Zora Neale Hurston: The Voice of the Goddess

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ZORA NEALE HURSTON: THE VOICE OF THE GODDESS

A Thesis
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the Faculty of the Department of Modern Languages
and Intercultural Studies
Western Kentucky University
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Mella Jean Davis
August 1991
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ZORA NEAL HURSTON: THE VOICE OF THE GODDESS
by Mella Davis
Submitted towards the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Folklore

Date Recommended 8/15/91

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Finally, a special thanks to my twin, Laverne, the only person who would answer to my name. I hope that your job as guardian of the toilet is made easier by the Old Man and
the Sea since he uses the river as his disposal.

I leave you with this prophetic word: "Well," as the Big Boy would say. Not forgetting the Third Reich and the Cat: **May Your Names and Memories Be Erased and May Big Foot Be Finally Led to a Jewish Wedding Canopy Presided over by the Priest and guest Rabbi Pollyanna.** Let us not forget those who almost perished in action, like the Good Man. To the headache I bequeath a 15-year supply of babysitters for the computer room. Many Continental breakfasts to the incredible shrinking person and a special thanks for your humor to the Marginal Man.

As Dr. U. would say: "Well, well, well, Mother's last words and Happy Landing."

Mella Davis
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the earthly and heavenly forces that helped it get into print: God, Dr. Luz Maria Umpierre, running a close second, Dr. Cheryl Keyes, Dr. Ellen Stekert, and Roger Platizky. In addition, I would like to thank my parents and my siblings, Regina, Thomas, and James; a final thanks to Jan Phillips for her special endeavor.
Zora Neale Hurston: The Voice of The Goddess

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79 pages

Directed by: Dr. Cheryl Keyes, Dr. Luz Maria Umpierre, Dr. Ellen Stekert,

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Zora Neale Hurston has re-emerged as an author of promise due to the re-appraisal of her works led by Alice Walker and Robert Hemenway. In both literary and folklore academic circles, Hurston's work has been reclaimed by African-American female scholars and writers, but still a significant study has yet to be done about her ethnographic contributions to folklore and her farsightedness in fieldwork methodology. This thesis seeks to validate her work as a folklorist, thereby dismissing the charges of popularization and amateurishness by re-examining her work. Mules and Men and Jonah's Gourd Vine are Hurston's two most influential folklore texts and will be evaluated for their approach and contribution to the study of ethnography.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>1-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Chapter I: Theoretical Paradigm</td>
<td>16-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Chapter II: Review of Literature</td>
<td>34-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Chapter III: Biography</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Chapter IV: Analysis of Works</td>
<td>51-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Conclusion</td>
<td>78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Introduction

Zora Neale Hurston was a renowned novelist, folklorist, actress, and playwright. She utilized the cultural traditions of African-Americans in her short stories and novels, presenting a marriage of folklore and creative writing. Mary Helen Washington describes Hurston's life and career as one of "...poverty and ill health, dogged by undeserved scandal, and without support of any academic or intellectual community[;] Zora Neale Hurston worked as a writer and scholar for thirty years."¹

This text seeks to reveal her ethnographic contributions to folklore and her farsightedness in fieldwork methodology, in particular, performance theory. In addition, it seeks to validate her work as a folklorist, thereby dismissing the charages of popularization and amateurishness by presenting her work as a voice of a dispossessed people, African-Americans, which speaks with sanity, clarity, and sensitivity.

Hurston was been marginalized because of the prevalent racism and sexism in both the disciplines of folklore and literature. During the early decades from the 1910-30s, it was typical for males, in particular, Anglos, to appropriate the cultural traditions of other groups. In addition, Hurston
suffered from her connections with Mrs. Mason, a white woman who served as Hurston's patroness. This particular relationship coupled with her choice of a black-centered subject increasingly isolated her from the other black artists of the Harlem Renaissance which flourished in the early decades of the 1900s. Moreover, Hurston suffered from her unorthodox presentation of folklore as part of the literary tradition. Her presentational style caused by later folklorists, like Richard Dorson, to label Hurston as a 'popularizer' because the format of her material appealed to a general audience.

Hurston's re-emergence in literary academia is due largely to the re-evaluation of her works, in the 1960s, by African-American writers, particularly Alice Walker. As a result of Hurston's resurrection in the works of Walker, interest in her as a folklorist has been sparked and led to a new appraisal of her ethnography. As the waves of Africanism swept the country, beginning in the 60s, her creations were rediscovered and adopted by African-Americanists and feminists. This national attention and analysis of her work led to the validation of African-American folklore of which she was one of the earliest collectors. Despite particular folklorists' interest in her travail, little or no research has considered her role as more than a Harlem Renaissance writer.
Our contemporary appreciation and perception of Hurston and her art is due to the work of African-American feminists and writers such as Walker and Toni Cade Bambara. Ralph Story argues in his article, "Zora Neale Hurston in the Harlem Renaissance," in the Black Scholar, the distorted view which we inherited of her was propagated because succinctly: Hurston was a black woman in a literary game decided by white males. He concludes that the negative judgments made about her "...seem to be determined by the gender of the scholar or writer; black male scholars hold one view of her and black female writers hold another." ²

Like many Harlem Renaissance artists, Hurston was financially tied to Mason who also served as a patroness for Langston Hughes. Robert Hemenway, Hurston's biographer, notes that "when Hughes broke with Mrs. Mason, he was physically sick and he went home to Cleveland and...stayed in bed for two or three months to try and get over the fact that...she was no longer his patron." ³ Mason was a caricature of white women with power, acting imperious even with her own family. ⁴ The game which Mason played with the careers of Hurston and Hughes is described by Cheryl Wall: "...I think obviously the idea that they are put into competition by Mrs. Mason and she has the money and there is the sense who's going to get it..." ⁵ placed them in an uncomfortable situation. Wall
believes that such a situation causes people to turn on each other.⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that the popular male conception of Hurston, which depicted her as a buffoon rather than a committed professional was engineered, by Hughes. It seemed easier to dismiss her brilliance and simply label her a 'minstrel' and 'shoe-shinner' of white patrons than to treat her as an equal.

Because she did not follow the rules of decorum predicted for a black female and was unashamed of her race and culture she was feared and ostracized. She had the insolence to smoke in public and walk down the road holding a man's arms which was considered disgraceful (1920s/1930). Story concludes that "an even more interesting context in which to place Hurston is as a southern black woman challenging the traditional position of women and exceeding the aesthetic space they had been traditionally provided."⁷ As Story notes, Hurston was more "down-home" and was unafraid to flaunt it; this attitude disturbed the mentality of the black bourgeois who hoped to assimilate into mainstream culture. She actually contributed "...an authentic folk experience to the esthetic mix of the Renaissance[,] a specific knowledge underestimated when the Renaissance interest in the folk has been assessed."⁸ Although most Renaissance intellectuals were interested and fascinated by folklore, they usually found it to be vague and romantic.⁹
In essence, Hurston pitted herself against black male critics and writers by choosing a primary focal point which was black-centered, concerned with intricacies of black culture, not white oppression. Because she spoke to blacks in their language she was accused of perpetuating stereotypes by many, including Richard Wright, a black male critic, in his work, *The New Masses*. However, Hemenway marks her attitude as being one which conceived "...that by representing black people in a black environment, stressing their kind of day to day living... she felt like she was having a political impact... that was the best way that she could demonstrate equality of black people."10 On the other hand, folklorists argued her presentational style and use of dialect in discriminating against her. But, these were mere formalities, because like black male writers, white male folklorists were not willing to concede any territory.

Ironically, however, since the 1970s, we began to witness the development of a community of Hurston scholars and the consequent commodification of Hurston's work as it receives continuing public exposure. Wall remarks, "all of a sudden, Zora Neale Hurston has become the black woman writer that everybody should know about."11 She concedes that "...there's a great deal of cynicism...and I noted that for a good reason, because we're in a society where anything of value, particularly anything that could be potentially
subversive to the social order is co-opted."12 Pointedly, she admits, "if other people are using Zora to advance their careers in the academia or if she is being made into a commodity in the popular culture so be it."13 She doubts that anything can be done about the way in which everything is commoditized. Hemenway suggests that the theory revolution in literary studies has made many aware of the way that literature is a commodity that is subject to market forces and the economics of a capitalistic society thus allowing us to have a better understanding of the class, artistic, and social pressures that were placed upon black writers in the 30s and 40s.14 This theory revolution gives not only a better appreciation of the hardships black writers had to endure, but helps minimize the negative recriminations against those who were involved in the system. Wall concludes: "sure, on one hand, what does it mean that she she is now independent? On the other hand, we're she not, had she not become the kind of cultural commodity that she has become, Eatonville might not exist anymore...."15

As was the case with Mason, Hemenway notes the "...tendency by white media to sorta play black writers off against each other to, to chose only one spokesperson for the race at given time...."16 He continues, "I think certainly in Hurston's time, there was a tendency to ...focus on the one black author who was going to somehow
speak for the Negro race." Yet, Hurston was never the kind of personality, personally or politically to be chosen for that...role; she was just too unpredictable and never inclined to play that. White critics and patrons attempted to control the direction of black writers by telling them: "you're not really going to be able to prove your talent until you can write a book that transcends race," Wall admits, "...of course in a society such as this one, the white male voice is granted a higher level of legitimacy...." Thus, Hurston's voice was controlled, like that of most black artists of the Renaissance, by the demands of the white literary world. Because of the discrimination and bias against her, a secret readership of Hurston's texts began during the 60s which distributed pirated, zeroxed copies of her novels, particularly, Their Eyes Were Watching God. Her work continued to be shared in this manner well into the early 70s until Fawcett Books began reprinting them.

