Sociological significance of Negro literature

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Chapter 1

Purpose and Point of View.

The purpose of this thesis is to study the Negro through his literary productions. It does not purport to deal with the mechanics of literature; it is rather a study in human nature and the vital aspects of group life. Negro literature is rich in sociological material. It gives a valuable, if not an infallible, account of the psychological and sociological experiences of the group. It reveals the social isolation and accommodation of the Negroes, and the changing attitudes and motives of group life. It shows the friction and conflict of the races and the growing racial consciousness of the Negro people. It portrays their philosophy of life. It is the only source for the understanding of the subjective aspect of Negro culture other than direct and intimate association with the race.

The interaction between the whites and blacks in America has, in some respects at least, been unique. The Negroes were imported into American society to perform menial types of labor. They were not valuable apart from their economic function. They were looked upon as a means to an end. A sort of symbiotic relationship existed between the two races: the Negroes
doing the menial labor and receiving their subsistence in return. The Emancipation Proclamation destroyed the legal basis of this arrangement, but the social attitudes supporting slavery were so completely imbedded in the folkways and mores that no formal legal document could destroy them.

The problem, then, became one of race relations, of locating the Negro in American life. Different and conflicting ideas as to the role of the Negro in the social organization gradually grew up. There came to be a sharp divergence of opinion concerning the nature of the Negro's participation in American society. In the conflict of opinions the Negroes have fought for recognition and equal rights. The whites have in general opposed the growing demands of the Negroes.

The whites have maintained a political and cultural superiority. They have maintained a superior status and have excluded the Negro. The isolation of the Negro has hindered his progress, and perpetuated cultural differences. These differences have been the basis of the doctrine that the "lower" race should remain in its place—assume a subordinate role in the social order. Some Negro writers have resented the exclusion from
full participation in American life. The conflict of attitudes and interests has developed into a tense situation that gets expression in the racial literature.

This literature expresses an attempt to escape social isolation and achieve self-respect. In it is expressed the various attitudes and techniques incident to the conflict of the races. The discovery of these is the concern of this volume.

Historically speaking, there has been a tremendous change in Negro attitudes. Generally the writers of the early period were acquiescent and accommodated, even though some complaint was registered against prevailing relationships. From the Civil War to the World War varied attitudes were expressed. Dunbar typifies acceptance of the social order; other writers complain of discrimination and plead for expansion of rights. Since the World War the attitudes have changed more drastically. Though there still is whining, despair and rationalization, the prevailing tone is that of belligerency. Presumably the change of tone expresses change in the external and environmental conditions of life.
One of the primary factors involved in this change of attitudes is the breakdown of isolation. Gradually, but surely, the Negroes are coming out of the psychological bondage of earlier decades. As their enlightenment increases, their demands increase. The educational handicaps have decreased and the literacy of the race has increased. The concomitant of this literacy is increased desires. Unrest has naturally ensued. When Negro boys and girls graduate from college they often cannot obtain positions of high prestige. In spite of their education they must still do the menial types of labor. There is no social organization that provides a place for many trained Negroes. Undoubtedly this has been the origin of bitterness and melancholy in their literature. The plaintive lines of Countee Cullen express bitterness against a social order that has no place for him.

Yet Do I Marvel

I doubt not God is good, well-meaning, kind,
And did he stoop to quibble could tell why
The little buried mole continues blind,
Why flesh that mirrors biza must some day die,
Make plain the reason tortured Tantalus
Is baited with the fickle fruit, declare
If merely brute caprice dooms Sisyphus
To struggle up a never-ending stair.
Inscrutable His ways are and immune
To catechism by a mind too strewn
With petty cares to slightly understand
What awful brain compels His awful hand;
Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black, and bid him sing!

Countee Cullen. *Caroling Dusk*, p. 182

Some Negroes are no longer ignorant or isolated from world affairs. The freedom that they now possess allows them to realize more clearly the past discriminations. They see the injustice and inconsistency of the law and the actual political activities. They attempt to break through white suppression. In a recent article J. W. Johnson reviews the Negro’s political status, and protests vigourously against the abuses by the whites. He prophesies victory for his race in obtaining and using the franchise.


