The Politics and Aesthetics of "New Negro" Literature

Edited with introductions by

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Series Introduction

The Harlem Renaissance was the most significant event in African American literature and culture in the twentieth century. While its most obvious manifestation was as a self-conscious literary movement, it touched almost every aspect of African American culture and intellectual life in the period from World War I to the Great Depression. Its impact redefined black music, theater, and the visual arts; it reflected a new more militant political/racial consciousness and racial pride that was associated with the term "New Negro"; it embodied the struggle for civil rights that had been reinvigorated by the founding of the N.A.A.C.P. and the ideology of W.E.B. Du Bois; and it was an aspect of the urbanization of African Americans that first attracted public attention in the early twentieth century with the black migration.

Within this context it is difficult to pinpoint the chronological limits of the Harlem Renaissance. Generally the consensus among scholars is that the Harlem Renaissance was an event of the 1920s, bounded on one side by World War I and the race riots of 1919 and on the other side by the 1929 stock market crash. Some, however, have either greatly expanded or sharply restricted the time span of the movement. In 1967 Abraham Chapman wrote that he saw elements of the Renaissance in Claude McKay's poetry of 1917 and even in W.E.B. Du Bois's poem, "The Song of the Smoke," which was published in 1899.[1] Nathan Huggins argued that the Renaissance began during the years between the beginning of World War I and 1920, when the center of power in the African American community shifted from Tuskegee to Harlem, and he saw the Harlem Riots of 1935 as the end of the movement.[2] John Hope Franklin, on the other hand, wrote as late as 1980 that the Harlem Renaissance extended into the 1960s; more recently he has modified that concept, and now speaks of a first and second phase of the Harlem Renaissance, with the latter phase extending into the 1940s and beyond; he also observes that African American literary creativity was not confined to Harlem, but spread across the entire country[3] Benjamin Brawley, the preeminent African American literary historian contemporary to the Harlem Renaissance, downplayed the concept of the "so-called Negro literary renaissance," which he felt was centered around the publication of Carl Van Vechten's ***Nigger Heaven*** in 1926 and which he argued had no significant positive influence on African American literature.[4] Finally, Sterling Brown, one of the Harlem Renaissance poets and later a literary scholar, denied that Harlem was ever the center of a black literary movement.[5]

For the purposes of this collection the Harlem Renaissance is viewed primarily as a literary and intellectual movement. While theater, music, and the visual arts are looked at briefly, the focus is on African American literature, the assessment and criticism of this literature, and the relation of this literature to the political and social issues confronting African Americans in the early twentieth century.

The Harlem Renaissance was a self-conscious movement. That is, the writers and poets who participated in the movement were aware that they were involved in a literary movement and assumed at least partial responsibility for defining the parameters and aesthetics of the movement; black scholars and intellectuals were also aware of the Harlem Renaissance (even if they railed against it) and attempted to define the movement in terms both of literature and the political and social implications of that literature. While it was self-conscious, the Harlem Renaissance lacked a well-defined ideological or aesthetic center. It was more a community of writers, poets, critics, patrons, sponsors, and publishers than a structured and focused intellectual movement. It may be best conceptualized as an attitude or a state of mind—a feeling shared by a number of black writers and intellectuals who centered their activities in Harlem in the 1920s and early 1930s. The men and women who participated in the movement shared little but a consciousness that they were part of a common endeavor—a new awakening of African American culture and creativity; other than that what bound them together was a pride in their racial heritage, an essentially middle-class background, and the fact that all, to a greater or lesser degree, were connected to Harlem at the time that Harlem was emerging as the cultural, intellectual, and political center of black America.

Within this context, the Harlem Renaissance may best be conceptualized as a group of black writers and poets, orbiting erratically around a group of black intellectuals positioned in the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, and other African American political and educational institutions. These older intellectuals supported the movement, criticized it, attempted with varying success to define it, and served as liaison between the writers and the white publishers, patrons, and critics who dominated the business of literature in the United States in the 1920s. Complicating and enriching this mix was the fact that the lines between the various types of participants were not clearly drawn. James Weldon Johnson, for example, was a major promoter of the movement and a poet and novelist in his own right; Jessie Fauset, the most prolific novelist of the period, also served as literary editor of *The Crisis* and actively promoted the careers of young black writers; Countee Cullen, Sterling Brown, and Gwendolyn Bennett wrote regular literary columns, while Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, and several other writers attempted to publish literary magazines; and Carl Van Vechten, a white promoter of African American literature, worked closely with the Knopfs to publish black literature, authored the best-known novel of Harlem life, and almost singlehandedly created the white fascination with Harlem and African American life that characterized the 1920s.

