

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction  
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Office hours: Murray 019, Thursdays 11:30–1:30 or by appointment

November 14, 2019. Hurston (2).

## review: orality, power

“Yo’ Nanny wouldn’t harm a hair uh yo’ head. She don’t want nobody else to do it neither if she kin help it. Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out...” (14)

## review: orality, power

She slapped the girl's face violently...

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She hated her grandmother and had hidden it from herself all these years under a cloak of pity....Some people could look at a mud-puddle and see an ocean with ships. But Nanny belonged to that other kind that loved to deal in scraps.... She [Janie] had been set in the market-place to sell. (89–90)

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## language makes language

Davis chanted a traditional-prayer poem with his own variations....

Mrs. Bogle's alto burst out in:

*We'll walk in de light, de beautiful light  
Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright  
Shine all around us by day and by night  
Jesus, the light of the world*

They, all of them, all of the people took it up and sung it over and over until it was wrung dry, and no further innovations of tone and tempo were conceivable. (45–46)

## participant-observer?

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## review: narration

- ▶ narrator (who tells?) vs. focalizer (who perceives)?
- ▶ frame: external narrator, external focalizer
- ▶ inner story: in *fabula* told by Janie but in text by EN
  - ▶ EN1 [EF1] [CF2]
  - ▶ CF2: Janie, townspeople, Jody...
  - ▶ sometimes free indirect discourse blurs the lines

## free indirect (I)

Janie noted that while he didn't talk the mule himself, he sat and laughed at it...Joe would hustle her off inside the store to sell something. Look like he took pleasure in doing it. Why couldn't he go himself sometimes? She had come to hate the inside of that store anyway. That Post Office too. People always coming and asking for mail at the wrong time....

But Joe kept saying that she could do it if she wanted to and he wanted her to use her privileges. That was the rock she was battered against.  
(54)

## free indirect (2)

At the newel post Janie whirled around and for the space of a thought she was lit up like a transfiguration. Her next thought brought her crashing down. He's just saying anything for the time being, feeling he's got me so I'll b'lieve him. The next thought buried her under tons of cold futility. He's trading on being younger than me. Getting ready to laugh at me for an old fool. But oh, what wouldn't I give to be twelve years younger so I could b'lieve him! (105)

The thing made itself into pictures and hung around Janie's bedside all night long. Anyhow, she wasn't going back to Eatonville to be laughed at and pitied. She had ten dollars in her pocket and twelve hundred in the bank. But oh God, don't let Tea Cake be off somewhere hurt and Ah not know nothing about it. And God, please suh, don't let him love nobody else but me. (120)

## who will speak?

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

Franz Boas, [preface](#) to Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935), in *Folk Tales*, 3.

“I god, where’s de Mayor?” (34)

She thought back and forth about what happened in the making of a voice out of a man. (87)

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“Mah wife don’t know nothin’ ’bout no speech-makin’.” (43)

“When you pull down yo’ britches, you look lak de change uh life.” (79)

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“Great God from Zion!” Sam Watson gasped. “Y’all really playin’ de dozens tuhnight.” (79)

is speech all?

She found that she had a host of thoughts she had never expressed to him [Joe], and numerous emotions she had never let Jody know about. Things packed up and put away in parts of her heart where he could never find them. She was saving up feelings for some man she had never seen. She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them. (72)

## is inner speech all?

Let the old hypocrites learn to mind their own business, and leave other folks alone. Tea Cake wasn't doing a bit more harm trying to win hisself a little money than they was always doing with their lying tongues. (126)

### Discussion

- ▶ What side is Hurston's narrator on here?

“Evenin’, Mis’ Starks. Could yuh lemme have uh pound uh knuckle puddin’\*  
till Saturday?” (98)

## feminist questions: the plot

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- ▶ Discussion: what is this novel doing with the coming-of-age plot? be specific.

next

- ▶ finish the novel
- ▶ Commonplacing: group B
  - ▶ Theme (contra syllabus): the move further South.