defense for helpless things was going on inside her. People ought to have some regard for helpless things. She wanted to fight about it. 'But Ah hates disagreement and confusion so Ah better not talk. It makes it hard tuh git along' (76).

Here there is continuity between the narrator's commentary and Janie's thought, "People ought to have some regard for helpless things". However, her inner speech presents a discontinuity by means of the quotation marks and the presence of dialect. Both these aspects represent mimesis of course, in which the narrator seemingly retreats from the text momentarily, leaving the character's unmediated speech open to the reader's interpretation (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 108). The presence of Janie's dialect suggests an even wider gap between narrative and figural voice, as the direct discourse of all the characters in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is always rendered in dialect. In

addition, this transition from free indirect discourse to quoted monologue also shows the dispute between her inner self and outer restrictions. Cohn states that, “rationalization and self-deceit continues to attend solitary discourse even when it drops below the audible in modern novels” (1978: 60). It is clear that Janie tries to curb her urge to speak out about the treatment of the mule for fear of “disagreement and confusion.” However, the narrator does not support her decision to remain silent and makes this explicit by means of allowing Janie’s expression to stand on its own, so to speak. Another example of this narrative technique is found in the following passage, which occurs after Janie has recognized the limits of her unhappy marriage to Joe, and contemplates leaving him:

Now and again she thought of a country road at sunup and considered flight. To where? To what? Then too she considered thirty-five is twice seventeen and nothing was the same at all.

‘Maybe he ain’t nothin’,’ she cautioned herself, ‘but he is something in my mouth. He’s got tuh be else Ah ain’t got nothin’ tuh live for. Ah’ll lie and say he is. If Ah don’t, life won’t be nothin’ but uh store and uh house’ (102).

Although Janie’s quoted monologue in dialect is again a marker of discontinuity in the passage, it is meant to be a modification of her thought “she considered thirty-five is twice seventeen and nothing was the same at all.” The thought verb in the form of “she cautioned herself” emphasizes Janie’s realistic take on her situation. This caution and, moreover, awareness, is repeated in her words “Ah’ll lie and say he is.” She has accepted the limitations of her marriage to Joe Starks and knows that if she does not pretend that he is something tangible on which to hold onto, her life would have no meaning at all. Her perception of her

inner and outer self is clear now: “She got nothing from Jody except what money could buy, and she was giving away nothing she didn’t value.” Her questions, “To where? To what?” recall her search for answers underneath the pear tree, however her advancement in age and experience mitigates her desire to leave especially since she does not have a strategy this time around (102). As Cohn mentioned, self-deceit characteristically accompanies interior monologue. When Janie becomes cognizant of her feelings for Tea Cake, this narrative technique is employed to highlight her anxieties about a relationship with him:

So he didn’t come that night and she laid in bed and pretended to think scornfully of him. ‘Bet he’s hangin’ round some jook or ‘nother. Glad Ah treated him cold. Whut do Ah want wid some trashy nigger out de streets? Bet he’s livin’ wid some woman or ‘nother and takin’ me for uh fool. Glad Ah caught mahself in time.’ She tried to console herself that way (142).

The narrator creates the context of Janie’s resistance towards her affections for Tea Cake. This is accomplished by means of the first and last sentences, commenting that Janie’s thoughts are pretense meant to console herself. Janie’s monologue is marked by quotation marks and dialect, which again illuminates the discontinuity between herself and the narrator in this instance. However, the reader’s perception of her thoughts has already been augmented by Janie’s previous thoughts about Tea Cake, rendered in free indirect discourse: “He could be a bee to a blossom – a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps...He was a glance from God.” Here we see Janie’s lyrical idiom returning to the text, indicating her connection to her original self as opposed to her pretence of scorn against Tea Cake. Prior to this passage, the narrator also comments: “She even ridiculed him in her mind and was a little ashamed of the association. But every hour or two the battle had to be fought all over again.” Therefore this shift in