With this definition it becomes a little easier to define the parameters of the movement. The Harlem Renaissance began in the early 1920s, when Jean Toomer published *Cane* and African American writers and intellectuals began to realize that something new was happening in black literature. The movement extended well into the 1930s and included the works of Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes that were published in that decade. As long as they and other writers consciously

pass the younger writers like Richard Wright, Frank Yerby, or Ralph Ellison, who emerged in the 1930s and 1940s. Like so much else, these boundaries are not exact. Antecedents to the Harlem Renaissance are clear in the first two decades of the twentieth century; likewise it is easy to place some of Langston Hughes's work from the 1940s and 1950s in the Renaissance.

The goal of this series is to reprint articles and other materials that will delineate a clear picture and foster an understanding of the Harlem Renaissance. Three types of materials are included in this series. First, and most important, are the critical and interpretive materials on the Harlem Renaissance written by participants in and contemporaries of the movement. These firsthand accounts will assist readers in understanding the efforts of Harlem Renaissance writers, poets, and critics to define the movement and enable readers to glimpse the dynamics of the movement. Second, this series includes a retrospective look at the Harlem Renaissance through the eyes of participants and contemporaries, as well as by writers and critics who were involved in post-Renaissance black literature. Finally, the series presents a sample of the scholarly analysis and criticism of the movement from the 1950s through the early 1990s. The selections come from articles, essays, columns, and reviews in periodical literature; selections from memoirs, novels, histories, and books of criticism; and essays from scholarly journals. These materials are supplemented by a selection of previously unpublished materials, including letters, speeches, and essays. Not included are the literary works of the Harlem Renaissance. There are a number of anthologies of African American literature that already serve that purpose well.

This series also reflects one of the major problems confronting the study of the Harlem Renaissance in particular and African American history in general—the difficulty of accessing needed source materials. For years the study of African American history was handicapped by the fact that many of its primary sources had not been preserved or were not made available to scholars. If they had been preserved, they were housed in scattered collections and often incompletely processed and catalogued. The sharp increase in interest in African American history during the last thirty years has improved this situation enormously, but problems still persist. This series is in part an effort to make material related to one aspect of African American history more available to students and scholars. Unfortunately, it also suffers from the problem that some resources, even when located, are not readily available. For this reason a number of items by James Weldon Johnson had to be excluded; likewise, a very valuable retrospective on the Harlem Renaissance that was published initially in *Black World* is missing here. In the future, perhaps these and other barriers that impede research in African American history will be lifted.

As in any project of this nature there are scores of persons who have provided valuable support and assistance; it is impossible to name them all here. I want to especially thank Leo Balk and Carole Puccino of Garland Publishing. Leo with patience and firmness guided this series to completion; Carole worked diligently to arrange permissions for the publication of the material that appears here. In addition, I want to thank Paul Finkelman, who played a key role in helping me conceptualize the scope and nature of this project. Wolde Michael Akalou, Howard Beeth, Merline Pitre, and my other colleagues and students at Texas Southern University provided valuable feedback as the project developed. I also had wonderful assistance from the staff at the libraries

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I visited while collecting the material for this series. I want to especially acknowledge the staff at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, the Beinecke Library at Yale University, and the Heartman Collection at the Robert J. Terry Library at Texas Southern University; in addition, librarians at the Fondren Library at Rice University, the M.D. Anderson Library at the University of Houston, the Perry Casteñeda Library at the University of Texas at Austin, and the library at the University of Houston, Clear Lake helped me track down the copies of the more elusive journals and periodicals used for this collection. I also want to thank Kathy Henderson and and Barbara Smith-Labard, who helped arrange for permission to publish previously unpublished materials from the collections at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center. Finally, research for this project was supported in part by a Travel to Collections grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Cary D. Wintz

Notes

1. Abraham Chapman, "The Harlem Renaissance in Literary History," *CLA Journal* 11 (September 1967): 44–45.
2. Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed., *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 6–10.
3. John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1980), 383; John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 379–80.
4. Benjamin Brawley, *The Negro Genius: A New Appraisal of the American Negro in Literature and the Fine Arts* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1937), 231–68.
5. Sterling Brown, "The New Negro in Literature (1925–1955)." In *The New Negro Thirty Years Afterward*, ed. by Rayford W. Logan, Eugene C. Holmes, and C. Franklin Edwards (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1955).

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Volume Introduction

One feature of the Harlem Renaissance was the struggle of both black writers and black intellectuals to define an appropriate aesthetic for African American literature and to define the appropriate relationship between an African American literary movement and racial politics in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. The literature of the 1920s was one element of a black cultural movement that included music, art, and theater. In their efforts to define an appropriate aesthetic for black artistic endeavors, critics and artists explored the Southern and African roots of black culture and the impact of race and urbanization on the African American experience. black writers and intellectuals debated the appropriate political agenda for black literature as they confronted the reality that in the 1920s black literature was dependent on white patrons, publishers, and book buyers.