Perhaps, one of the most disturbing examples of appropriation is to be found in one of the most famous and celebrated collections of literature and folklore. White males have long been allowed to 'co-opt' black voices. The classic example lies in a figure who successively combined folklore with literature, Joel Chandler Harris. He was enrolled as a founding member of the American Folklore Society and published
several collections in its journal. Andrienne Seward notes that Harris is credited with popularizing stimulating scholarly interest in Afro-American folktales...."22 Roger Abrahams, reputed folklorist of African-American culture, concurs with this statement, "if he had merely published them [the stories] in the Journal of American Folklore, without the Remus context, he would be thought one of the founding fathers of Afro-American folklore studies."23 Yet, Hemenway finds something disturbing about Harris's psychological state. Perhaps, what is so disturbing about Abrahams' opinion of Harris is the fact that a racist could have been potentially considered the father of African-American folklore. Hemenway describes Harris as a timid, extremely shy man, who in later life became a recluse. Supposedly, Harris overcame his fear of strangers by telling dialect jokes, and Hemenway reports that he once assumed the character of 'Uncle Remus' to entertain Andrew Carnegie.24 He discloses that "there is an element of minstrel show in all this though Harris' dialect was fairly accurate, thereby distinguishing Remus from the "Honorable Pompey Shamsh and other minstrel stage..." personalities.25 In his opinion, Harris assumed the personage of his character thus donning a mask which allowed him to liberate himself from his debilitating neurosis.26

Although Hurston has been criticized for both
producing a caricature of black people through dialect and creating docility in her characters, these accusations could not have been further from the truth. To the contrary, Abrahams notes that "these protest stories [Hurston's tales] seemed to not only confirm the idea Afro-Americans not only had many benign public forms of entertainment that they performed in the presence of outsiders but also a body of hidden lore." Harris actually believed his character Remus represented a forgiving, acquiescent black people. His Uncle Remus stories "...create[d] a racial utopia in which black and white love one another and share a childhood, just as Harris thought he had." This perfect environment is preserved and ritualized as a symbol of reunion, and the Remus dialect helped to support Harris's fantasy. It seems quite obvious to us that Hurston's characters resembled Remus very little. Although, they may have not been volatile and revolutionary in the manner expected, they were quite more than the plantation darky Hurston herself was accused of being.

The standard English used by Harris to frame the tales contrasts with the vivid dialect in the stories themselves suggesting that black language is colorful but ignorant, that black people are picturesque, but intellectually limited. Wall declares, "he misrepresents...he devalues it, [African-American folklore] makes it impossible for it to be treated seriously; it is a total misrepresentation."
However, Hurston never distanced herself from her audience; she, as the narrator, spoke the same tongue as her characters, including and acknowledging her presence in the field experience, resisting the temptation to be the invisible ethnographer, and by doing so, presenting a more authentic, valuable, and appreciative record of the field experience. The image and language of Remus promised whites that there would be no change in the social order. Hurston never squanders her voice on such vain promises.

The contradictions inherent on how history views and treats Hurston are obvious. She is quietly ignored because her folklore was packaged in story form; on the other hand, Harris is infamous for this same technique and is highly praised. But, as Wall has stated, white men are afforded opportunities that black women are denied. On one hand, Hurston is disclaimed as a folklorist and criticized for the fictionalized environment in which she places the folklore, but the opposite is true of the white male. It is difficult to admit that Harris was able to attempt to empower himself through black folklore, but this right was denied Hurston. Hemenway clearly articulates the problem with white male 'co-option' of black cultural traditions: "...Folklore is a complicated system of expression, and to understand its universality one begins with its culturally specific characteristics," which would demand esoteric knowledge
which Harris lacks. Hemenway explains that black folklore is not childish but is part of a human survival system, a cultural paradigm for sanity and imaging revolutionary change."32 Unfortunately, Harris did not realize these principles in dealing with African-American folk traditions, instead he sought reactionary movements.1 Still, one must realize that Harris wrote for the dominant society of the late 1800s with widely-held beliefs of black inferiority. It has been suggested that Harris's work be approached by viewing it as a voice for an Anglo-American society which was struggling with its conscience and overturned way of life. Such an opinion, places the issue of 'co-option' in a somewhat different light because it identifies Harris's audience as white America and therefore, his aims were different.

Hurston's work is all the more valuable because she

1 It is important to note that Harris spoke and wrote in a different socio-cultural environment than Hemenway. Hemenway's ability to explore black culture without 'co-option' is because his work has an altogether different aim than Harris's: Hemenway's work seeks to praise and examine authentic black culture through literature rather than mimic it. For present criticism of Harris refer to an article by Eric Montejal in Folklore Forum which is forthcoming.
considers African-American folklore as credible and intelligent and wrote from that perspective. For example, Hemenway explains the cross-cultural applications of her work: "I come away from Mules and Men with this realization, that, here is an extraordinary expressive culture in a country which reminds them of all the other expressive cultures which we don't pay enough attention and we don't fully understand." Story believes that Hurston was able to capture, through her dialogue, the different values of African-American writers with their desire for self-fulfillment, by recreating through fiction a portrait of black life. He notes that she dared to see herself as a writer with talent equal to if not greater than her peers at representing the "folk" orally and in writing.

Summary of Chapters:
The work will be divided into four parts: the first chapter will examine the theoretical development in African-American folklore scholarship and the role Hurston played in establishing contemporary ethnographic practices. The second will present a survey of the critical examinations of Hurston's work, both folkloric and literary, emphasizing the different concentration of interest invested by both disciplines. The third chapter will provide a brief
description of Hurston as a scholar and person. The fourth and last chapter will evaluate her contributions to folklore as communication, typifying, and serving as a precedent to the ethnography of the 70s and the formation of the paradigm of performance, one from which her work is rarely evaluated. Her two most influential and praised folklore texts, *Mules and Men* and *Jonah's Gourd Vine* will be examined and appraised in this light.
Summary of Works

_Their Eyes Were Watching God_, which Story credits with establishing Hurston as one of the greatest imaginative writer-folklorist in this century, revealed her strong feminist character, Janie, and "...her [Hurston's] authentic rendering of black folk speech and legend [which] should make it impossible for any African-American scholar to disparage her importance to the African-American and American literary traditions respectively."35. But, of course, this prediction was not accurate. In fact, until recently, no major works concerned themselves with the folklore content of the novel, despite the fact that she was one of the first writers to use folk images and speech as well as the insular folk culture.36 In her creative pieces, Hurston anticipated future black women writers who would attempt to define themselves as persons within a specific culture rather than primarily through their relationship with whites.37

_Mules and Men_ is her most analyzed and cited work within the field of folklore. The fact that she includes her experiences as part of recorded data was a first in the discipline. She set precedents for ethnographical work that would not be replicated for decades. Abrahams describes
this piece as a radical departure "...from previous [folklore] collections in bringing out the group hilarity and involvement in the actual telling of the tales, and in the stories she reports featuring an open, if comic, conflict between blacks and whites."  

Tell My Horse was her third popular folklore text for which she spent the years from 1936 to 1938 researching in Haiti and Jamaica. Published in 1938, this collection is often overlooked when analyzing Hurston's work. Certainly not her best folkloric expedition and analysis, it still offers gems of Haitian folk culture.

Hurston has often been criticized for the humor she has included in presenting a picture of blacks. The complaints are based in the argument that Hurston causes her readers to believe blacks are content with their status in America and propagates the black minstrel image of African-Americans. However, galley humor or black humor, which Hurston employs, refers to the tradition that evolved while African slaves, who were kept in the galley, were being transported to the Americas. The slaves were known to tell jokes despite the bleak circumstances. They actually told jokes which made light of their situation; thus, emerged galley humor. (Refer to the dissertation of Carmen Torres Robles, Rutgers University, 1988.)
References

1 Mary Helen Washington, "Introduction: Zora Neale Hurston: A Woman Half in Shadow," I Love Myself When I Am Laughing...and Then Again When I'm Looking Mean and Impressive, p.24.


3 Robert F. Hemenway, taped interview July 1, 1991, cue (016). All further quotes from this interview will be identified by the informant's name and tape cue number.
4 Hemenway, cue (024).

5 Cheryl Wall, taped interview July 5, 1991, cue (107). All further citations from this interview will be identified by the informant's name and tape cue number.
6 Wall, cue (115).
7 Story, p. 27.
8 Story, p.51.
9 Ibid.
10 Hemenway, cue (902).
11 Wall, cue (156).
12 Wall, cue (064).
13 Wall, cue (068).
14 Hemenway, cue (1138).
15 Wall, cue (208).
16 Hemenway, cue (951).
17 Ibid.
18 Hemenway, cue (968).
19 Wall, cue (454).
20 Wall, cue (054).
References Continued

21 Hemenway, cue (1078).


24 Abrahams, p.16.

25 Abrahams, p.17.

26 Ibid.

27 Abrahams, p.16.

28 Joel Chandler Harris, Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings, in Introduction by Robert Hemenway, p.19.

29 Hemenway, Uncle Remus..., pp. 20-21.

30 Wall, cue (049).

31 Hemenway, Uncle Remus..., p.27.

32 Hemenway, Uncle Remus..., p.30.

33 Hemenway, cue (087).

34 Story, p. 27.

35 Story, p.30.

36 Ibid.


38 Hemenway, Uncle Remus..., p.16.
Chapter 1
Theoretical Paradigm

History of African-American Folklore:

The inadequacies in typifying African-American folklore is at the crux of the difficulties in appreciating its sources and its retentions in black American culture. In Seward's opinion, the spirituals and blues and "Br'er Rabbit and Shine" have long been unsatisfactory responses to questions calling for a definition of African-American folklore. She notes that phrases such as the "lore of the group," qualified by such terms as traditional, nonelite, or oral, do not sufficiently serve to delineate black folklore in any holistic way. In the past, folklorists placed an inordinate importance on slavery as a destructive force of African culture in the Americas. In his article, "Eating in the Belly of the Elephant," Abrahams urges his audience to recognize African-American culture as more than "...a resource for new forms and new artistic styles...but to ...acknowledge that an Afro-American culture has been maintained despite the forces that assume the assimilation or the elimination of alternative ways of performing and creating." Such an appreciation would aid in understanding how a culture remains vital and retains its integrity.
Despite Abrahams suggestion, past folklorists approached all cultures from an ideology which stressed classification and collection for fear of losing materials which they believed were quickly vanishing. This 19th-century orientation emphasized recording and preserving rather than exploring traditions from a point of view which reflected their vital functions and dynamic mutability. As Seward points out, this "Mason Jar" system which stressed products would not have satisfied the needs of black intellectuals such as Hurston, who were, in her opinion, offering evidence of the existence of a viable black culture, with its own unique structure complete with functions, values, aesthetics, and tradition. She further comments, "... the exhaustive collecting done by great figures in Afro-American folklore study like Zora Neale Hurston and J. Mason Brewer has only been marginally recognized within the discipline." She is convinced that "[m]uch of the early scholarship, then, can benefit from a kind of reassessment, reinterpretation, and reaffirmation of critical sources crucial to the theoretical development of Afro-American folklore study." In particular, John Dorst argues that Hurston's ethnographies and folk studies need to be reassessed, especially Mules and Men. By stressing multiple origins of African-American culture, many white folklorists retrogress to the early
stage of product-centered study by examining the lore. Seward argues that this type of analysis, while it solves the problem of treating African cultural heritage in America, leaves important questions unanswered with which the new folkloristics is concerned, those related to performance. In reality, the new folklorists have re-adopted the critical discourse which Hurston posited in her works as an alternative (to the past methodology) theoretical tool of presenting performance as communication.