The following newspaper clippings depict a re-
bellious attitude caused by political and social infringements.

Any Negro who says that he is satisfied to be let alone with his broken political power, his miserable Jim Crow restrictions, his un-American segregation, his pinches and emasculated democracy, and his blood-curdling inquisition of lynching, simply lies. He lies base-ly. He knows himself he lies, and the white man knows he lies. He does not fool anybody. He disgusts his friends, and earns only the contempt of those whose favor he seeks to win. He assumes this contemptible attitude, not because he is feeble-minded, however, but because he has a white liver. He is an arrant coward and a traitor besides.

Robert T. Kerlin. *The Voice of the Negro*, 1919, p. 28

As suggested above the institutions have changed since the days of slavery. Ecologically the sustenance
relationships between the whites and blacks in slavery times were those of symbiosis or mutualism. Now, due to a change in the social organization, the relations have assumed the form of competition. Whenever and wherever races meet upon the competitive basis, tension follows. In the north especially we find a competition that sometimes results in race riots. If the Negro submits to a proscribed status friction is reduced materially.

Such is the case in the west among the Chinese, Japanese, and the whites. At one time there was a demand for Oriental laborers. As long as this need remained and a specific work existed for the yellow men there was no bitterness. Hatred occurred after the two races came into direct competition. On the Pacific coast the racial hatred is greater toward the Japanese people than against the Chinese because the latter do not compete directly. The Japs compete actively in various industries.

Like the Japs the Negroes will not acquiesce to the demand of the whites that they remain in a lowly status. In the struggle they become more conscious of their subordination. The more the Negroes realize the abuse and subordination of the whites the more they struggle. This fighting is resented by the whites who increase their discrimination, which in turn causes
the blacks to fight harder. The resultant of the entire struggle is that the Negro becomes supersensitive and develops a persecution complex. Professor Miller says, that the writings of the Negroes "reflect the obsession of injustice."

One of the big factors that brought change in the attitudes in their literature was the World War. The end of the struggle left the Negroes disillusioned and disappointed. During the world combat they fought side by side with the whites and apparently occupied an equal status. Danger and conflict demand the reduction of racial prejudices. But after the war the Negroes returned to the same world of abuse and discrimination. After an experience of equality the old status was galling. The World War gave the Negro a new conception of himself that the white organization will not let him realize. Kelly Miller states the Negro's position rather emphatically.

---Andrew Jackson advised the Negro troops who won the belated victory behind the fleecy breastworks of New Orleans to return to their masters, and be loyal, obedient servants, but no one now expects the Negro soldiers of the World War to revert with satisfaction to the status they occupied
before the war for the emancipation of mankind.

Kerlin states the effect of the war upon the Negro and white relations.

The man who can see no reason for colored America's unrest and dissatisfaction is either a mental misfit or totally unacquainted with human psychology. The Black Man Fought for Democracy (whatever that is) and Only Democracy Can Satisfy the Innermost Yearnings of His Heart!

When called upon to defend his country's honor and integrity and to save civilization from the clutches of the cruel and heartless Huns of Europe, the black American went forth to battle the mighty Goliath of autocracy, militarism and 'kultur'. Having performed a 'brown skin' job 'over there' he now expects Uncle Sam to clean up his own premises and since The Black Man Fought to Make the World Safe for Democracy, he now demands that America be made and maintained safe for Black Americans.
The World War greatly disturbed the economic equilibrium and increased the mobility of the southern Negroes. Numerous white laborers entered the war, thus creating the demand for more workers. Wages rose and Negroes were attracted North. The migration increased the demand for houses and this increased rents. For some years the black belt in Chicago and other large northern cities accommodated the Negro population. But the increase of Negroes in the north made it physically impossible for them to live in their accustomed areas. The blacks encroached upon the residential areas of the whites and conflict ensued. When the war ended the returned soldiers found the Negroes in their old positions. All these factors intensified the race conflict, increasing the unrest of both groups.