The first selection in this volume is the anthology of African American art and literature that Charles S. Johnson published in 1927 as *Ebony and Topaz: A Collectanea*. Johnson was a University of Chicago–educated sociologist who came to New York in 1921 to take the position of director of research and investigations for the Urban League. For slightly more than five years, beginning in 1923, he edited the Urban League's monthly magazine, *Opportunity*. Like James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, and to a lesser degree, W.E.B. Du Bois, Charles S. Johnson used his position to promote African American literature. He opened the pages of *Opportunity* to young writers and sponsored the *Opportunity* literary contests. In 1927, under his direction, the Urban League published *Ebony and Topaz*, a collection similar to *The New Negro*, in which he outlined his views on African American literature. Johnson believed that literature would promote interracial communication and help blacks contend with the social issues that they confronted as a result of the black migration to Northern cities.

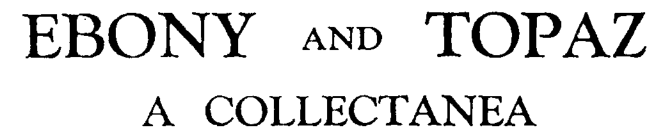
The second and third sections of this volume consist of a series of essays written in the late 1920s and early 1930s that attempt to place African American literature and the other African American arts within the context of American and African American culture. In section two, black writers and critics assess the significance of the Harlem Renaissance and the role of black literature; in section three, critics explore black music, theater, and the visual arts in terms of the relationship of developments in these areas to the Harlem Renaissance as well as their relation to African American and African heritage.

The final three sections in this volume address the politics of African American literature from three distinct perspectives. First, the racial pressures that confront African American writers are explored. These include the responsibility to write "race literature" (i.e., literature that focuses on racial themes and the experiences of African Americans), the special difficulties that confront black writers as they seek publishers and audiences, and attempt to make a living through their writing, and the particular problems that individual writers had with their politics and their art. The fifth section examines the relationship between black writers and white publishers through the examination of unpublished materials that detail the relationship between Langston Hughes and his publisher, Alfred Knopf. The final section focuses on the political options that confronted black writers in the 1920s, in particular the relationships of the Garvey movement, socialism and the Bolshevik revolution, and the other racial/political ideologies of the 1920s to the writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

The efforts to define a political agenda or an aesthetic agenda for the Harlem Renaissance did not bear fruit, whether these efforts came from black intellectuals or white publishers. Most black writers subscribed to the views that Langston Hughes expressed in his essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," in which he insisted that black writers must be free to write about truth as they define it, regardless of what other blacks or other whites think. However, the Harlem Renaissance did not occur in a vacuum. The realities of race in America, together with the historical, cultural, and artistic traditions of blacks, both in this country and in Africa, both in literature and the other arts, had an impact on the Harlem Renaissance.

EBONY *and* TOPAZ

A COLLECTANEA



EBONY AND TOPAZ
A COLLECTANEA

Edited by

CHARLES S. JOHNSON

FOREWORD

IF "every life has pages vacant still whereon a man may write the thing he will," it is also true that in many little-considered lives there are pages whereon matter of great interest has already been written, if the appraising eye can only reach it.

So with the recently developed discoveries of the wealth of material for artistic and intellectual development in the life, manners, and customs of the Negro and his unique and all-too-frequently unappreciated and unasked contribution to our American self-consciousness.

This challenging collection focuses, as it were, the appraising eyes of white folks on the Negro's life and of Negroes on their own life and development in what seems to me a new and stimulating way.

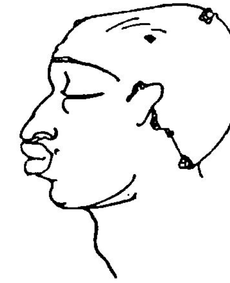
Great emotional waves may not be stirred by taking cognizance of the performances of Negroes in art and literature, but faithfulness to an ideal of proportion or fair play makes us uneasy lest through ignorance we miss something by straying into the tangles of prejudice.

Most of us claim to recognize Miss Millay's thought that

"He whose soul is flat, the sky
Will fall in on him by and by."

and will follow with zest the explorations of appraising eyes which have been made available to us in attractive form on these pages.

L. HOLLINGSWORTH WOOD.



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A Drawing by Charles Cullen

"It is better to walk
Than to grow angry with the road."
An African Proverb.

INTRODUCTION

IT is only fair to rid this volume, at the beginning, of some of the usual pretensions, which have the effect of distorting normal values, most often with results as unfortunate as they are unfair. This volume, strangely enough, does not set forth to prove a thesis, nor to plead a cause, nor, stranger still, to offer a progress report on the state of Negro letters. It is a venture in expression, shared, with the slightest editorial suggestion, by a number of persons who are here much less interested in their audience than in what they are trying to say, and the life they are trying to portray. This measurable freedom from the usual burden of proof has been an aid to spontaneity, and to this quality the collection makes its most serious claim.

It is not improbable that some of our white readers will arch their brows or perhaps knit them soberly at some point before the end. But this is a response not infrequently met with outside the pages of books. There is always an escape of a sort, however, in ignoring that which contradicts one's sense, even though it were the better wisdom to give heed.