narration between narrator and Janie's quoted monologue illustrates her unsuccessful resistance to a man such as Tea Cake who is antithetical to the previous men in her life. The context in which a monologue takes place is equally important to its content. The status of the figural voice in the monologue depends on the context that the narrator creates for it. Therefore the reader's perspective of the figural voice and what is being said is connected to whether the narrator is empathetic or ironic towards the character (Cohn 1978: 66). The narrator is creating an ironic context in this regard and Janie's thoughts about Tea Cake recall earlier warnings in the novel against carefree men like him from Nanny and Logan, people who had tried to restrict her: "Ah betcha you wants some dressed up dude dat got to look at de sole of his shoe everytime he cross de street tuh see whether he got enough leather dere tuh make it across." and "Ah guess some low-lifed nigger is grinnin' in yo' face and lyin' tuh yuh." Janie thus tries to supplant these sentiments by Nanny and Logan in place of her burgeoning yet insecure feelings for Tea Cake (Hurston 1937: 31-43).

In comparison, the following passage, although also utilizing the same narrative technique of interior monologue, does not display any quotation marks separating Janie's interior monologue from the rest of the passage. Here Janie and Tea Cake are already married and living in Jacksonville. Janie's insecurities resurface when she discovers that Tea Cake has taken the two hundred dollars she brought along with her. Her recollection of old widow Annie Tyler who was bamboozled and abandoned by her young lover Who Flung sends her into a panic that Tea Cake may have behaved similarly:

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. Maybe Ah'm is uh fool,

Lawd, lak dey say, but Lawd, Ah been so lonesome, and Ah been waitin', Jesus.

Ah done waited uh long time. (160)

The most significant aspect about this passage is that Janie's quoted monologue is unsigned, which means that it lacks any explicit quotation marks (Cohn 1978: 63). However, it is still rendered in dialect as though she had spoken the words out loud in direct discourse. The level of narrative mediation in this passage is therefore lower than the previous passages of quoted monologue and, besides the presence of dialect, Janie's thoughts signal a less discontinuous syntax. The narrative structure of the passage begins with a narrative commentary and transitions to free indirect discourse before the unsigned quoted monologue. In comparison to Janie's interior monologue, the content of the free indirect discourse appears more defiant – if Tea Cake has indeed deceived her she has enough money and will not return to Eatonville to be humiliated. Thus, in this sense she is not as vulnerable as old Annie Tyler who had everything taken away from her. Nonetheless, she is still vulnerable due to the intensity of her emotions towards Tea Cake, and this vulnerability is highlighted by her interior monologue. The absence of quotation marks creates the effect that Janie's interior monologue is a seamless part of the narrative commentary and free indirect discourse in the passage. This narrative feature indicates the beginning of a shift in narration as Janie begins to develop into a more unified being. Having become aware of her inner and outer self during her marriage to Joe, she had learned how to control the two vastly different areas of herself. However, the narrative now begins to illustrate less discontinuity between these two parts of herself. This is achieved above by means of unsigned interior monologue, and also the existence of Janie's dialect rhetorically inserts her unmediated thoughts into the text alongside the narrator's.

Their Eyes Were Watching God is also a novel which incorporates different voices into the text, making it richly multi-vocal. From Nanny to Janie's husbands and the different

characters in Eatonville and the Everglades, the text is infused with multiple voices as Hurston often allows characters to speak for themselves in dialect, or represents their voices via the novel's narrator. The interaction between the narrator and character voice is an important aspect of the novel because, while still allowing for the reader to overhear the character's discourse, it also displays the narrator's attitude towards the character. The use of free indirect discourse is effective in illustrating the level of narratorial empathy or irony in their interaction with the male characters in Janie's life. When Joe Starks enters the novel, for example, the narrative technique is heavily infused with his dialect and this is a comment on the narrator's view of him:

Joe Starks was the name, yeah Joe Starks from in and through Georgy. Been workin' for white folks all his life. Saved up some money – round three hundred dollars, yes indeed, right here in his pocket. Kept hearin' 'bout them buildin' a new state down heah in Floridy and sort of wanted to come. But he was makin' money where he was. But when he heard all about 'em makin' a town all outa colored folks, he knowed dat was de place he wanted to be. He had always wanted to be a big voice, but de white folks had all de sayso where he come from and everywhere else, exceptin' dis place dat colored folks was buildin' theirselves. Dat was right too. De man dat built things oughta boss it. Let colored folks build things too if dey wants to crow over somethin'. He was glad he had his money all saved up. He meant to git dere whilst de town wuz yet a baby. He meant to buy in big. It had always been his wish and desire to be a big voice and he had to live nearly thirty years to find a chance. Where was Janie's papa and mama? (Hurston 1937: 37-38).

It is evident that the narrative is richly infused with Joe's idiom as though it is his direct speech but there are no quotation marks in this passage. So far in the novel, the narrator has used standard English in their diction. This is the first explicit use of a fictional

consciousness's African-American dialect in an indirectly narrated passage in the novel. For example: "But when he heard all about 'em makin' a town all outa colored folks, he knowed dat was de place he wanted to be." The use of the pronoun "he" is in reference to Joe which illustrates that it is the narrator, not the character Joe, who is in control of delivering this passage. However, the result of this narrative technique is that, although it is controlled by the narrator, Joe's voice and subjectivity filters through heavily in the text. In opposition to Janie's potential lyricism, Joe's narrowed potential is illustrated in his repeated emphasis of having money, being the boss, and having possessions. This is what defines him. There are various references to his voice and his talk. For example, Janie falls for him because he "spoke for change and chance" which is what she needed in order to get away from an oppressive marriage to Logan Killicks. Later in the novel the residents of Eatonville remark that he "talks like a section foreman", and that Joe "loves obedience out of everybody under de sound of his voice". Eventually, after his death, Janie sympathises with him as she thinks about the toll it took on Joe "in the making of a voice out of a man" (39-117). Thus, Joe's voice is the overwhelming factor in this passage and later on in the novel we see that he uses it to oppress Janie and the rest of the town's people in Eatonville. However, the representation of his inner world by the narrator is often cloaked in irony which illustrates the dichotomy between his outer big voice and his inner insecurity. For example, Joe commands Janie to cover up her hair in the store, a deed motivated by his insecurity:

This business of the head-rag irked her endlessly. But Jody was set on it. Her hair was NOT going to show in the store. It didn't seem sensible at all. That was because Joe never told Janie how jealous he was. He never told her how often he had seen the other men figuratively wallowing in it as she went about things in the store. And one night he had caught Walter standing behind Janie and brushing the back of his hand back and forth across the loose end of her braid ever so lightly so as to enjoy the feel

of it without Janie knowing what he was doing. Joe was at the back of the store and Walter didn't see him. He felt like rushing forth with the meat knife and chopping off the offending hand. That night he ordered Janie to tie up her hair around the store. That was all. She was there in the store for him to look at, not those others. But he never said things like that. It just wasn't in him (73).

The narrative technique in this passage alters back and forth between free indirect discourse and indirect discourse with the aim of exposing a weakness of Joe's – his jealousy about other men in Eatonville not only admiring his wife's appearance but getting pleasure from it as well. On a deeper level this ties in with Joe using his possessions as status symbols from which only he benefits.

The pronoun "This" in the first sentence and the use of her nickname for Joe, "Jody", indicates that Janie's thoughts about the head-rag are being reflected, rather than the narrator's. The second sentence, however, appears to contain both Janie's and Joe's assertions. Although Janie's nickname for Joe appears in this sentence, the idea that he is not changing his mind about the head-rag also connects to his utterance towards the end of the passage: "That was all." Therefore the sentence contains Janie's as well as Joe's utterances while being rendered in the narrative idiom of standard English. The following sentence follows a similar technique, however the capitalization of the word "NOT" creates the impression that Joe's voice is dominant in this instance as it emphasizes his unwillingness to have Janie's hair visible in the store.