The great exodus of the Negroes from the south to the north was due partially to disturbing influences of the war and partially to the dissatisfaction of the Negroes with the southern point of view. Coming from a rural area into an urban center affected the Negro personality. Located in the natural areas of the city environment the Negro has been stamped with certain
attitudes conducive to congenial living in these areas. In the city morals are relative, contacts are formal and secondary, and behavior is self-assertive. When the Negro becomes assimilated into urban culture he evidences unrest, and he is transformed from a conformation, self-abusive personality into one who possesses an individualistic life organization. This individualistic attitude breeds aggressiveness and this again functions to facilitate the race struggle. Saturated with urban behavior patterns the Negro becomes offensive to the whites. Any impingement upon the newly-acquired rights of the Negro results in protest and invective.

Another effect of the war upon the Negro situation was to increase race pride. This subordinated group furnished almost 400,000 soldiers to the draft. Those who remained at home labored in the war industries, sacrificed for the Red Cross and other charitable institutions, bought liberty bonds and thrift stamps, and assisted materially in the conservation of food. In France Negroes noticed a different attitude toward their race. They were accepted on an equal social level; they ate at the same tables with the whites, and even mingled with the French women. All this raised their race pride. A certain element of the Negro population have attempted to transplant this European attitude
in the American situation. This emphasized racial pride of the Negro developed during the recent world conflict never has been appreciated by the Caucasian group, and the Negroids have bitterly felt the insult.

The emergence of a new Negro, aggressive in his demands for equality, has increased the resentment and suppression policy of the whites. The Negroes feel their suppression more after each experience with the whites. The exclusive policy of the now dominant race has afflicted the Negroes with what Professor Miller calls "suppression psychosis." Any type of subordination, whether due to discrimination or broken health will ultimately stimulate a mental condition. Social discrimination and economic exploitation affect the lives of the abused. Since the World War the Negroes have reacted bitterly against the white treatment. Their poetry and newspapers are crowded with accusations.

The increase of invective and hatred can be attributed in part to the number of race riots in the summer of 1919 in the United States. Riots occurred in Chicago, Washington, Norfolk, Knoxville, Longview, Texas, and in Phillips County, Arkansas. These and similar experiences evoke varied responses from the Negroes. These responses appear in their writings
as fear, self-praise, irritability, suspicion, resentment, protest, whinings, attempts to escape responsibility, isolation, invective and compensation.

Another factor involved in this universal rebellious attitude among Negro writers certainly is the Negro press. There are fifteen Negro newspapers with 20,000 circulation, besides others which have a smaller reading audience. Negro magazines such as the Crisis, Opportunity, and The Journal of Negro History constantly inform the Negro population of important matters. Newspapers are one of the agents for the manufacturing and spreading of propaganda. So radical and demonstrative were these publications that a report was given to the 66th Congress warning the government of the hostile attitude. This expresses the dissatisfaction of the Negro group. The communication of this unrest through the medium of the press has served as a successful agent of social contagion.

The methodology used in this research is relatively simple. The field of Negro literature has been surveyed to discover attitudes and behavior tendencies. These have been gathered from the different types of American Negro literature and classified.

Since this thesis deals exclusively with the
sociological aspects of Negro literary accomplishments, the appreciatory elements are of small concern. Some evaluation will be expedient, but this is only of secondary importance to the study. Enough criticism will be interspersed to demonstrate that the writer does not accept the Negro literature as high class material.
Chapter 11

Negro Poetry

Poetry expresses moods. It is interested less in explanation than in emotional appeal. Its treatment of social values and social experience is in general uncritical. Its power is in suggestion; in the communication of feeling. Poetry reflects the life and conditions of the times. The poet expresses the social conditions of his age because his imagination is circumscribed by the prevailing social heritage. Poetry, then, reveals the social attitudes of particular groups. For this reason, it has value for sociological analysis.

The volume of Negro poetry is relatively small.

The first of the Negro poets was Jupiter Hammon. Phillis Wheatley published a volume in 1773. From this time to the death of Paul Lawrence Dunbar in 1906 some thirty Negroes published more or less pretentious poems. By 1916 there had appeared some 173 titles in English and others in French and Spanish. Some of these are single


poems published in various magazines; some are translations or anthologies; and others are volumes that contain
both poetry and prose. The practice of padding out new volumes with poems previously printed in other books partially accounts for the number of Negro poetry. Since 1916 the amount of Negro poetical writing has been greatly increased. As yet the blacks have produced no outstanding poet. They have, however, produced some poetry of merit.