Some of our Negro readers will doubtless quarrel with certain of the Negro characters who move in these pages. But it is also true that in life some Negroes are distasteful to other Negroes. Following the familiar patterns, we are accustomed to think of Negroes as one ethnic unit, and of whites as many,—the Nordics, Mediterraneans; or Germans, Irish, Swedes; or brachycephalics and dolichocephalics, depending upon our school of politics or anthropology. The significance of the difference is not so much that Negroes in America actually represent different races among themselves, as that there is the same ground, in dissimilar customs and culture patterns, which are the really valid distinctions between races, for viewing Negroes differently among themselves. The point, if it were important enough, could be proved about as satisfactorily as proofs in this field go, and with the same type of data. Beneath the difference, however, as must be evident, is the cultural factor which distinguishes one group of Negroes from another: the small, articulate group from the more numerous, and, one might even add, more interesting folk group; the unconscious Negro folk contributions to music, folk lore, and the dance, from the conscious contributions of Negroes to art and letters. The sociological confusion here has brought about endless literary debates.

Accepting the materials of Negro life for their own worth, it is impossible to escape certain implications: It is significant that white and Negro writers and artists are finding together the highest expression of their art in this corner of life. And, as Mr. Albert Jay Nock reminds us, an interesting person in literature is just what he

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is in life. It is evident in many quarters that Negroes are being discovered as "fellow mortals," with complexes of their own to be analyzed. With Julia Peterkin, Paul Green, Dubose Heyward, Guy Johnson, there has been ushered in a refreshing new picture of Negro life in the south. Swinging free from the old and exhausted stereotypes and reading from life, they have created human characters who are capable of living by their own charm and power. There is something here infinitely more real and honest in the atmosphere thus created, than in the stagnant sentimental aura which has hung about their heads for so many years.

The Negro writers, removed by two generations from slavery, are now much less self-conscious, less interested in proving that they are just like white people, and, in their excursions into the fields of letters and art, seem to care less about what white people think, or are likely to think about the race. Relief from the stifling consciousness of being a problem has brought a certain superiority to it. There is more candor, even in discussions of themselves, about weaknesses, and on the very sound reasoning that unless they are truthful about their faults, they will not be believed when they chose to speak about their virtues. A sense of humor is present. The taboos and racial ritual are less strict; there is more overt self-criticism, less of bitterness and appeals to sympathy. The sensitiveness, which a brief decade ago, denied the existence of any but educated Negroes, bitterly opposing Negro dialect, and folk songs, and anything that revived the memory of slavery, is shading off into a sensitiveness to the hidden beauties of this life and a frank joy and pride in it. The return of the Negro writers to folk materials has proved a new emancipation.

It might not seem to go too far afield to refer to the statements offered not infrequently in criticism, that the cultured Negroes are not romanticized in fiction as generously as the folk types. This has a distinctly sociological implication back of which is the feeling that a loftier opinion of all Negroes would follow an emphasis in fiction upon more educated individuals. The attitude is not uncommon in the history of other races and classes. For many years, Americans were affected by the same sensitiveness in relation to Europe, and even in the Southern United States, until very recently, the literature has been defensive and for the most part ineffectual. Aside from the greater color and force of life in those human strata which seem to have struck lightning to the imaginations of our present writers, it might be suggested that the educated Negroes, even if they are not yet being romanticized in fiction, are finding a most effective representation through their own comment upon the extraordinarily interesting patterns of Negro folk life to which they have intimate access. Or, perhaps, they have succeeded only too well in becoming like other people whom writers generally are finding it difficult enough to make interesting.

The most that will be claimed for this collection is that it is a fairly faithful reflection of current interests and observations in Negro life. The arrangement of the materials of this volume follows roughly the implications of significance in the new interests mentioned. The first part is concerned with Negro folk life itself. The vast resources of this field for American literature cannot be escaped even though they are no more than hinted at in this volume. There is here a life full of strong colors, of passions, deep and fierce, of struggle, disillusion,—the whole gamut of life free from the wrappings of intricate sophistication.

The second part sweeps in from a wider radius of time and space some of the rare and curiously interesting fragments of careers and art which constitute that absorbing field of the past now being revealed through the zeal and industry of Negro scholars. The garnering of these long gone figures who flashed like bright comets across a black sky is an amenity which has found root quietly and naturally in Negro life.

A third division is concerned with racial problems and attitudes, and these are rather coldly in the hands of students. In these, there is the implication of a vast drama which the stories and the poetry merely illuminate.

The fourth section might well be set down as the most significant of current tendencies—the direction of Negro attention inward in frank self-appraisal and criticism. The essays touch boldly and with a striking candor some of the ancient racial foibles. At frequent points they violate the orthodoxy, but in a spirit which is neither bitterly hopeless nor resentful. This is perhaps one of the most hopeful signs of life and the will to live. And finally, there is a division which gives a brief glimpse into the intimate self-feeling of articulate Negroes. These lack conspicuously the familiar tears of self-pity and apology.

