

Hurston

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essay and Sketches* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 3. HathiTrust.

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation*, June 23, 1926: 694.

But I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.

Hurston, "How It Feels To Be Colored Me," *The World Tomorrow* (May, 1928), rpt. in *Folklore*, 827.

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

Franz Boas, preface to *Mules and Men* (1935), in *Folk Tales, Memoirs, and Other Writings*, ed. Cheryl A. Wall (New York: Library of America, 1995), 5, Alexander Street.

The creation of a discourse of “the folk” as a *rural* people in Hurston’s work in the 1920s and 1930s displaces the migration of black people to cities.

Her representation of Eatonville...is both an attempt to make the unknown known and a nostalgic attempt to preserve a disappearing folk culture.

The assertion of autonomy implicit in this figuration of a discourse that exists only for the pleasure of the self [at the end of *Their Eyes*] displaces the folk as community utterly and irrevocably. (87)

Hazel V. Carby, “The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston,” in *New Essays on “Their Eyes Were Watching God,”* ed. Michael Awkward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 76, 80, 87.

“Mowgli,” said Baloo, “thou hast been talking with the Bandar-log—the Monkey People.”

Mowgli looked at Bagheera to see if the Panther was angry too, and Bagheera’s eyes were as hard as jade stones.

“Thou hast been with the Monkey People—the gray apes—the people without a law—the eaters of everything. That is great shame.”

...“They are very many, evil, dirty, shameless, and they desire, if they have any fixed desire, to be noticed by the Jungle-People. But we do not notice them even when they throw nuts and filth on our heads.

Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (1893), in *The Jungle Book; The Second Jungle Book* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1925), 36–37, HathiTrust. In Hindi, *bandar-log* means “monkey-people.”

“Oh, yes, de white folks did put us to work too,” said Jim Allen.

Know how it happened? After God got thru makin’ de world and de varmints and de folks, he made up a great big bundle and let it down in de middle of de road. It laid dere for thousands of years, then Ole Missus said to Ole Massa: “Go pick up dat box, Ah want to see whut’s in it.” Ole Massa look at de box and it look so heavy dat he says to de nigger, “Go fetch me dat big ole box out dere in de road.” De nigger been stumblin’ over de box a long time so he tell his wife:

“Oman, go git dat box.” So de nigger ’oman she runned to git de box. She says:

“Ah always lak to open up a big box ’cause there’s nearly always something good in great big boxes.” So she run and grabbed a-hold of de box and opened it up and it was full of hard work.

Dat’s de reason de sister in black works harder than anybody else in de world. De white man tells de nigger to work and he takes and tells his wife.

Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935), in *Folk Tales*, 76–77.



Postcard, 1928; historical marker, West Palm Beach, 2001. National Weather Service, "Memorial Web Page for the 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane," weather.gov/mfl/okeechobee.

1891	b. Notasulga, AL
1897	John Hurston elected mayor of Eatonville, FL
1918	at Howard U.
1925	at Barnard (BA, 1928); studies anthropology under Franz Boas
1925	"Spunk," <i>Opportunity</i> (2nd place in contest); rpt. in <i>The New Negro</i> , ed. Locke
1926	<i>Fire!!</i> , ed. Hurston, Hughes, Thurman: one issue
1931	"Hoodoo in America," <i>J. Am. Folklore</i>
1935	<i>Mules and Men</i> (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott)
	Works Progress Administration, Federal Theatre Project
1936	fieldwork in Jamaica and Haiti (Guggenheim)
	drafts <i>Their Eyes</i> in seven weeks
1937	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (Lippincott)
1942	<i>Dust Tracks on a Road</i> (Lippincott): memoir, success
1950	increasing poverty and obscurity
1960	d. Florida
1975	Walker, "In Search of ZNH," <i>Ms.</i>