In recent years there has been a great popular interest in Negro poetry. The general public takes a sentimental interest in any type of Negro writing. This is due to several factors. Many prominent white men, as William Dean Howells, have written flattering introductions to Negro volumes. Other volumes of poetry contain laudatory introductions by well known Negro leaders as Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Booker T. Washington, and William S. Braithwaite. Efforts of Negro poets are given much encouragement; numerous prizes are offered, literary contests are held, and many papers and magazines of both races carry a poetry department and print much Negro verse.

The material on Negro poetry is classified into three periods; before the Civil War, from the Civil War to the World War, since the World War. In each division the material is grouped in terms of attitudes. An attempt is made to relate the social situation and the
attitudes expressed or implied.

The period before the Civil War produced no outstanding Negro poet. There were poetic efforts but the poems were generally incoherent, crude, imitative, and conventional. Most of these poems were either religious exhortations or eulogies of great men. In general these expressed pathetic longings for freedom. James Weldon Johnson, commenting on the poets between the time of Phillis Wheatley and that of Paul Lawrence Dunbar, remarks: "Many of them showed marked talent, but barely a half dozen of them demonstrated even mediocre mastery of technique in the use of poetical materials and forms."

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This early verse is a valuable source of information. "The poetry of the period has some value to the historian and sociologist, perhaps, as showing the attitude of the Negro writers toward the race question, but from a literary point of view it is practically worthless."

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Up to about 1830 the Negro poetry expressed an attitude of accommodation or resignation. There was no bitterness or complaint about status. To the contrary rejoicings were evidenced because of the privileges enjoyed. The Negroes were adjusted to slavery and servitude. They had known bondage in foreign countries and in Africa. Slavery was in their mores; they had the attitudes of servitude. The bondage was new to them only in so far as they were transplanted in a new country. In America there was almost a total absence of prejudice. The treatment of the slave was on the whole kindly, and this, combined with the absence of outside agitation, maintained accommodation. The nature of the social organization was conducive to peace. Competition was reduced to a minimum, and mutualistic and cooperative attitudes were developed. Knowing no other life the Negroes readily developed a group of habit patterns and corresponding mental attitudes.

On the other hand certain external factors helped in the accommodation. After importation into American society the Negroes were either consciously or unconsciously separated by the whites. The very nature of conditions forced them to make an adjustment. Ignorance was also a factor that made accommodation easy. Negroes
were kept illiterate and knew nothing else but slavery. They had no norms in terms of which to criticize their status.

After 1830 the tone of Negro poetry began to change. Lamentations began to appear in the verse. Melancholic longings for freedom and complaints against bondage and racial discrimination make their appearance. The reason is obvious. The anti-slavery agitation of the abolitionists had filtered into Negro life. The Negroes were emerging from their isolation, and were obtaining other behavior patterns as criteria for judging their status. As a natural consequence dissatisfaction ensued, and got literary expression in lamentations and complaints. These were encouraged by the white abolitionists as evidenced by the preface to Mrs. Harper's \textit{Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects} written by William Lloyd Garrison.

The first Negro poet was Jupiter Hammon, a slave owned by Mr. Joseph Lloyd. His first poem, "An Evening Thought-Salvation by Christ, with Penetential Cries," (1760) was published nine years before Phillis Wheatley, generally considered the first Negro to produce poetry in America, wrote her first poem. A few of his later poems, including "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley" (1778) and "A Winter Piece: being
a serious Exhortation, with a call to the Unconverted (1783), have been preserved. His poems are crude, incoherent in thought and religious in nature. The attitude of Hammon, as well as his poetic gift, is evident in the following lines.

Dear Jesus give thy Spirit now,
Thy Grace to every Nation,
That han't the Lord to whom we bow,
The Author of Salvation.

'Tis God alone can make you wise,
His wisdom's from above,
He fills the soul with sweet supplies
By His redeeming love.