The classification is not a strict one, but it has a possible usefulness as a guide through the varieties of expression to be found herein. There will be in one an abandonment to the fascination of a new life, in another a critical self searching, in one humor for its own sake, in another humor with a thrust; there will be stoical rebellion, self reliance, beauty. Those seeking set patterns of Negro literature will in all likelihood be disappointed for there is no set pattern of Negro life. If there is anything implicit in the attitude toward life revealing itself, it is acceptance of the fact of race and difference on the same casual gesture that denies that the difference means anything.

This is probably enough about the contributions to this collection to let them take their own course. From the list of contributors are absent many names with as great reason for inclusion as any present. There were, however, physical limits to such a volume, with all that this implies, and, if there is, for those who must pass judgment, less merit in what appears than should be, some measure of this deficiency may be laid to the omissions.

A spirit has been quietly manifest of late which it would be a gentle treason to ignore. Its expression has been a disposition on the part of established writers, scholars, artists and other interested individuals, to offer to Negro writers the practical encouragement of those facilities which they command. To this may be accredited among other things a share in the making of that mood of receptivity among the general public for the literature of Negro life.

CHARLES S. JOHNSON.

原书缺页

If you want to tell anything to Heaven, tell it to the wind.

An African Proverb

A DRAWING FOR JUMBY
By Aaron Douglas

JUMBY

(To Doris)

By Arthur Huff Fauset

Jean-Marie

JEAN-MARIE tossed fitfully upon her bed of straw until a cock, crowing shrilly in the early morn awoke her with jarring suddenness. She raised herself slightly, and fearing to open her eyes, clutched the wall of the thatch-roofed hut, in order to steady her trembling body.

Feverishly she felt of her waist, her temples, her pale brown limbs, and her feet. She was puzzled. Assuredly there was something wrong. But where? She peeled open her eyes timorously. As the delicate brown lids slowly unfolded, she beheld the marvelous blue Caribbean, bobbing gently, playing a child's game, as it were, with the rising sun.

Jean-Marie shivered. Then from her throat came a tiny sound like the cluck of a hen. She stretched out full length on her back, and extending her clasped hands as far as possible from her body, she heaved a sigh of gladness.

Thanks be to Jumby, a dream! Suppose, now, that she had awakened to find herself bitten by a cobra, her limbs swollen double, and her pale amber brownness turned a hideous black! Just suppose Kasongo, the obeah man, *could* really put "nastiness" upon her, and she had awakened with Barbados Big Foot (elephantiasis), and thousands of tiny chiggers building their houses in the seams of her feet!

Ah, the chiggers! They got everywhere, and into everything. You could not move for the chiggers. And how they did bite! She gazed upon a tiny red splotch on her arm, and scratched it ruefully. The more she scratched the more it burned.

But the blacks did not mind the chiggers. Manja, sleeping over there in the corner, her almost naked body exposed to the caprices of brown scorpions, red and green lizards, mosquitoes, huge white ants, and roaches big as fingers . . . she did not mind the chiggers. Why, she had colonies of them, on her elbows, the sides of her hands, of her feet! The tops of her feet were live chigger-hives. But Manja did not mind. . . .

But then, what had she to do with these folk anyway! She did not look like them, she did not think like them. They were black; she was pale brown. Their eyes were constantly red, and the whites spotted with gelatine-like masses which affected their sight. Hers were clear like the Caribbean, and soft and brown like a chewink's feathers. Instead of the brittle, harsh mat of hair which adorned their heads, rough almost to prickliness, her hair was black, and soft like velvet or silk.

Jean-Marie leaped lightly from her bed, and glided to the door of the hut. Her tall slim figure was lithe like a leopard's; her pale brown limbs moved with the grace of a beautiful race horse. She opened wide the door and gazed at the silent wonder of the island on which her home was situated.

Mateka, the sacred mount, towered in the distance, some dark green knight, hiding his crest in a thin white mist. The sun, a streak of white in a pale blue sky, peeked his head over the mountain's top.

Jean-Marie noted the light green patches by the side of the mountain, where the blacks had cultivated their cane and their cotton, and the roads, looking like brown streaks crawling up the great hill. She saw a dozen tiny sail-boats, much like geese-

feathers, tossing and bobbing on the Caribbean. Far in the distance, the native huts looked like cattle lying in the grass.

Frogs croaked. Crickets chirped. Tall palms, glistening in the sunlight, and looking like sentinels on the side away from the sun, bended and swayed to the occasional purring of the breezes.

Far off a boy was yodeling. Somewhere a woman was hoeing and spading. Between the pat-pats of her hoe, she sang snatches of lines from hymns taught by Wesleyan missionaries:

"... that Jesus doied fo' me."