The Long Road to Performance Theory

Hurston was tutored in anthropology by one of the premier folklorists of the 20th century, Franz Boas, who helped to establish folklore as a discipline of anthropology. In Rosemary Zumult's words, it was Franz Boas's aim to "...develop anthropology in all areas—physical, archaeological, linguistical, ethnological—to the extent that a specialist would be needed for each." In reality, he accomplished far more than he had anticipated for his students went on to dominate the field of folklore and make impressive contributions to all of the areas listed above (Hurston's accomplishments lay in her ethnography). He stressed accurate and thorough fieldwork, and his influence is still felt in folklore because of his own work on Native American Indian tribes, but also the work of his students. A concern for accuracy in recording fueled his energies, and he demanded
the same quality work from his apprentices. Therefore, the criticism that Hurston produced less than quality work is incomprehensible. For example, Alan Lomax remarked to Hemenway that she was meticulous in her transcriptions and notes.

Boas was a different type of anthropologist, bringing to folklore the concept of cultural relativism, rejecting popular cultural evolutionary theory. His objectivity allowed Hurston to pursue her interest in black cultural traditions. The work she produced under his tutelage pre-empted the theoretical discussions of folklore which would later become performance theory.

The schism between the anthropological focus of Boas and the literary orientation of the scholars of American folklore in the discipline's beginning was based in a dispute over the description of folklore. Boas and his followers were concerned with folklore only as an oral component of anthropology. Rosemary Zumult, in her critically acclaimed examination of the history of the discipline, *American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent*, explains the conflict thusly: where the anthropological folklorists were exclusive in material considered, the literary folklorists were inclusive. However, where the literary were narrow in their consideration of the folk group, the anthropological folklorists broadened the concept of folk including groups other than those of Euro-
pean ancestry. Elizabeth Fine, the author of The Folklore Text: From Performance to Print, which discusses the historical and theoretical evolution of performance theory of the 70s and 80s, points out that under William W. Newell's, American Folklore Society's first president, and Boas' direction, AFS articulated a broad definition which included the traditions of Native American Indians and African-Americans, rather than the limited segment of folk that interested the literary folklorists. It was this anthropological position that spurred on most of the important fieldwork we now possess on people of color. Yet, Fine admits that "if these two branches had remained separate, the holistic interdisciplinary performance approach might never had emerged." She observes that it was of no surprise to see the interest of the two branches merging in the climate of interdisciplinary cooperation which stressed context and performance instead of the issues of the folk and the boundary of the discipline which were central issue of contention in the formative years of the discipline.

Hurston's theoretical framework for interpreting black culture takes the orientation of performance, concentrating on context and communication. In her critical essay, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," she outlines her performance-oriented ethnography. Hurston perceived of
black folklore in terms of drama: "His [the Negro] very words are action words[,] his interpretation of the English language is in terms of pictures. One act described in terms of another."12 Hence, when she seeks to expose African-American folklife, she uses the vehicle of drama for as she explains "every phase of Negro life no matter how joyful or sad the case there is sufficient poise for drama. Everything is acted out."13 She explains that this transformation of words into action, as the speaker creates a mind-picture such as a "sitting-chair," is part of black metaphorical language custom. In her opinion, Anglo culture conceives and constructs language by writing whereas African-derived cultures understand language in pictures or hieroglyphics.

Gates reclaims Hurston's term, hieroglyphics, in his book, *Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, during his discussion of Hurston's most famous work, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In discussing the above-mentioned work, he analyzes it through his third category of readerly text. He announces that "... Hurston attempts to render the pictures through the imitation of the extensively metaphorical medium of black speech in an oxymoronic oral hieroglyphic that is meant only for the printed page."14 Gates concludes, "it's [the language's] obvious oral base, nevertheless, suggests that Hurston
conceived of it as a third language, as a mediating third term that aspires to resolve the tension between standard English and black vernacular."15 She declares that "we may go directly to the Negro and let him speak for himself"16 even though she understands that she will most likely be denounced for her declaration that the common African-American has the capacity to speak intelligibly. Gates astutely realizes that the language of her characters begins to color the language of the narrator, and moreover, Hurston's text becomes speakerly because of its use "...of free indirect discourse not only to represent an individual character's speech and thought, but also to represent the collective black community's speech and thought...."17 He believes this collective unidentified voice, which acts as free indirect discourse, to be almost without a doubt Hurston's own creation; it is one which is based in black dialect that resonates with the quality of oral narration.

1 Wolfgang Iser in The Act of Reading (Maryland: John Hopkins University press, 1978) speaks of two aesthetic responses: one is what he calls the structure of effects and the other that of response therefore referring to the writerly and the readerly. Gates takes the verbal and affective comment from Iser and refers to it as the speakerly text.
This expressive culture which Hurston attempted to imitate and capture in her literature included what she termed as "the will to adorn." She states that 'the will to adorn' is the second most notable characteristic in Negro expression after drama. Part of this 'will to adorn' includes poetical devices such as metaphor and simile, the use of the double-descriptives, and verbal nouns such as:

metaphor: Yo sho is propaganda or regular as pig tracks
double-descriptive: High tall or kill-dead
verbal nouns: funeralize or uglifying away.

In addition to adornment, angularity and asymmetry are two main concepts in black aesthetics as represented in dance and art respectively. Rhythm and lack of symmetry exist simultaneously as evidenced in blues texts. In reference to African-American folklore, she articulates one of the fundamental precepts in the revolution of the new folkloristics that helps to discard the old product-centered theory:

"Negro folklore is not a thing of the past. It is still in the making. Its great variety shows the adaptability of black man." In this one sentence, she identifies the transformative process by which all cultures are kept alive and the continual evolution which creates new lore and traditions.

Reevaluation Thru Performance: (Changes in Folklore's Focus):

Linda Dégh characterizes folklore as "... very much an
organic phenomena in the sense that it is an integral part of culture[,] any divorce of tales, songs, or sculptures from their indigenous locale, time, and society, inevitably introduces qualitative changes into them." RemarKably, the terms, genre, tradition, even 'folk' are absent from Degg's description of folklore; these terms predominated folklore discussions of the past century. Instead, cultural attitudes, social setting, performer's variables which produce the uniqueness in the structure, text, and texture of the ultimate artifact are considered. Ultimately, the audience and particularly its composition, whether all women or children, affects the folklore performance and its presentation. This contextual approach which has exerted a strong influence on the theoretical framework of the "ethnography of speaking" was first articulated by Bronislaw Malinowski. He was the first to make the distinction between situational and cultural context which became an integral part of the theoretical framework of performance theory. As Dan Ben-Amos remarks, it was in essence Malinowski's functionalism that evolved into Hymes's "ethnography of speaking."

Ben-Amos continues the break with tradition in his attempt to define folklore: "to define folklore, it is necessary to examine the phenomena as they exist. In its
cultural context, folklore is not an aggregate of things, but a process- a communicative process, to be exact.\textsuperscript{21} This particular appreciation of folklore expresses and explores the dynamics of continuation: the issues of transmission, modification, and textual variation, which help to perpetuate the dichotomy between processes and things. The new folkloristics speaks of context, rather than text, process rather than product, community or group (Ben-Amos in particular) rather than the 'folk,' performance and communication.

Albert Lord and Milman Parry were instrumental in these changes within the folklore community. Their fieldwork with Yugoslavian epic singers (1933-35) led them to several startling discoveries: first, there is no "Ur" or original text as the Historic-Geographic school claimed or even a text; therefore, the structure of the 'artifact' emerges during performance, and the audience is an integral part of the creation.

The narrator, his story, and his audience are components of a single continuum which is the communicative process.\textsuperscript{22} For Ben-Amos, folklore is artistic communication in small groups. The small group or community takes the place of the larger sense of a universal 'folk.' He is concerned with the face-to-face communication
possible in a community or reference group. Although Bauman and Hymes are not so concerned with the group, their interests still lie with the idea of shared aesthetics or esoteric knowledge in the form of traditional repertoire. The symbolic significance of a performance is more profound than its explicit content because performer and audience share esoteric knowledge and way of speaking. As with the grammar of particular spoken languages, Bauman iterates, we must reveal by conscious effort the underlying structures of verbal art or metacommunication (influenced by Gregory Bateson's ideas). For this reason, performance has drawn heavily from linguistics, especially, the holistic approach of the Prussian school. Hymes believes, "...if linguistics is the study of language, not grammar alone, then the study of these materials adds to what is known about language."23 In contrast to traditional linguistics, Hymes's "ethnography of speaking" studies the use and patterns of language within culture, thus revealing both linguistic and cultural content. It is on this thesis that performance study is based: that there exists a structure to the spoken and unspoken language (metacommunication) in performance, elements of the theoretical threads of syntagmatic and paradigmatic structuralism.