Phillis Wheatley, a Negro poet, was brought to America from Africa in 1761 and was purchased by John Wheatley. In his home she received a fair education. In 1773 she published a volume entitled Poems on
Various Subjects, Religious and Moral  Her style was imitative; her poetry was purely conventional. The bulk of her verse was addressed to prominent people. Her poetry expresses the attitude of accommodation; no complaint of bondage is evidenced in her verse. She voices her appreciation of her new opportunities. The following excerpt is typical of her attitude.

'Twas mercy brought me from my pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God and there's a Savior too;
Once I redemption neither sought or knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
'Their color is a diabolic dye.'
Remember, Christians, Negroes black as Cain,
May be refined, and join th' angelic train.


George Moses Horton was born a slave in 1797. This illiterate Negro edited two volumes of poetry, Poems by a Slave (1839), and The Poetical Works of George M. Horton (1845). Some of his poetry is characterized by religious sentiment. A great part of
it expresses complaint of his slavery condition and a deep longing for freedom. A few stanzas illustrate his attitude of complaint.

Alas! and am I born for this,
To wear this slavish chain?
Deprived of all created bliss,
Through hardship, toil, and pain?

How long have I in bondage lain,
And languished to be free?
Alas! and must I still complain,
Deprived of liberty?

Come, Liberty! thou cheerful sound,
Roll through my ravished ears;
Come, let my grief in joys be drowned,
And drive away my fears.


Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was born of free parents at Baltimore, Maryland, in 1825. In 1854 she published Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects. She devoted her life to the anti-slavery cause. Consequently her poems express a sense of wrong and injustice. Such
titles as "The Slave Mother," "The Freedom Bell" and "Bury me in a Free Land" are suggestive of her attitude. The following poems are typical of her verse.

Make me a grave wher'er you will,
In a lowly plain or a lofty hill;
Make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves.


You can sigh o'er the sad-eyed Armenian
Who weeps in her desolate home.
You can mourn o'er the exiles of Russia
From kindred and friends doomed to roam.

But hark! from our Southland are floating
Sobs of anguish, murmurs of pain,
And women heart-stricken are weeping
O'er their tortured and slain,

Have ye not, oh, my favored sisters,
Just a plea, a prayer or a tear
For mothers who dwell 'neath the shadows
Of agony, hatred and fear?

Weep not, oh my well sheltered sisters
Weep not for the Negro alone,
But weep for your sons who must gather
The crops which their fathers have sown.


During this Pre-Civil War period Charles L. Reason wrote a few scattered poems. His fame rests largely upon his poem "Freedom" published in 1847. This poem voiced the sentiments of a large number of Negroes. Like Horton and Harper he expresses an attitude of complaint and longing for freedom.

O Freedom! Freedom! Oh, how oft
Thy loving children call on Thee!
In wailings loud and breathings soft,
Beseeching God, Thy face to see.

With agonizing hearts we kneel,
While 'round us howls the oppressor's cry,-
And suppliant pray that we may feel
The ennobling glances of Thine eye.

Quoted by Robert T. Kerlin. Negro Poets and Their Poems, p.34
Negro Poetry from the Civil War to the World War.

A number of Negroes wrote poetry during this period from the Civil War to the World War. Mrs. Harper, who was conspicuous in the pre-Civil War period, published verse after the Civil War. Among others who contributed poetry since the Civil War and up to the World War were: Paul Lawrence Dunbar, George Marion McClellan, Daniel Webster Davis, Charles R. Dinkins, Timothy Thomas Fortune, J. Nord Allen, William Stanley Braithwaite, Joseph Seaman Cotter, Sr., Walter Everette Hawkins, Benjamin B. Brawley, and Fenton Johnson.

The attitudes expressed in Negro poetry during this period show little change from those of the previous period. Early slavery attitudes of accommodation carried over after the Civil War. Religion still dominated much of this poetry. A great many of the poets were ministers and reflect the attitudes of the church. This attitude is patience for this life and hope for the next world. Some of the poems express faith and pride in the South and pride in the Negro's protecting homes during the Civil War.

The attitude of complaint still carries over from the early period, and the theme of race comes in for much discussion. The Emancipation Proclamation sup-
posedly gave the Negroes freedom, but it really only increased their mobility. In many instances the freed black suffered more than he did during slavery. Because of this the question of racial liberty occupies a prominent role. Most of this post-Civil War poetry is not protest poetry. The Negroes accept their situation but complain about their status and seek the sympathy of sentimental whites.