Jean-Marie remained some moments entranced. The spell was broken, however, by a sudden rustling of leaves in front of the hut. Out of the shrubbery, hobbled an old woman. She was black, and she wore a head-dress of red and gold which sparkled in the sunshine. In her mouth was a clay pipe, in her right hand a gnarled stick which she carried for a cane. She wore a simple frock of brown and white, and her feet were bare.

They called her Ganga the Good.

"Hyeh, hyeh," she fairly screamed as she perceived Jean-Marie standing in the doorway. Her cry aroused Manja and two other women who dwelt in the hut.

"Hyeh, hyeh, lookit, lookit," Ganga cried again.

She pointed to a spot on the ground, some distance away from the hut. Everyone rushed to see.

"Da' he," she said. "Jumby comin' dis toime roight hyeh. Sure, Oi knows you be's de one sometoime, Miss Jean-Marie. Hyeh be's it, roight where's Jumby's put it."

Breathlessly, they crowded about the speaker who gazed intently upon an object on the ground. There lay the head of a white cock, its beak pointing to the corner of the hut where Jean-Marie slept.

"Bukra," shouted Manja, as she turned to Jean-Marie, a malicious look in her red eyes, "nas'iness shor' git you dis toime. Laf' on an' hop skippity-skip, but you kitch de chigger foot yit."

Blood mounted to Jean-Marie's cheeks.

"So!" she exclaimed. "Maybe if I have chigger foot, Babu trade my brown leg for your ugly black leg of an elephant!"

"E-yah, e-yah," screamed Manja, the whites of her eyes glistening with rage. "You bukra bitch. You no say nas'iness come ovah you.... You see... mebbe *you* leg swell like banyan; mebbe breasts look like jellies (cocoanuts); mebbe you guts rot an' grow snakes.. .wait an' see... e-yah, e-yah."

Manja spat on the ground. She turned her back on Jean-Marie and rushed back to the hut, dragging her "big foot" behind her.

Ganga looked at Jean-Marie and pointed to the cock's beak. Then directing a warning finger towards the young girl she said, "Keerful, white chile... white cock mean badness... trouble pointin' yo' way."

Kasongo

MANJA hobbled away from the *ajoupa* (thatched hut) of Kasongo the obeah man. Kasongo lived far back in the island, away from the village, away from the road, away from the sea. He had to hide himself. Were not the police everlastingly on his heels, trying to send him to Antigua for a good ten years' stretch, with twenty lashings a week?

But he had been too clever for the stupid police. Anyway, they were afraid of

him, afraid of his charms. Was it not a common saying that when Kasongo looked at a man thru his dead eye (the other eye was like fire), he was sure to be caught in a squall and die by drowning? or if you caught him whistling thru his hare-lip it meant loss of a dear one?

When Flonza, the half-Indian wife of Francois died suddenly, even the police knew that Kasongo had baked a tarantula, beaten it into powder, and secreted it in Flonza's food. And why?... So that Francois might marry another woman.

There was Mariel. He was secretly hated by Kasongo, because he had gone to the States and learned powerful obeah. Fool! Mariel should have known better than to drink whiskey out of Kasongo's glasses. Everyone knew that Kasongo had a habit of slipping powders made from maggots, roaches and crickets in his whiskey. No wonder Mariel developed swelling in his right arm. What might have happened if he had not gone over to Martinique and consulted the most powerful obeah man on the island? There they slit open his arm with a knife. His hand was alive with small black worms! Only the powerful medicine of the obeah man prevented them from eating him up alive. Instead, they came jumping out of his flesh like skippers from a piece of rotten ham....

Manja hurried to a sequestered spot under some tall banyan trees. She emptied the pocket of her dress of some charms she had received from Kasongo. There were strands of hair taken from the dead body of a man who had died from "bad man's" disease (syphilis), some huge yellow-stained toe-nails, a clot of human blood, a dried chicken gizzard, and a rabbit's paw. All had been dipped in a peculiar black powder.

She bound these together in a piece of cloth torn from an old dress worn by Jean-Marie. Standing with her back to the sun, she held the bag over her left shoulder and mumbled these words:

Be some Peter
Be some Paul
An' be de Gahd dat mek us all,
Spin ball,
Spin jack,
An' ef she don' do whut you says
May I neber come back.

Then she hastened to the hut where Jean-Marie lived. No one was about. She walked rapidly to the little plot of earth behind the hut, where every evening just before sun-down Jean-Marie tended her tiny garden. Near a favorite rose-bush Manja placed the charm on the ground, saying softly,

Not for Manja,
Not for Adova,
Not for Merve,
But only for Jean-Marie.

Then she strode briskly into the hut and prepared for evening.

Jumby

IN the heart of the night Jean-Marie woke suddenly. Her eyes felt like blazing coals.

Feverishly she gazed out on the starry firmament. The heavens were a curtain of soft velvet studded with diamonds. Moonbeams, the molten music of star-elfs, streamed into the hut, and played weird tunes in the sunken depths of her eyes.

Night, the black obeah man who sprinkles star dust in lovers' potions, drugged

her with his lures, and before she was able to recover from the magic spell of soft loveliness, her body was aflame with madness and longing.