Structuralism has been diversely applied in many
disciplines. Vladmir Propp, a Russian formalist, was one of the first folklorists to conceive of culture as having a grammar: the concept of reducing phenomenon to its underlying elementary structures which are hidden beneath the fluidity of cultural expression; the units of the frame are inherent in the corpus itself. Yet, Hymes chose a separate course from Chomsky's generative grammar approach. Chomsky spoke of an ideal speaker; however, he failed to account for the ordinary 'competent' speaker in language. In reality, he saw the actual use or performance of language as a step away from the ideal. Chomsky described linguistics completely out of social and cultural context relying on linguistical models of speech. But, ethnographers found that those rules were in contrast with the real world. One can be competent, that is communicate one's thoughts, without using correct grammar. In Hymes' opinion, Chomskian grammar reduces the creative aspects of language to novelty. Perhaps, most apparent in contrast to this language model is the fact that folklore as a discipline validates and appreciates all cultural expression, not just the ideal. The ethnographic sense of competence is much broader including what Malinowski referred to as symbolic needs which Hymes later reclaimed as, "music, dance, visual art... part of human symbolic
Hymes argued that there are separate structures that govern the real use of language. In his article, "Folklore's Contributions to Sociolinguistic Research," he advocated a whole theory of language not only grammar. He views speaking as a form of behavior which functions differently in each community, not as a universal phenomenon which can be abstracted. In his opinion, there is an organization to language which goes far beyond structure. First of all, we 'frame' our speech to set it apart as performance; in so doing, we signal through language whether it is a speech situation, event, or act in the speech community. Moreover, a speaker is not limited to one kind of speaking for we all switch codes by using metacommunication to signal the change from speech to play or vice versa. It was finally Bauman who articulated a formal definition of performance by discussing the components of keying, framing, patterning, and the emergent quality of performance, once again saying, there is more than generative grammar.

In transformational generative grammar, the term, performance is considered overt behavior as the result of an underlying knowledge, quite likely imperfect, on the part of speaker. In folklore terms, performance refers to
traditional material, while emphasizing the elements which comprise a social event. Hymes argues that the concern in folklore is with performance in context as emergent, not mechanical, but as creative, achieved in the usual course of events. Performance occurs, in Bauman's opinion, when an individual assumes responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. There is a heightened sense of expression that identifies the speech as performance. Performance is considered "full, authentic, or authoritative performance, [only] when the standards intrinsic to the tradition in which the performance occurs are accepted and realized."26 As William Lavers declared, "there is no more an 'Ur performance' than there is an 'Ur text'."27 He disclosed an essential reality about communication: each performance is newly created and is affected by many variables, including the presence of ethnographer and her process of recording the communicative event, in addition to the physical and cultural factors that govern performance.

Hurston's ethnography revealed this knowledge of the ethnographer's presence and the effects produced by it. Her fieldwork exemplified the objectives and awareness of the new folkloristics which would only be realized fully three decades later. First, she contended that folklore is
alive and ever-changing. Although she did not articulate her knowledge of cultural and situational venues in social scientific terms, she was aware and recorded the physical and cultural dimensions in her ethnography. By presenting her fieldwork as drama, she was able to include and display the interactions of the audience, the community's assessment of the performance, as well as the performance itself. She understood that there could be no divorce of the teller from the tale or the audience and that her own presence had an effect upon the event. Community aesthetics are recorded as well as the group's appraisal of the event. By setting her work down as drama, she was able to capture the communicative, transformational nature of performance, and differentiate between speech and play. She was culturally equipped to determine (through metacommunication) when true performance began. For this reason Dorst argues, "...that Hurston's social scientific work, though not extensive, is more important than her fiction from the perspective of contemporary critical theory, and that Mules and Men bears interestingly on current discussions of ethnographic practice." 28

Methodology:

The methodology for this study will include archival
and library research to provide an accurate and comprehensive examination of the literature written by and about Zora Neale Hurston. Also, interviews with scholars of Hurston work, and transcription and analysis of this data will be part of the intensive research process. Interviews with Dr. Cheryl Wall, specialist in Afro-American writers and professor at Rutgers University, and Robert Hemengway, Hurston's biographer, considered the leading author on Hurston's literary work, will be recorded. These interviews will be conducted via telephone, will be transcribed, and documented when used within the thesis.
References

1 Seward, p.48.
2 Ibid.
3 Abrahams, p.21.
4 Seward, p.50 (emphasis mine).
5 Seward, p.52.
6 Seward, p.53.
8 Seward, p.53.
9 Rosemary Lévy Zumult, American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent, p. 97.
10 Zumult, p.7.
11 Elizabeth C. Fine, The Folklore Text: From Performance to Print, p.17.
12 Zora Neale Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," The Sanctified Church: the Folklore Writings of Zora Neale Hurston, p.50.
15 Ibid.
17 Gates, p.214.

19 Ibid.


21 Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," Toward a new Perspective in Folklore, p.9.

22 Ibid.

23 Dennis Tedlock, The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation, p.31.


25 Fine, p.47.

26 Tedlock, p.84.

27 Hymes, In Vain I Tried to Tell You, p.86.

28 Dorst, p.305.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature:

Much of the honest confident work published on Hurston has come from the black female literary community. One example is the collection of Hurston's work, compiled and edited by Alice Walker, *I Love Myself When I am Laughing... and Then Again When I'm Looking Mean and Impressive*, which includes an important and essential article by Mary Helen Washington that deals with the elusive persona of the author, Hurston. Moreover, Howard describes the political climate of the black Renaissance and Hurston's trials with the critics as well as her fights with her own conservatism and political reactionarism. The book includes a sample of Hurston's folkloric and literary works and several essays that disclose her feelings about racism and the critics, revealing Hurston to be both astute and clever: included are the "The Pet Negro System," "What White Publishers Won't Print," and perhaps her most famous essay, "How It Feels to be Colored Like Me." The inclusion of these essays helps to destroy the illusion that Hurston refused to speak out against the social situation of blacks and that she blinded herself to her people's predicament.

N.Y. Nathiri is the author of a book which appeals to
the general reader entitled, *Zora! A Woman and Her Community.* It presents the Eatonville festival held in the author's honor. In addition, the text includes interviews with those who remember Hurston. Alice Walker wrote an essay especially for this book, and in addition, an article from a local newspaper is reprinted to show the town's impression of Hurston's work. It was her ethnography which saved the town from destruction because of the national reputation and attention her folklore brought to it.

There have been feminist critiques of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Mules and Me* that focus on the issues of empowerment and wholeness. Many present articles discuss Hurston's influence on contemporary African-American female literature, as revealed in the novels of Toni Morrison and Walker. Unfortunately, this same kind of increased attention and thorough study has not been replicated in the field of folklore. Instead, feminists like Joanne Gabbin discuss the phenomenon of the folkloric framework of much of contemporary African-American literature produced by females in "A Laying on of Hands: Black Women Writers Exploring the Roots of Their Folk And Cultural Tradition." She states, "contemporary black women writers... have gone deeply within themselves to discover who they are, to urge forth a voice too long silenced by a male-centered literary tradition...." The fact that Hurston succeeded in
transforming oral traditions into literary structures, thus breaking the silence of the Anglo-male-centered literary tradition, is particularly feminist and provides an explanation for her popularity with black feminists.

Cheryl Wall, a professor of Afro-American literature, has written one of the few articles which explores the folklore of Hurston's work, *Mules and Men*, from a feminist perspective. Wall is the first to bridge the gap between literature and folklore, presenting a synthesis of the two disciplines, at least in social scientific terms, with such a perspective. She examines the role of women in the field experience that Hurston records and sees the potentiality for female empowerment in Hurston's informant/character, Big Sweet. Her article provides an example of a developing feminist practice which analyzes fiction that holds quiescent power in its text for the empowerment of women. Referred to as engendering the subject, it examines women's roles as prisoners of traditional cultural mores. Wall creates a discourse between African-American 20th century literature and contemporary feminist theory in examination of the position or interrelationship of Hurston's central female character, Big Sweet, to those of male characters. The heretical, almost iconoclastic life which Big Sweet lives is overturned by the almost dichotomic life of Hurston herself, who must remain a great deal of
the time in a subordinate role until she has proven her expertise. This dominant-subvertive twist serves to illuminate the multiplicity and contradictory positions of women's role even within their own creations.

Lillie Howards's efforts in *Zora Neale Hurston* purports to be an extensive examination which critically considers the writer's life and works assiduously. It gives us the historical background in order to enable the public to become familiar with Hurston and gain an appreciation of her creative accomplishments. The book attempts to testify to the woman as well as her literary genius. Yet, she fails to reveal Hurston as a prominent folklorist and thus leaves more questions unanswered than Hemenway's biography does.

Despite Howard's admirable efforts, the honor of the definitive literary work belongs to Robert Hemenway's *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*,1 which has become the standard Hurston biography. He provides a layman's examination of Hurston's ethnography. Hemenway attempts to give Hurston her proper place in the literary canon while

1 It is noteworthy to mention that in the 1950s and 60s Larry Neal's research on Zora Neale Hurston appeared. Hemenway cites Neal's scholarship in the acknowledgement page of his work; Neal was a black literary critic.
the same including a discussion of her folklore. His approach is balanced between Hurston's two crafts, writing and folklore, and surprisingly, he is quite adept at dealing with both subjects with an ease rarely seen in either field.

Henry Louis Gates has two articles devoted to Zora's work in his book, The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism. In a section entitled, "Reading the Tradition," he discusses a literary method of 'reading' Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and the quality of voice Hurston possessed through her use of black narrative speech and metaphor. Moreover, he examines her brilliant use of black dialect in various modes of narration in his chapter, "Zora Neale Hurston and the Speakerly Text." He also extends his analysis to the discussion of wholeness and female empowerment in the work. But, he is more interested in examining Hurston's novel as an example of literary signifying, adopting black speech in a written text, not her ethnographic efforts.

In his article, "Zora Neale Hurston in the Harlem Renaissance," Ralph D. Story dissected the image of the writer which haunted her compellingly while he examined her place in the black arts movement of the Harlem Renaissance. He suggests that her problems were accentuated by the 'publish or perish game' that many white patrons played with black artists. Hurston offended many sensibilities with
her Southern manners and her ability to get money. Because she rejected the position which black and white male critics wished her to take she was black-listed. Story's description of these circumstances sheds a new light on the caricature which was produced of the artist and helps to legitimize Hurston's present resurgence and reappraisal.

Most of these articles limited their discussion to Their Eyes Were Watching God and Mules and Men and ignore the greater portion of her collection, those with folklore content, except to discuss the use of traditional material in a literary piece. They rarely attempt anything other than a feminist or womanist reading of the piece and usually interpret the folklore from this standpoint, thus limiting its application to the wholity of black experience. To my knowledge, there has only been one article published that focuses on the ethnography of Hurston's work: "Rereading Mules and Men: Toward the Death of the Ethnographer" by John Dorst. In this article, the issues and charges of racism and sexism are acknowledged as Hurston is revealed as an extraordinary ethnographer. Moreover, the article is enhanced because its examination stresses the disruptive nature of Hurston's work in the male-dominated field of folklore and the literary canon and attempts to balance her ethnography with her creative writing.

