

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: OPPOSITIONAL NARRATIVES:
EMBEDDED TALES, SOCIAL JUSTICE,
AND THE READER

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Oppositional narratives are texts that work to disrupt dominant ideology and interrogate social injustices through tactical and thematic interactions with readers. Tactically, oppositional narratives activate embedded tales, small stories inserted in the frame narratives, to question dominant conceptions about marginalized people. Embedding operates through gathering, retasking, and projecting, which I substantiate with coalitional and rhetorical narrative theories. Oppositional narratives give voice to the silenced and sketch an inclusive humanity that offers hope for social justice by gathering multiple embedded tales that connect heterogeneous individualities across shared experiences, enabling revisions of dominant culture through retasking, and projecting imagined possibilities for change. Through readers' ethical experiences with multiple tales and tellers, oppositional narratives create possibilities for empathy and understanding across differences. I consider how embedded tales work oppositionally in Sanora Babb's *Whose Names are Unknown*, Marita Bonner's *Frye Street and Environs*, Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited*, Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Comedy: American Style*, Langston Hughes' *Not Without Laughter*, Josephine W.

Johnson's *Now in November*, Meridel Le Sueur's *The Girl*, and Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio*. Embedded tales empower these narratives thematically to validate social justice for the marginalized through models of oppositional consciousness; disrupt ideological constrictions of those othered by class, race, and gender ideologies; and expose objectifying physical exploitations.