(Oh, Jungle Girl, with amber face, why do you struggle against a foe who draws you tight with bands like steel, and will not let you go?

Oh, Jungle Girl, with eyes so pure, would you be a jungle lover and scoff at jungle charms?

Oh, Jungle Girl, with limbs pale brown, fly, fly to your destiny!)

She looked in the direction of Manja and saw a dark bundle, half clear in the moonlight. Manja was asleep.

Fever mounted in her body. The spell of love added to its flame until the pallet on which she lay burned like a bed of fire.

She tried to cool the flame which was her body by crooning soft words to her lover:

Babu, my Babuji, you will come to me.
Say, Babuji, that you will come.
Oh, my Babuji, come to me . . . come.

Quietly, so that Manja should not hear, she murmured the words of a lovesong taught her in Trinidad by her African grandmother who had learned it from a wandering Zulu:

U-ye-ze, u-ye-ze,
Ma-me! U-ye-ze U-mo-ya!
U-ye-ze, u-ye-ze,
Ma-me! U-ye-ze U-mo-ya!
Nakuba
Se-ku-li—
Ba-nchi la-ke ngo—
Sha-da na-lo
Ngomte-to!
He cometh, he cometh,
Rapture! Cometh the Strong Wind!
He cometh, he cometh,
Rapture! Cometh the Strong Wind!
Let me have
But his robe,
And the marriage vows
I will utter,
By the law!

Her body moved in rapturous rhythm with each note. She imagined herself in the arms of her lover, and that she was perishing in a fire of passion.

Abruptly she ceased her chanting. Somewhere in the distance, she heard the faint din of beating. Gradually it swelled, then as gradually died away, only to swell again. Jean-Marie listened intently. She heard. E-yah! Jumby!

Dum-a-lum-a-lum (pom-pom)
Dum-a-lum-a-lum (pom-pom)
a-Dum-a-lum-a-lum
a-Dum-a-lum-a-lum
Dum-a-lum-a-lum (pom-pom)

E-yah! Jumby!

Eh! eh! Bomba, hen, hen!
Canga bafio te,
Canga moune de le,
Canga do ki la,
Canga li.

All of her body was aflame. Her eyes, her ears, her hands, and those pale brown limbs were like live coals of fire. Her bed had become a pyre.

Like a panther pierced by the hunter's spear, she leaped from her cot, and gliding across the floor of the hut, rushed out into the moonlight. Louder and louder the drums beat. Swifter the pale creature sped along her path.

The way was tortuous and long. The Jumby Dance must not be within hailing distance of the police, and beside, members of the village would never have it said that they believed in Jumby.

Jean-Marie sped over the dense underbrush. Her tiny feet tripped over the brambles and thorns with the lightness of a hare. Her brown body moved forward with the speed of a gazelle.

Over hills tracked with sharp-pointed stones she traveled; down into valleys where the tangled grass lay hidden neath the waters of the swamp she trod. The gray mongoose darted from beneath her feet, and occasionally a huge field rat; but these she never saw.

She came nearer the spot from whence sounded the monotonous call of the drum. Its tones sank louder into the depths of her heart.

Dum-a-lum-a-lum
Dum-a-lum-a-lum

As she came out of a clump of forest, she suddenly espied a hut in a small open space close by the ocean. Tall cocoanut palms, and mango trees heavy ladened with fruit, sheltered it from the moon's beams.

The drumming stopped abruptly, as Jean-Marie appeared like some elfin sprite under the shadowed moon-light.

She approached the hut.

There, squatting on the ground, she perceived dimly the forms of nearly a score of men and women, many of them old. They were barefooted, and naked except for loin-cloths. All of them wore amulets, made from sharks' teeth, dried frogs, and mummified rats.

As she came near to them, they rose, then bowing almost to the ground, they murmured, "Welcome, fair daughter of the kings. Welcome."

The door of the bamboo hut opened. A tall dark man appeared. He was bedecked in leopard skins, and with charms which rattled all over his body like many sea-shells. His body was smeared with the blood and brain of fowls, and his eyelids were daubed with white paint.

Extending his arms towards Jean-Marie, he greeted her.

"Welcome, oh daughter of the kings," he said. "Many days and nights we have been waiting for you. At last Jumby has sent you forth. Enter with me, for this night we feast to Jumby, and celebrate with the dance of the leopard."

Jean-Marie clasped her hand in his, murmuring, "Babuji, my Babuji. . . . I have come at last . . . to you Babuji . . . at last I have come."

The head-man beckoned to the others to follow. Slowly they filed in couples into the hut.

The room was nearly bare except for a small table which was alight with the unsteady gleam of ten candles placed around its edges. The flickering flames cast eerie shadows on the walls of the hut.