In conclusion, perhaps, fewer works have appeared that
analyze Hurston from the point of folklore or ethnographical content because more than a surface-reading of the text is required to accomplish this objective. In addition, one must come to terms with Hurston's eclectic approach and unorthodox style to folklore as well as her unconventional position as ethnographer in her folklore collections, thus a different theoretical praxis is demanded to analyze both folkloric and literary material.
Chapter 3

Although there is much doubt surrounding the beginnings of Zora Neale Hurston, we are certain that she was born in the only black incorporated town, Eatonville, Florida. The rest of her background remains as much a mystery as the elusive folklorist/novelist herself. She was born on January 7th, 1891, a date finally determined by Cheryl Wall, to Lucy Ann Potts-Hurston and a preacher, John Hurston.

After Hurston's mother died, her father quickly remarried. Zora and her younger siblings were displaced and were often shifted from home to home among her mother's friends. She received minimal attention and only intermittent schooling, and no parental guidance. Therefore, as soon as she was able, Hurston began to travel. She finished high school in the Morgan Academy, a division of Morgan State University. She later studied at Howard University for her undergraduate degree, but would ultimately complete her degree Barnard. She had almost finished her studies when she took her first anthropology course. A paper she wrote was shown to Dr. Franz Boas by her course director, Gladys Reichard. Immediately, Boas took Hurston as his mentee.

Hurston spent much of her life as child absorbing
the folklore she listened to on Joe Clarke's store porch in Eatonville. She would later return to document this black folklore which would animate her fiction. It was the discipline of anthropology, for which Boas served as her mentor, that provided her with the tools which she would use to return to the South and compile her extensive collections. She proved to be a difficult talent to control in that she resisted training in conventional folklore methods. In 1928, only two weeks before graduating from Barnard, she received a fellowship to collect African-American folklore in the South. The grant, arranged by Boas, was given by the Carter Woodson's Association for the study of Negro Life and History. The fellowship was to allow Hurston to spend six months in the field working her way through Florida. She was to record various forms of customs such as jokes, dances, games, and tales.  

Zora later returned to Florida under the patronage of Mrs. Mason Osgood with whom she negotiated a contract to gather African-American lore including music, poetry, and conjure and hoodoo. She made her way to New Orleans where she lived and recorded this "Voodoo" culture. The information she gathered while apprenticing herself to many hoodoo (root workers) and spiritualists, including the renowned Mary Leveau, led to her first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, which will be later examined in further detail for its folkloric content.
During her investigation of the "Voodun" culture, she underwent the rituals of each of her teachers. Her behavior was quite unorthodox for folklore practices of the late 1920s. For example, one initiation ceremony required her to lay naked for three days on a couch.

Hurston's most fruitful years were between 1934-1942: a time when the social climate which stressed a professed liberalism appreciated and esteemed the work of black artists and garnered public and public support for black artists. During these years of the Harlem Renaissance, in New York, she published her most successful literary and folkloric works, including her most acclaimed folklore text, *Mules and Men*, in 1935. Her most popular and honored work to date, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, was published two years later. That same year she received two Guggenheims to collect folklore in Jamaica, Haiti, and Bermuda. By the 1940s, the environment which had been conducive to the rediscovery of African art and modernism disappeared and with it the funds for African-American artists to continue to create. The depression dried the wells of the Renaissance, and Hurston, like many writers, was forced to use her talents for the United States Government as part of the Writer's Project Association. She continued to collect folklore for the project in her home state Florida. The materials gathered by those working for
the project was packaged for the general public, many times
in a form similar to guide maps for each state. Hurston
and B.A. Botkin, who headed the folklore portion of the agency,
were labeled as popularizers by the following generation of
folklorists, especially Richard Dorson who sought to
establish the field folklore as a legitimate branch of the
social sciences. Finally, in 1942, she published her
autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, the last work in
which she exhibited her usual brilliance and received
critical acclaim.

After 1948, the date her last novel appeared in print,
*Seraph on the Suwanee*, her career began to suffer. Hurston
had managed to offend many of her black fellow writers, and
in addition, the prosperity of the Harlem Patronage was over.
Literary agents began to refuse to accept her work because
the demand for black authorship had diminished and the
quality of her literary voice with it. But total
ruin was to come in 1948, when she succumbed to writing her
first novel about a white family, *Seraph on the Suwanee*
which was a critical and financial failure as judged by the
records of her past works. Perhaps, as Hemenway initiates
that it was part of her effort to overcome the stereotype
of the black artist's inability to write the universal novel,
disproving white critics. That same year she was involved in
court because of a charge of sexual relations with a
minor of which she was found innocent. As evidence of Hurston's discord within black academia, a black newspaper, The Afro-American printed the story, knowing it to be fallacious, simply because their editors disliked Hurston. In reality, this was the final blow to her career. Although the allegations were false, she fell from public favor. Her career was greatly hurt, and for the rest of her life, she never achieved the success she had before and was rarely published. She would continue to write, particularly on political issues, but without financial and popular support. Her ideas, though the products of thought, were considered unprogressive. She was discovered two years later working as a maid. She became, in her last ten years of life, more and more reclusive. Hurston scholars note the change in her personality and the almost radicalism in her conservatism. Her strong shift from extrovertism to introvertism in her personal life corresponded to her almost complete failure to write in the previous genres of her former work. Although, in the past, she had presented black life fully as equal to white culture, her politics propagated separate but equal. She finally died on January 28, 1960, in the County Welfare Home, Fort Pierce, Florida. She was buried in a pauper's unmarked grave. Her obituary was simple:

"Died: Zora Neale Hurston, 57, Florida-born Negro
author who explored the world of Negro folklore and magic in remote parts of the South and the West Indies, celebrated the big trials and small triumphs of the Southern Negro in a series of novels" (Jonah's Gourd Vine, Seraph on the Suwanee) without succumbing to bitterness; in Fort Pierce, Fla.-

*Time* magazine, Feb. 15, 1960.5

The records show that in the year she died the *Journal of American Folklore* did not even mark her passing. Ironically, it was Hurston's forgotten folklore that revived a town and saved it from eventual collapse. Her fieldwork on Eatonville, Florida, made it a national treasure worthy of continuity. Alice Walker later placed a marker on her grave on which was inscribed in 1973:

"A GENIUS OF THE SOUTH

1901-1960

NOVELIST, FOLKLORIST

ANTHROPOLOGIST"6

Hurston's demise was brought about partly because of her difficulties with the black intelligensia especially the critics. Mary H. Washington provides an answer to why Hurston was able to be dismissed so quickly only to be rediscovered by African-American womanists: "she was a black woman whose entire career output was subjected to the judgment of
critics, both of white and black, who were all men;" 7
unfortunately a strong African-American women's community
did not exist at this time. The literary community's
reticence in accepting Hurston's work was propagated by her
dismissal as a "cute little darky" of her white supporters.
Her literary voice was denounced as one which was sold out to
white patrons during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.
Washington concurs that much of the early criticism leveled
against her was based on her relationship with Mrs. Mason
who funded many of her research expeditions.

Yet, financial dependency tied many black artists to
white supporters during these critical years of black
artistic development, including Langston Hughes, one of her
main critics. Although it's hard to believe, in reality, Mrs.
Mason owned Zora's research and controlled their publication.
Her loyalty to Mrs. Mason often expressed itself in terms
that seemed and were demeaning to Zora's person, but this game
was played by all would-be artists during a time when all the
checks were signed by white people. Story notes that all black
artists, including Hughes who also received patronage from
Osgood, played the game of attracting a publisher or supporter.

Story concludes, "thus, the task for Hurston as a black
woman player in the interracial literary game was to make
it." 8 It was quite likely that jealousy was the spark that
ignited many against Hurston. For a black woman writer to
excel in the early decades of the 20th century when white males controlled the literary game, was an ordeal in itself, a literal dissent to the abyss, but to have to fight one's own people was at least a heart-break. She was hurt simultaneously by her connections to a white patroness and the fact that her works did not belabor the point of black injustice in a white-dominated world.

Instead, she concentrated her efforts on presenting a black world where the white man was impotent. This world-picture offended many critics. Even, in later years, Sterling Brown, characterized one of Hurston's work, *Mules and Men*, as brilliant, but noted his disappointment at its lack of revolutionary theme, not understanding the emphatic effects, and absence of black struggle. Hurston's conservative politics did not help her position in the black community, which unlike her, was not supporting polite democracy but revolution; to them, Hurston's reactionary politics were suicidal by condemning blacks to agree to segregated life, suggesting blacks lived better in their own society. In the 50s/60s, for example, she found herself at odds with the general black sentiment to be integrated because she believed that white teachers could not teach black students better. Therefore, Hurston finished her life in isolation outside of the community which she had served. As John Dorst, a folklorist, comments: "her
race, sex, and class background insure[d] her marginality to the Great Tradition of Western letters."
References


2 Lillie P. Howard, Zora Neale Hurston, p.21.

3 Howard, p.22.

4 Howard, p.28.

5 N. Y. Nathiri, Zora! A Woman and Her Community, p.17.

6 Alice Walker as cited in Zora! A Woman and Her Community, by N.Y. Nathiri, p.17.

7 Washington, I Love Myself When I'm Laughing..., p.11.

8 Story, p.7.

9 Dorst, p.305.
Hurston drew on the same field notes from which she wrote, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," what Walls considers a groundbreaking essay on Afro-American aesthetics, to produce *Mules and Men*. Therefore, the structure of the discourse chosen to evaluate Hurston's work comes from this treatise. In Walls' opinion, it is in this important essay, "...Hurston states one of the principles that informs the structure of *Mules and Men*[,]" that of drama. Hurston displays her adeptness at producing this highly dramatized life she perceived black life as in *Mules and Men*. In accordance, with this precept, the novel presents a series of brilliant performances that reflect what Hurston termed the Afro-American 'will to adorn' in the classic setting of the store porch which Wall identifies as a transformative space. Wall notes that more recent commentary from folklorists emphasizes the value of the context Hurston provides because of what it conveys about the folklore process. Wall remarks that Hemenway initially suggested to her a contextual reading of Hurston's work. Such a reading evaluates both physical and cultural contexts Abrahams considers important to the analysis of the performance event. Therefore, Hurston provides us with the constant interruptions and mimicry that emerge during every
story's telling, thus revealing the evolving drama and the spoken art of African-American culture.