The narrator reveals Joe's jealousy in response to Janie's puzzlement. Joe is often unwilling to verbalize certain thoughts which would expose his "illusion of irresistible maleness". The effect is that, on the contrary, Joe's masculinity is diminished by the narrator's cognitive privilege in rendering his thoughts. His "big voice", thus, is just a show.

The clear irony, however, is revealed in the statement, “She was there in the store for *him* to look at, not those others.” This is ironic because ever since Joe Starks arrived in Eatonville with a firm intent to be a “big voice” in the town, Janie became one of his many possessions: “They stared at Joe’s face, his clothes and his wife” (46-107). Joe’s possessions play a major role in his determined acquisition of power by means of instructing others what to do in Eatonville. These possessions are put on display by him to emphasize his idea of desirable masculinity, intending to inspire envy and obedience in the other residents. An example of Janie’s object status is when the store opens:

Jody told her to dress up and stand in the store all that evening. Everybody was coming sort of fixed up, and he didn’t mean for nobody else’s wife to rank with her. She must look on herself as the bell-cow, the other women were the gang (55).

Janie is being put on display much like the town’s first streetlight, which Joe paid for: “He unwrapped it and had it wiped off carefully and put it up on a showcase for a week for everybody to see” (59). It is therefore evident that Joe’s intention is to display Janie in the same manner that he displays his other possessions. The issue arises, however, when his possessions stop being a source of envy and status of power, but start being enjoyed by others, in the manner that Walter enjoys the feel of Janie’s hair. This is threatening to Joe because it has the potential to damage the illusion of power he has in the community. He cannot voice this insecurity, though, as he will be admitting to a weakness he does not want reveal.

The narrative technique of including Joe’s utterances at the same time as Janie’s creates the illusion of his dominance over her initially. However, the psycho-narration which reveals his insecurities to the reader diminishes his dominance to nothing more than jealousy and

insecurity that his “big voice” is not enough to sustain his authority over Eatonville and his wife. Cohn states that, in terms of psycho-narration, “...cognitive privilege enables [the narrator] to manifest dimensions of a fictional character that the latter is unwilling or unable to betray” (1979: 29). It is evident that Joe is unwilling to admit to his weaknesses. It also reveals his humanity behind his voice, as Janie reflects immediately after his death: “She thought back and forth about what had happened in the making of a voice out of a man.” Just like Janie, Joe is a divided self with his inner weaknesses portrayed as outer dominance. But he dies never managing to develop beyond this division. Janie’s recognition of this division in Joe only materializes once she herself becomes aware of her own divided self (Hurston 1937: 116).

In comparison, the narrator’s representation of Tea Cake’s voice has a far more empathetic tone, particularly after he contracts rabies and begins his downward spiral into insanity before being killed by Janie in self-defence. What we overhear from Tea Cake is his mental disarray caused by his sickness, thus it is made clear that his demise is through no fault of his own unlike Joe Starks’ downfall:

He was not accusing Janie of malice and design. He was accusing her of carelessness. She ought to realize that water buckets needed washing like everything else Finally he dipped up a drink. It was so good and cool! Come to think about it, he hadn’t had a drink since yesterday. That was what he needed to give him an appetite for his beans (234).

Hurston’s intention of incorporating elements of the oral tradition in the novel is thus evident in her use of narrative technique in order to ‘overhear’ the thoughts of Janie and the other characters as well as the use of their dialect. This is once again derived from

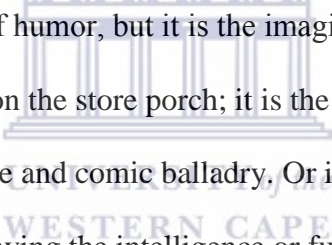
her wish to incorporate drama into the text, rather than a standard received literary approach. The function of the porch in Eatonville, for example, is to provide such drama to the text by means of elaborately made up stories or ‘lies’ which is delivered in dialect with minimal interference from the narrator:

‘Well all right then. Since you own up you ain’t smart enough tuh fund out whut Ah’m talkin’ ‘bout, Ah’ll tell you. Whut is it dat keeps uh man from getting’ burnt on uh red-hot stove – caution or nature? ‘Daisy,’ Jim began, ‘you know mah heart and all de ranges uh mah mind. And you know if Ah wuz ridin’ up in uh earoplane way up in de sky and Ah looked down and seen you walkin’ and knowed you’d have tuh walk ten miles tuh git home, Ah’d step backward offa dat earoplane just to walk home wid you.’ (86-93)

The stories of the porch range from competitive debating to mock flirtation with the women passing by. As the narrator states: “[The girls] know it’s not courtship. It’s acting-out courtship and everybody is in the play.” This allows the reader to partake in an unmediated game of words and entertainment. Conversation is on par with drama or performance in black rhetoric and the street is the setting of the most intricate kind of verbal play between men mainly. This kind of competitive play, while important in establishing solidarity between the men, is also a means of building a reputation for the speaker in the community. “Where status based on economic or educational achievement is problematic, especially for men, the ability to rap, to establish dominance, camaraderie, solidarity, and opposition to white hegemony, as well as to entertain, is the measure of communal admiration” (*Modern and Postmodern Rhetoric* n.d: 1546). The men of Eatonville are not wealthy or educated so their ability to perform their conversations in front of an audience make them powerful: “These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long....But now, the sun and the

bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things.”

In her exploration of dialect and narrative in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Gayl Jones writes about the historical view of dialect in literature from the period of slavery to contemporary times. The earliest use of dialect was mainly for comic relief and minstrel humour whereas the use of standard English by central characters would display their “moral and intellectual superiority”. Jones states, however, that Hurston’s use of dialect “is linked both to her concern with the authentic possibilities of the black voice in literature and to variegated dimensions of character.” With regards to humour in dialect she states that:



...dialect is still capable of humor, but it is the imaginative humor of the oral tradition – such as the storytelling on the store porch; it is the humor that one laughs with, the humor of boast and tall tale and comic balladry. Or it is a dialect capable of wit and biting satire, but never denying the intelligence or full humanity of its users (Jones 1991:128-131).

Hurston’s use of folktales in her novel illustrates another aspect of expression that she values and uses to display the full humanity of her characters. In “The Characteristics of Negro Expression” she says that folktales “shows the adaptability of the black man: nothing is too old or too new, domestic or foreign, high or low, for his use.” (1934: 61) Besides the novel’s characters relaying folktales in dialect, Hurston’s narrator also partakes in the oral tradition:

Most of the great flame-throwers were there and naturally, handling Big John de Conquer and his works. How he had done everything big on earth, then went up tuh

heben without dying atall. Went up there picking a guitar and got all de angels doing the ring-shout round and round de throne. Then everybody but God and Old Peter flew off on a flying race to Jericho and back and John de Conquer won the race; went on down to hell, beat the old devil and passed out ice water to everybody down there. Somebody tried to say that it was a mouth organ harp that John was playing, but the rest of them would not hear that. Don't care how good anybody could play a harp, God would rather to hear a guitar. That brought them back to Tea Cake. How come he couldn't hit that box a lick or two? Well, all right now, make us know it (Hurston 1937: 208-209)

The narrator's indirect discourse in the passage is again adorned with the rhythm and syntax of the characters such as "went up tuh heben without dying atall" and "got all de angels doing the ring-shout round and round de throne" as well as the free indirect discourse "How come he couldn't hit that box a lick or two? Well, all right now, make us know it." Gates states that "the text's imitation of these examples of traditionally black rhetorical rituals and modes of storytelling ... allows us to think of it as a speakerly text." Also, the narrator's idiom is influenced by the discourse of the characters in the novel, representing a communal voice, which also makes us think of it as a speakerly text.

This sort of anonymous, collective, free indirect discourse is not only unusual but quite possibly was Hurston's innovation, as if to emphasize both the immense potential of this literary diction, one dialect-informed as it were, for the tradition, as well as the text's apparent aspiration to imitate oral tradition. (1988: 194-214).