In the center of the table was the body of a two-footed creature, half beast, half fowl, made from carcasses of small animals sewed together, into which had been stuffed the entrails of a cow. Mounted on its neck was the head of a white cock. A roasted pig, squatting with its fore-paws extended was to the left, and to the right was the roast carcass of a huge gray rat.

These were the gifts to the Jumby.

Jean-Marie and the company bowed in silence before the objects on the table, and formed around them in a circle. Soon the sputtering candles mixed their vapors with the stench of sweat and unwashed bodies.

"Daughter of the kings," intoned the head-man, "soon Jumby will appear. You are his daughter, and the mother of the children of men. Pray guard your children well."

He bowed and disappeared silently into the darkness.

As the door closed upon him, a drum suddenly sounded a warning note. Almost hidden, it stood with the drummer in a corner of the room.

"E-yah!" shouted the drummer. "E-yah! It is Jumby."

He commenced to beat slowly and gently, accompanied by the sound of rattles and castanets which another tall figure played upon. Softly the drummer began chanting an African melody as if imploring Jumby to enter the hut and partake of the feast prepared for him. . . .

But Jumby does not appear. The drummer as if to coax him, quickens his beat, and raises his voice; then permits the song to die down to a low sob, while the measures of his beating become long and sustained.

Very slowly, almost imperceptibly, the door opens. In the diminishing candle light it is difficult to make out the head-man, who clad in his leopard skins, silently enters the hut. But the drummer has seen the door open. He beats madly upon his instrument and sings:

Mbwero! Mbwero! Mbwero!
Beware! Beware! Beware!

Jean-Marie steps out from the group and prepares to save her children from the ravages of the leopard, who by this time is seen almost creeping on all fours. Meanwhile the crowd of dancers move slightly, now forward, now backward, keeping time with the drummer, and shouting.

Mbwero! Mbwero! Mbwero!

Jean-Marie dances nearer the leopard. She sings:

Be careful, children.
It is Jumby in the form of a leopard.
Be careful! Mbwero! Mbwero! Mbwero!

Her "children" scream and sing, all the while stepping backward and forward to the drum accompaniment.

Slowly the leopard advances, sniffing the air, but at first ignoring the dancers and proceeding to the feast prepared for him on the table. He bows before the central figure, then proceeds to eat portions of the roast pig and roast rat. Suddenly he turns upon the crowd, and with his tongue extended and emitting terrible growlings, he throws them into convulsions of fear.

Madder beats the drum. Wilder the hissing of the snares and rattles. More hideous the screams of the participants to whom the intoxicating effect of sweat, burnt tallow, and palm oil which is poured on the candles to make them sputter, bring a strange reality to the dance.

Jean-Marie in the role of protector, steps in front of her children, and attempts to keep off the onslaught of the leopard. Her steps grow quicker, now forward, now

backward. As she moves backward she motions to the children behind her to flee, calling out to them, "My children, Mbwero!"

The participants imitate her steps, her motions, her calls.

The leopard, swaying and measuring his step to the music of the drummer, dashes forward suddenly, and catches one of Jean-Marie's children, whom he sets aside. Jean-Marie screams defiance, but he brushes her aside and snatches another child from her protecting embrace.

One after another of her children he captures, until only a single child remains. Jean-Marie has become exhausted. Her steps become slower and feebler. She clings to the remaining child with fingers that are numbed with weakness and exhaustation. No use . . . the leopard seizes it also, and casts it aside to be devoured.

Once more the drum beats wildly. Jean-Marie the mother has become a furious tigress. Her children are all dead. Must she die also?

The leopard slowly approaches her. Jean Marie rushes to attack him, then retreats with backward steps. With claws protruding, the leopard rushes again, but the snarling Jean-Marie holds her ground, forcing him to turn back. The leopard prepares to leap. Jean-Marie seizes a club which rests on the table for the purpose, and lifts it high over her head in order to strike the leopard and slay him. . . .

Behold . . . a silver gleam from the thatched roof-top. It is the flash of a cobra's fang, which darts like an arrow straight into the pale brown arm of Jean-Marie. One shrill scream she utters, and falls in a heap on the floor.

Now she seems to be swimming against an overpowering current. Her arms and limbs become numb and heavy. She feels a terrible swelling in her breasts. Her eyes are balls of fire burning, burning, burning. There is a putrid smell in her nostrils, as of flesh rotting . . . and the sensation of myriads of swarming creatures. . . .

Jean-Marie awoke from an age of slumber. Startled, she looked into the loving eyes of Ganga the Good.

"But--but--the cobra—" she gasped, feeling her arms and limbs.

"Po' chile," whispered Ganga, "dat was mighty close call. All de jumbies sho' dancin' in you."

"But Ganga . . . my children . . . where are they?"

"Da now, Bukra chile, you mus' a seed all dat de night we fin' you tearin' t'roo de bush. Fever mos' burn you to def!"

She held Jean-Marie close in her arms.

"Bukra chile," she said softly, "ma po' Bukra chile."

"Babuji," whispered Jean-Marie, "my Babu-ji."

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