In the preface to *Mules and Men*, Boas begins by stating: "Ever since the time of Uncle Remus, Negro folk-lore has exerted a strong attraction upon the imagination of the American public." Boas comments that Hurston has the ability to "penetrate through the affected demeanor by which the Negro excludes the white observer effectively from participating in his true inner life." Foreshadowing Seward's discussion of African-American folklore, Boas recommends this book to the student of cultural history because "...it throws into relief also the peculiar and European tradition which is so important for understanding historically the character of American Negro life, with its strong background in the West Indies...." To present a view of black life from a cultural and aesthetic perspective, Hurston is forced to subordinate the existence of the Jim Crow South. The setting of her tales is not the plantation, instead she reveals the intimate setting in the social life of African-Americans through her focus on the communication and drama of black culture. Washington concurs, "...*Mules and Men* goes far beyond the mere reproduction of the tales, as was the case with Harris, but it introduces the reader to the whole world of jook joints, lying contests, and tall-tale persons that make-up the drama of
the folklife of black people in the rural South."

By presenting a black-centered and controlled existence in all its expressiveness, Hurston refutes the idea that black life is pathological.¹

Contemporary critics cite the lack of cross-cultural analysis and conventional scholarly forms in Hurston's folklore collections, but Wall believes the book's difficulty in being categorized is the main reason for its neglect. After admitting her own trouble in approaching the work, she states, "...it's very difficult to figure out, to categorize, and that has been problematic for folklorists and...for literary people.... "⁸ She remarks that this elasticity in conceptualizing the work led many to say "fascinating" and go on to Their Eyes Were Watching God.⁹ Dorst agrees, "...the close attention afforded Hurston's stories and novels, especially Their Eyes Were Watching God, has not been matched by critical reassessment in the social sciences of her ethnographies and folklore studies."¹⁰ Yet,

¹ In her essay, Hurston identifies the 'jook' as the common setting or physical context where much of a black township life evolves (p.62). 'Jook' is the word for a Negro pleasure house; it may mean the house set apart on public works where men and women dance, drink, gamble. She explains, "the real Negro theatre is in the jooks and
In Wall's opinion, there need not be any confusion for "she [Hurston] offers the theories by which her work can be read herself. 11 For instance, she notes that Bauman's definition of performance, written in the vernacular of the social science, is merely a re-articulation of Hurston's theoretical treatise, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," which Wall believes to have cross-cultural implications. 12 Gates concurs, "the curious aspect of the widespread critical attention shown to Hurston's texts is that so many critics [who] embrace such a diversity of theoretical approaches seem to find something new at which to marvel..." 13

Hurston's style in the work is presentational rather than analytical. In order to recreate the vitality of black speech, Hurston employed the literary technique of drama, but without the textual transposition now prominent in ethnopoetics. Hemenway declares, "I come away from Mules and Men with this realization that, here is an extraordinary expressive culture..." 14 He acquires a respect for black performance, as exhibited in its speech artistry, Hurston wished the reader to receive.

Miriam Decosta Willis, in her article, "Folklore and the Creative Artist: Lydia Cabrera and Zora Neale Hurston," suggests that Hurston wanted to reveal the dynamics of
the folk event and that her return to Eatonville to ceremonies and rituals of the community convinced her that black art was a living, breathing thing that could not be reduced to a collection of field notes. She understood folklore as process, communication, and continually-evolving and newly-created performance, unlike most folklorists who believed folklore to be fixed. Hemenway insists that "Hurston alone, among all the artists of the [Harlem] Renaissance, understood this principle of folk process[: folk tradition is not just a body of text, melodies, and beliefs." Hurston knew that folk tradition was behavior—performed interpretations of the world which influence activities, and it does not easily transfer to a print-oriented tradition that conceives of art as something fixed (i.e. Anglo culture). Hurston is tuned into the process of communication: by including the discussion that results from the story-telling sessions, she exposes the audience's reactions and appraisal of the performance, the two key factors in evaluating a performance's authenticity. Moreover, she actually includes the reactions that effect the performance's outcome.

2 The Nuyerican poetry (of Dominican artists) conceived of their writings as oral tradition and performance also. Therefore, they attempted to represent their folk traditions through their verbal artistry.
For example, she includes portions of a prayer chanted by Pa Henry heard during a lying-session which was occurring at the same time: "You have been with me from the earliest rocking of my cradle up until this present moment. You know, our hearts, our Father." 19

By so doing, she acknowledges that the performer, his audience, and outside forces have an effect on the event as Dégh would later suggest. She uses this interruption to stir up more tales by remarking that "de towns too little. Everybody ought to go to one (church)." 20 Hurston's textual representation of the event is quite accurate according to Abrahams who discloses that "in the usual community performance, the voice of the storyteller is far from the only one heard. Comments, exclamations, criticisms, repetitions of the most dramatic lines merge in the welter of sound that constitutes the tale's telling." 21 For example, Hurston provides the impression and criticism of a competing story-teller: "Long before Calvin had ended his story James had lost his air of impatience." 22 Hurston even notes her own response to James's offer to tell a story: "Sure, Ah want to hear you tell'em till daybreak if you will," 23 she eagerly explains.

By documenting both her reactions and those of the participants, Hurston manages to recreate the event and leave much detail for later ethnographic analysis. For instance
she records examples of several verbal techniques including the 'dozens': "Dat's a lie, youse blacker than Ah ever dared to be. Youse so black they have to throw a sheet over yo' head so de sun kin rise every mornin'." 24 By introducing the resultant conversation of the participants, Hurston allows us a view into the psychology and attitude of the informants and the environment that surrounds the event. In addition, she reveals, through her informants' comments, the communal-evaluation of an artist and his or her expertise and the validation of the tradition. Many storytellers are silenced by rebukes that the tale is old or by a competitor who swears he/she can tell it better.

The storytelling frame which Hurston employs in *Mules and Men* is part of a rhetorical strategy used to engage her readers in the performance event. As noted in the analysis of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Gates, the telling "...is self-reflexive in that it draws attention to the process of telling, yet deflects the reader's attention from the writing process...[;] the reader is implicitly discounted as the audience of the novel in favor of the 'real' audience."25 Hurston intentionally engages drama as a means of communication while she presents the folklore process. Hurston's transitions between chapters, which were literally memorates, were included initially to quiet her publisher's complaint that the book was too scientific. She
explains to Boas, "...I hope the non-scientific matter that must be there for the sake of the average reader will not keep you from writing the introduction." These transitional segments which appear everywhere in the chapters provide background information and retain the work's framework as a narrative:

"Before telling of my experiences with Kitty Brown[,] I want to relate the following conjure stories which illustrate the attitude of negroes of the Deep South toward this subject [voodoo]." She documents and collects children's games, railroad songs, and an interesting version of the folk song, "John Henry," while at the same time capturing the environment and mood of the moment and the participants' reactions to it.

Although her fieldwork methods benefit from her narrative framework, much criticism has been leveled against her disregard for conventional folklore presentation and recording of the field experience. Time becomes mythological/non-concrete which is quite appropriate for the text. Amazingly, as soon as she arrives in Eatonville, she starts to collect folklore, thus begins her story which was to last four years, though the years seem unaccounted for. She has often been criticized for her procedures in documenting her field experience, especially in recording dates and times, which is considered essential. Time is not mathematically correct, but in these tales, it is culturally-specific,
creating an illusionary boundary of time. She describes her four year-collecting by the days' events, nights, or seasons, rather than dates and times usually employed by folklorists. Dorst accounts for her methods by explaining, "the obvious constructedness of this section involves a new level of narrative control[...]; the events and performance are not random, but form a natural sequence, the course of a day." Hemenway describes it thusly: "You have a person, Zora Neale Hurston, that spent four years in the South collection folklore. She took those experiences, wrote them down, and collapsed it into a book the same way Thoreau collapsed two years... into one..." at Walden Pond. Literally, Hurston creates the illusion of a day in the life of Eatonville.

Hurston uses the first person "I" thereby making the reader immediately part of the folklorist's adventure, thus denying the advantage of distance which allows the typical folklorist/narrator to control the material or the ability to act as its creator. Instead, Zora

2 Time is an abstract concept and has remained a part of the African retentions of black Americans in their cultural heritage. In the African bardic tradition, the story of one's life, which the bard, recites is constructed as a long narrative with references to events rather than hours and minutes. Hurston's use of 'time' is a clear example of this Africanism.
begins by acknowledging and announcing her presence: "As I crossed the Maitland-Eatonville line[,] I could see a group on the store porch. I was delighted."  

By the end of *Mules and Men*, the reader is on a first-name basis with Hurston as well as the informants/characters. This special referentiality is particular to Hurston alone. Typically, an anthropologist of the early 1900s would objectify his subjects and rarely revealed their personal biases and opinions. Hemenway is correct in stating that the Eatonville residents were no longer "...simply good storytellers,... remarkable in their superstitions, the creators of a local-color of fiction. Now[,] they become a part of cultural anthropology: scientific objects who could and should be studied for their academic value."  

Hurston presents us the drama as it unfolds in the setting of the porch. She uses classic techniques of telling jokes and stories to illicit material from her informants. Hemenway believes, "much of Hurston's personal success was built around her storytelling, which more often than not emphasized the Eatonville milieu."  

Having grown up in a culture with an oral-aural tradition which defined the artist by her ability to use and manipulate metaphorical language prepared her to become a living persona of the
southern folk idiom and almost guaranteed success with her constituents. However, her ability to entertain created the problem of distinguishing between her roles as folklorist and participant. Many critics cite this alternating position as one of the difficulties in identifying Hurston's collections as folklore because of its unorthodoxy. Ultimately, even Hurston is surprised to learn that despite her position as actor in the folklore drama she is still an outsider. Moreover, this knowledge of artistic demands made her a critical judge of community standards of acceptable performance. For this reason, Charlie Jones asks Zora "well, Zora, did we lie enough for you las' night." Zora responds, "You lied good but not enough." Therefore, he suggests that she go to Polk County where the storytellers are judged to be experts in "ly[ing] up a mess and mak[ing] up all de songs and things lak dat...in Polk County de water drink lak cherry wine." Interestingly, community standards and evaluation of traditional arts directly revealed in this passage.