To conclude, it can be seen that in many critical responses to *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, associations made between the narrative structure of the novel, the use of different perspectives and symbolism and the features of the modernist novel are, for the

most part, avoided. Therefore, Hurston has not been sufficiently credited with an understanding of the qualities present within the modernist genre, as well as her use of these features in her writing.

In terms of the shifts in narration, the novel begins with the frame in which the omniscient narrator sets in place the theme of journey, specifically Janie's journey. The narrator, by means of the focus on the porch, also sets the theme of oral tradition, a dominant aspect of the novel. The first part of the frame shows the opposition between showing and telling, an opposition which is resolved in the main narrative.

The novel also includes narrative techniques which illustrate Janie's *Bildung* such as the relationship between first and third-person narration as well as free indirect discourse. Gates (1988) specifically characterizes free indirect discourse in the novel as an implied criticism of the historical literary opposition between showing and telling, and that the use of the narrative technique is as a diegesis disguised as a mimesis and vice versa. This innovative technique ensures that Hurston's novel contains an element which she highly prizes in her writing, that of drama. Free indirect discourse is also an effective technique to illustrate the division of self that Janie experiences in the novel as the technique dramatizes her unspoken inner world, making it more immediate.

The closeness between the narrator and Janie is illustrated in the narrator's use of figurative language which we begin to associate with Janie's lyricism. The use of consonant psycho-narration in which the narrator communicates Janie's consciousness which she cannot verbalize yet is also indicative of the close interaction between narrator and protagonist.

The use of free indirect discourse also allows for the substitution of other characters' assertions in the text, illustrating the prominence and influence these voices have over Janie. For example, when Janie marries Logan Killicks, her first husband, her decision is rendered in free indirect discourse, with Nanny's assertion that "husbands and wives always loved

each other” as the comfort she makes for herself. In instances such as these, free indirect discourse also illustrates the distance between the narrator and Janie.

Hurston’s narrative technique of transitioning between narrator and Janie’s thoughts is also effective in showing Janie’s displacement between her inner and outer self and, when she finally understands that she has a divided self, the transitions become less apparent as the narrative techniques blend together, often in one sentence. From this point onwards the narrator’s language subtly starts to be infused by Janie’s idiom in terms of her vocabulary, rhythm and symbolism. As the novel reaches its end, it becomes much more of a challenge to distinguish between Janie and the narrator’s narration, which symbolizes the unified self she has transformed into.

The use of quoted monologue in the novel illustrates Janie’s mental challenges with herself and others, as well as a marked distance between herself and the narrator. This is because the narrator’s empathy is usually displayed in the instances of free indirect discourse when the narrator’s diegesis substitutes Janie’s potential mimesis. The use of quoted monologue or Janie’s interior monologue shows her rationalization and self-deception, for example, when she wants to challenge Joe or when she wants to fight the feelings she has for Tea Cake.

The presence of other voices in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* makes it a richly multi-vocal text. The narrator’s interaction with Joe Starks’ and Tea Cakes’ voices, for example, show the level of irony or empathy towards them. The narrator’s attitude towards Joe is accompanied by irony, usually displaying the inner weaknesses and insecurities which lay beneath his big voice. On the other hand, the narrator portrays Tea Cake’s voice in a more empathetic manner, particularly after he contracts rabies and starts becoming increasingly paranoid. The importance of oral narration is illustrated in the narrator’s idiom being infused with the character’s discourse which produces, as Gates (1988) calls it, a speakerly text.

It is, therefore, undeniable that the novel has various modernist aspects. The disruption of the novel's narrative continuity is evident in the transitions between the first and third-person narration as well as the narrator's shifts in idiom. In terms of the frustration of narrative framing, the novel's frame sets up the opposition between showing and telling, which then gets resolved in the main narrative. The frame serves to negate Janie's character which then is developed in the main narrative. In addition, the narrator's initial omniscience is discarded as a greater closeness to Janie and other characters is displayed.

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