When Hurston arrives in Polk County, she again acknowledges and records the effect of her presence on the group: "Very little was said directly to me[,] and when I tried to be friendly[,] there was a noticeable disposition to fend me off." She continues, "this worried me because I saw at once that this group of several hundred Negroes from
all over the South was a rich field for folklore but here was I figuratively starving to death in the midst of plenty."37 Importantly, she provides us with records of the reactions of the male-dominated group to her presence. The information she provides is examined by ethnographers and feminists alike.

Much critical debate is raised by the accusation that Hurston tampered with the folklore texts in *Mules and Men*. Miriam D. Willis is one of several people who believe that Hurston altered the material which appeared in *Mules and Men*, which is a reason given for its neglect and as well as its label as a popularized version of folklore. Yet, Hemenway believes that the experiences related in these sections "are as close to an objective account of black folklore as Hurston could make them and still satisfy her publisher's demands that the book be accessible to the general reader."38 Although subtly, he affirms Hurston's belief in the efficacy of what she observed: "Hurston ultimately reveals her conviction that these men and women, considered irrationally superstitious by most observers, have discovered many of nature secrets."39 Other collections of folklore preceded Hurston's including one by a Anglo male who pretended to be a hoodoo doctor. Newbell Puckett, a Mississippian, published *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*; yet, unlike Hurston's work, the book failed to present the
validity and intelligence of black folklore. In Hemenway's opinion, "Puckett's interpretation of at least some of his material could not have charmed Zora Neale Hurston, based as it was on a belief that black personality was characterized by laziness, humor, and sexuality." The issues of tampering become marginal when one considers that Hurston was one of the first folklorists to present black religious and social systems without the presumptive mask of racism that characterized the small amount that was being produced in the early years of the discipline about African-Americans (1930s).

**The Authority Figure—The Past Folklorist**

Retrieving past rebukes about Hurston's scholarship, Willis criticizes Hurston's position as ethnographer. She states, "As a writer, Hurston does not always control the voice or the perspective from which a narrative is told, and on occasion[,] she shifts from third to first person, underscoring her strong sense of "I." She argues that "this shift is particularly disconcerting in a scientific work in which the third person objective point of view is a sine qua non." Hemenway characterizes Hurston the narrator as "a self-effacing reporter created...to dramatize the process of collecting and make the reader feel part of the scene." However, his explanation of Hurston's presence as narrator only supplies part of the answer.
John Dorst holds the opposite view of Hurston's position in the novel, actually praising its honesty as ethnographer. In diffidence to Miriam D. Willis's criticism of Hurston's inability to "...be what social scientists call a participant-observer; she had to be participant from pars, partis (a part) and capere (to take)." However, Dorst locates the problem in the fact that "Hurston's work has been and continues to be received according to the conventions of a problematic that takes for granted a void between the work of the ethnographer and that of the creative artist." The criteria of judging each is totally different; yet, at the same time, he notes, some of the same axioms underlie both. He believes "foremost among these axioms is the assumption of stable, self-identical, authoritative subjective, a fully present consciousness standing over against an external reality that the subject can register and interpret." He argues that "this stable, unproblematic subject is assumed for the producers of texts, and the figures represented within texts," which privileges the authorial intention for the text's meaning. Hurston manages to create a disruptive treatise in *Mules and Men* because of her problematic dichotomic position of ethnographer/participant which Decosta renounces.

Hurston's approach allows her to present the aesthetic
essence of a folk tradition which was valued for its behavioral significance. Even in 1970, at that time of its re-issuance, she was still being criticized for the work's lack of comprehensive descriptions of black folklife (traditions and morés) which was conventional for folklore texts by Darwin T. Turner who wrote the new introduction. At the most, folklore texts, almost to the 1970s, included a short description of their experience in their preface or notes about fieldwork methods in the appendix. Dorst states that counter to these expectations, "Hurston's solution was to present her data, primarily folktales, as dramatic performances emerging from the natural flow of everyday life on the store porches and in the 'jook' joints of Black south folk culture."48 In his opinion, her rhetorical strategy of placing the folklorist as the center point of view and situating the folktales "...in the dramatic frame of a fieldwork account leads her ultimately to a disruptive exploration of participant-observation, the privileged research method of 20th-century cultural anthropology and the ground of authority in realist ethnography."49 He suggests that his theoretical reading of the work is anticanonical: "...one that highlights those elements that run counter to the easy totalization and tight closure privileged by the liberal/classical literary and ethnographic traditions."50 Such a dramatic analysis of both Hurston,
the ethnographer, and _Mules and Men_ is valuable because it revolts against the two male-dominated disciplines that discriminated against her work and sought to control its dissemination, and initially forced her to compromise her voice. Obviously, Hurston would not have been able to overthrow the status quo without her talent as a creative artist which supplied her with the expertise needed to create the drama that would supplant Realist Ethnography, thereby justifying the duality of her position as folklorist/writer.

The climax of _Mules and Men_ is where this ethnographic revolution occurs. Dorst argues that behind the open door to black life is the presence of the narrator: "there is the tale collection, presented as a series of dramatized performances, that conveys a sense of accessible cultural Otherness, but also the structure of the collector's experience, which denies the possibility of closure in the Other." In essence, she invites the reader to view the 'play,' but she as the folklorist stands as a clear symbol of the exotericism of the reader's experience unlike, the character, Remus, who pretends to allow total absorption to another foreign culture. Zora manages to destroy this illusion of otherness with her trip to the swamp, where she assumes a fictive personality, and becomes a performer with James Presley and Slim: "Up to this point of crucial folklore performance[,] Zora has been the controlling observer, manipulating situations from a
position of superior knowledge, seeing but in a sense unseen."52 He identifies this moment as the point at which Hurston, observer/collector and participant/performer loses her status and becomes a real actor in the drama. Ultimately, the danger in her cross-over of ethnographer/participant is revealed. With the epiphany of Hurston’s mortality, which occurs when Lucy, a rival of her friend Big Sweet, tries to kill her, comes the destruction of the illusion of her participant status. It is here, explains Dorst, that we realize "there is a whole world of motivations, alliances, and animosities that she has barely glimpsed, much less penetrated."53 Therefore, we realize the inauthenticity of the participant/observer status. Dorst suggests that if the reader identifies with the folklorist she is automatically implicated in this falsehood of connection to the other. Anthropological conventions commanded the absence of the folklorist and stressed, objectified narrative is preferred to the personal aspect of experience. Yet, this approach, part of the Boasian tradition of Realist Ethnography, suppresses the existence of the reporter as selector, shaper, and manipulator of the data54, and as storyteller thus distorting and falsifying the folklore experience as much as intentional tampering with its material.

In this last stage, Zora becomes the folklore object,
first person, fulfilling Willis's description. It is an evolution which takes her from folklorist(observer to performer to folklore subject. In Dorst's terms, "it is the analogue in formal narrative terms to the disruption of the subject as participant-observer" and in reality, to the death of the ethnographic author or the Authority itself, destroying the illusion of control which the hierarchy of the folklore and literary community (i.e. Mrs. Mason) and the subsequent commodification of community traditions.
References


2 Wall, p.663.

3 Wall, p.663.

4 Hemenway, cue (087).


6 Boas, Mules and Men, X.

7 Ibid.

8 Washington, I Love Myself When..., p.16.

9 Wall, cue (320).

10 Wall, cue (339).

11 Dorst, p.305.

12 Wall, cue (493).

13 Wall, cue (495).


15 Hemenway, cue (087).

16 Miriam DeCosta, "Folklore and the Creative Artist: Lydia Cabrera and Zora Neale Hurston," p.86.

17 Decosta, p. 87.

18 Hemenway, p.80.

19 Zora Neale Hurston, Mules and Men, p.86.
20 Hurston, _Mules and Men_, p.80.
21 Hurston, _Mules and Men_, p.27.
22 Hurston, _Mules and Men_, p.29.
23 Abrahams, p.13.
26 Gates, p.86.
27 Hurston, _Mules and Men_, pp. xxiv.
29 Hemenway, cue (1155).
30 Hemenway, cue (1155).
31 Hurston, _Mules and Men_, p.5.
32 Hemenway, p.62.
33 Hemenway, p.61.
34 Hurston, _Mules and Men_, p.60.
35 Ibid.
37 Hurston, _Mules and Men_, p.64.
38 Hurston, _Mules and Men_, pp.64-65.
39 Hemenway, p.12.
40 Decosta, p.86.
Jonah's Gourd Vine presents a different approach by Hurston in fueling her narratives with folklore. As her first novel, she had yet to reach the delicate balance between ethnography and literature that her subsequent works would reveal. *Jonah's Gourd Vine* is a fictionalized version of Hurston's parents' lives; John Pearson is the unfaithful town preacher and Lucy, his endearing wife, is his backbone. Hemenway concludes that "the power of *Jonah's Gourd Vine* as a biographical novel...is clearly Hurston's writing exactly from her own personal experience; that's what gives it a special power."¹

Hemenway categorizes this piece as "the most vital and original novel about the American Negro that has yet been written by a member of the Negro race."² This statement establishes the novel as one of the earliest African-American stories not 'co-opted' by whites. The idea for the novel came to her in 1928, but it was not until 1933 that she began to write. Pointedly, it was this novel that ended Hurston's dependence on Mrs. Mason's support. She found a publisher, Lippincott, who was comfortable with the duality of her literature and folklore interests. After Hurston's successful publishing of the novel, Godmother Mason estranged herself from her.

Remarkably, Zora expands the genre of personal narrative by fictionalizing it. Jan Branvand's folklore text, *The Study*
of American Folklore, defines the personal narrative which he refers to as personal legend, as stories which are told as true and are attached to a particular person. He attributes family traditions as a sub-category of this genre. These family stories or sagas serve as vehicles of speech for the preservation of the past, part of the African aesthetic, a means of continuity for the future. Recent attempts to utilize this traditional means of orally transmitted family lore is witnessed in Kathryn L. Morgon's work, Children of Strangers: The Stories of Black Family. But, to my knowledge, no one other than Hurston has achieved the coupling of both fiction with the 'family story.' This form allows her to recount the courtship of her parents: their marriage, the birth of their children, and the perpetual unfaithfulness of Pearson, and his eventual ruin both spiritually and financially.

However, the strength and vitality of the work lies in its preservation of the language of the black preacher. Abrahams suggests that the most distinguishable feature of African-American speech patterns, esoteric as well as exoteric, is the heightening sense of dramatic stylization. Stylized expression most often can be observed when a particular individual establishes himself as a character in a stage-plot where he can reveal his abilities with words; a preacher is a perfect example. The ability to manipulate
and create language is a valued craft in African-derived cultures. As Abrahams notes, changes in the physical demeanor of the speaker results as he progresses into the ritualized performance. Patterns of stylized behavior result from the performance atmosphere as the contest becomes more serious; subsequently, content is subverted to style and delivery. As the performance evolves, the interaction between actors and audience increases and responsive verbal exchange and movement occur.

Hurston's recreation of a country preacher's sermon as Pearson's final address to his congregation Zion Hope exemplifies the heightened speech, dramatic techniques, and precision evoked in performance. As Pearson is preaching his last message, after being dethroned from his position of high authority and influence in the community (following his divorce from his second wife), he and the congregation provide a 'fictional' example of performance.

Bruce Rosenberg's initial concern lay in his desire to discover vital traditions which would lend credible support to Milman Parry's and Albert Lord's research, oral-formulaic theory, when he published The Art of the American Folk Preacher (1970), which examined black folk preaching in particular. Then in 1973, Willett E. Henry expanded Rosenberg's discussion to include the aesthetic and social dimensions of folk preaching. He argues that
"... in examining black folk religion in this country that the African roots are not found in African culture but in the African psyche," which reminds one of Seward's contentions. Henry views the black preacher as an intermediatory who has the social function of acting as moderator of supernatural power. Henry believes that the black preacher is a mediating figure in a community ritual which commands a socio-psychological position. The preacher's vernacular includes physical movements, facial expressions, verbal and unarticulated language. Henry continues to insist that the African mindset of fatalism has been retained in the African-American psyche. In his opinion, "submission is balanced by power, and when power is not obtained in reality, it must be obtained ritually, and black folk religion has been the instrument through which this has been accomplished." By ritual, man is able to order and to dismiss disorder; for this reason, Henry identifies the chant as an anomaly (disorder) which must be structured by meter. He insists that "the preacher, like the auctioneer, is trying to place his audience into an emotional trance, and this is accomplished, in both cases, through the chant."

Later important work has been done by folklorist, Gerald Davis, on the subject of the black folk preacher. His work extends the analysis of both Rosenberg and Henry.
In an interview with Reverend Earl J. Jackson, the pastor of a black Baptist Church, confirms the aforementioned opinion, "I think a preacher is the best individual that God has on earth. He sells heaven's life insurance policies..."11

Henry continues with this idea stating, "...the preacher's chant has a hypnotic effect, through which he is able to bring the power of the Spirit, as manifested in emotional excitement out of those members of the congregation who might be... non-participants...[,]"12 thereby selling the power of the Spirit. The active participants or actors of this drama are the spiritually-potent; those who do not partake in the spiritual experience remain the audience to the drama of the ritual experience. Therefore, it seems obvious why Hurston has chosen drama to convey the performance-orientation of the sacred event.

For Hurston, the sacred and the profane are both religious establishments in which spiritual healing occur. It is for this reason, she has little problem leaving her discussion of 'Voodun' to take up the issues of the black folk church. In an article bearing the title of her collection of folklore writings, *The Sanctified Church*, Hurston discusses the black church and its performance-drama. Hurston choreographs the entire service by explaining the sermons, prayers, and testimonies which she
believes to have their own definite form and in which the congregation has its appropriate parts. The performance aesthetic is part embellishment and ability to retain the old form. Hurston states, "...all religious expression among Negroes is regarded as art, and ability is recognized as definitely as in any other art." She believes that the Old Testament can only compare with black religious artifice. The prayer is used to stir the audience up before the preacher begins his sermon. She notes the dramatic pauses, elaboration, the propounding on the physical description of both the church and prayer, the crescendo in which the mastery of language and painting is exhibited, and then a final amen in the course of the prayer.

Each part of black folk tradition involves ritual, for example the customary three days of lying under conviction before one repents or seeking a vision. While discussing the feature, "shouting," she concludes, "there can be little doubt that shouting is a survival of African "possession" by the gods. In Africa it is sacred to the priesthood or acolytes, in America it has become generalized." She categorizes "shouting" as a communal act which thrives in concert, responsive to rhythm, sometimes evoked by foot-patting which she believes imitates the tom-tom. Unlike the folklorists of her time, Hurston discussed both the much sought-after survivals
and its evolution in contemporary society without viewing it as less valuable as the popular gunsulkenkundergult. "Shouting" is an integral part of the performance event of the service that leads to the climax, and usually occurs after the prayer, in the final part of the ritual, the sermon.

It is during the chanting-section of the sermon that the performance reaches its height. She explains that "the well-known "ha" of the Negro preacher is a breathing device; it is the tail end of the expulsion just before inhalation." These exclamations add to the emotionalism of the service. Chants and hums have a definite place and time and are used to 'bear up' the preacher, a clear example of the interaction in which the actors engage. Hurston 'documents' the interaction and receptive attitude between the preacher and the congregation:

"there had been a mighty response to the sermon all thru its length. The "bearing up" had been almost continuous, but as Pearson's voice, in Jonah's Gourd Vine, sank dramatically to the final Amen, Anderson lifted a chant that left the church on fire for several seconds more." Once the preacher begins to grunt, he has reached both the sermon's and his own emotional high which will carry him to the end of the drama. Henry observes that "the chant serves not to further develop the theme, but rather to confirm through repe-
tition the power and significance of the theme, and to serve as an expression of the power aesthetic in the preacher and the congregation." The 'amen-corner' which Henry notes is mentioned by Hurston in her description of the performance. He observes that the congregation too must be at its emotional peak in order for the sermon to achieve its proper ritual effect. He urges that the sermon is a group performance with the minister serving the role of mediator for the power aesthetic to be expressed by the entire community. The chant, as Hurston had previously noted, serves to promote and continue the field of energy and potency of the context; the theme of the message is reiterated by the chant. Although Zora describes the atmosphere of the service merely as 'frenzied', such a statement could suggest that Pearson's sermon probably led many to dance, shout, and fall under the presence of the spirit.

Henry concludes,

the chanted portion of the sermon is a group-aesthetic creation; the religious ritual is an expression of the aesthetic values of the entire community in which it is such an integral social function.
Here follows a portion of the sermon in Jonah Gourd Vine which exemplifies the emotional intensities of the black folk preacher. This particular sermon is the one which appears in The Sanctified Church which Zora recorded from C.C. Lovelace in Eau Gallie, Florida, May 3, 1929:

When God said, ha! Let us make man
And the elders upon the altar cried, ha!
If you make man, Ha!
He will sin
God my master ha!
Father!! ha-aa!

Hurston defines the "sanctified church" as "...a protest against the high-brow tendency in Negro Protestant congregations as the Negroes gain more education and wealth." She concludes that this primitive religious expression is a true revelation that "... the Negro has not been Christianized as extensively as is generally believed[;] the great masses are still standing before their pagan altars and calling old gods by a new name," in essence, a real extension of more retained forms of African religion such as "Voodun." In her opinion, "... the service is really drama with music. And since music without motion is unnatural...," there is dance. In addition, the art
of shouting is merely a continuation of the practice of African "possession" by the gods (p. 104). Hurston goes so far as to claim that the ceremonies in which a person is "mounted" by a loa or spirit are analogous to the experience of 'shouting' when one is overcome by the Holy Spirit, one member of the Trinity. In actuality, Hurston believes that "the Saints, or the Sanctified Church is a revitalizing element in Negro music and religion, putting back into Negro religion those elements which were brought over from Africa and grafted onto Christianity as soon as the Negro came in contact with it...." All of these spirituals elements which have been retained combine to create the African-derived Sanctified Church.

In ending, Hurston's interpretation of the black folk church as drama and as an American model of African religious systems validates Seward's contention that "Mason Jar" folklore was an inadequate model for African-American folklorists and their culture. Hurston not only examined performance (art of communication) as folk speech (i.e. preaching), but she surpassed the 19th century mindset and considered how culture evolves rather than dies, an extraordinary achievement for a folklorist of the 1930s.
Conclusion

In concluding, it seems apparent that Zora Neale Hurston was a forerunner in the field of ethnography. Her collections examine and represent the interior of black life. Her position and practices as a folklorist/creative writer would come to predominate present-day ethnographic discussions. Her novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, presents one of the most dramatic and performance-oriented expressions in contemporary culture, by examining the art of the black folk church. *Mules and Men* provides us with a picture of the self-reflexive ethnographer and the ethnographical dilemmas of the folklorist as recorder and participant of the event. Dually, these texts furnish the present-day folklorist with a picture of the fully-conscious ethnographer and a skilled folklorist who is proficient at capturing the essence of the art of performance in the smallest things. Her works construct a disruptive treatise of commodified canonical readings and demolish the hierarchal, authoritative/privileged position of the folklorist by resisting classification and the accepted model for ethnography.

Hurston conceives of all black life as drama or spoken artistry that performance has come to be perceived as.
Her definition of drama embraces the secular 'jook' and its profane language as well as 'speaking out' or 'shouting' found in the sanctity of the church. Yet, despite what might appear as paradoxical, Hurston views black life as balanced and examines the underlying psychology in black ritual, something few folklorists were able to achieve.
References

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8 Henry, pp. 8-9.
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12 Henry, p.23.
13 Hurston, _The Sanctified Church_, "The Sanctified Church," p.83.
14 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Hurston, "The Sanctified Church," p.82.
19 Henry, p.21.


21 Henry, p. 22.

22 Hurston, "The Sanctified Church," p.95.


24 Hurston, "The Sanctified Church," p.103.

25 Ibid.

26 Hurston, "The Sanctified Church," p.104.

27 Ibid.


References