Paul Lawrence Dunbar, perhaps the only meritorious Negro poet, evidences the attitude of resignation. While he escaped theological obsessions and religious cant, yet he acquiesces to the situation. Little bitterness, complaint, or protest prevail in his poems. His attitude is the resultant of two factors. One is the continuation of the slavery point of view given to him in his home, and the other is his favorable reception by prominent American citizens. The great popularity of Dunbar was due in a large measure to the activities of Dean Howells, Dr. H. A. Tobey, James Whitcomb Riley, Robert G. Ingersoll and James Lane Allen. The following poems written by Dunbar express accommodation.

The Deserted Plantation
Paul Lawrence Dunbar

Oh, de grubbin' hoe's a-rustin' in de co'nah,
An' de plow's a-tumblin' down in de fiel',
While de Whipp'will's a-wailin' lak a mou'nah
When his stubbo'n hea't is tryin' ha'd to yiel'.

In de furrers whah de co'n was allus wavin',
Now de weeds is growin' green an' rank an'tall;
An de swallers roun' de whole place is a-bravin'
Lak dey thought deir folks had allus owned it all.

An' de big house stan's all quiet lak an' solemn,
Not a blessed soul in pa'lor, po'ch, er lawn;
Not a guest, ner not a ca'iage lef' to haul 'em,
Fu' de ones dat tu'ned de latch-string out air gone.

An' de banjo's voice is silent in de quâ'tters,
D'ain't a hymn ner co'n-song ringin' in de air;
But de murmur of a branch's passin' waters
Is de only soun' dat breks de stillness dere.

Whah's de da'kies, dem dat used to be a dancin'
Evry night befo' de ole cabin do'?
Whah's de chillun, dem dat used to be a-prancin'
Er a-rollin' in de san' er on de flo'?

Whah's old Uncle Mordecai an' Uncle Aaron?
Whah's Aunt Doshy, Sam, an' Kit, an' all de res'?
Whah's old Tom de da'ky fiddlah, how's he farin'?  
Whah's de gals dat used to sing an' dance de bes'?  
Gone! Not one o' dem is lef' to tell de story;  
Dey have lef' de deah ole place to fall away.  
Couldn't one o' dem dat seed it in its glory  
Stay to watch it in de hour of decay?

Dey have lef' de ole plantation to de swallers,  
But it hol's in me a lover till de las';  
Fu's I fin' hyeah in de memory dat follers  
All dat loved me an' dat I loved in de pas'.

So I'll stay an' watch de deah ole place an' tend it  
Ez I used to in de happy days gone by.  
'Twell de other Mastah thinks it's time to end it,  
An' calls me to my qua'ters in de sky.

Quoted by Newman I. White and Walter C. Jackson.  
An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes, pp. 71-72.

A Hymn
Paul Lawrence Dunbar

Lead gently, Lord, and slow,  
For oh, my steps are weak,  
And ever as I go,
Some soothing sentence speak;
That I may turn my face
Through doubt's obscurity
Toward thine abiding-place,
E'en tho' I cannot see.

For lo, the way is dark;
Through mist and cloud I grope,
Save for that fitful spark,
The little flame of hope.

Lead gently, Lord, and slow,
For fear that I may fall;
I know not where I go
Unless I hear thy call.

My fainting soul doth yearn
For thy green hills afar;
So let Thy mercy burn—
My great, guiding star!

---


Accommodation is obvious in the following poem by
Daniel Webster Davis.

_Highlight on the Ol' Plantashun_

Daniel Webster Davis

Upon de Ol' plantashun, jes' erbout de crack ub day,
You could listen fur de oberseer's horn;
An' by sunrise we wux movin', fur we had to git away,
An' do an hones' day's wuck shorze yo' bo'n.

But when de shadders gathered, an' we had done our tum
We'd put away de shuvel an' de hoe,
Fur ol' marster never bothered, if he knowed our
wuck wuz done,
Ef we den injoyed de fiddle an' de bow.

Sumtimes our wives an' chillun wuz on de 'jinin' farm,
Maybe ten or 'leben miles or mo' away;
We'd walk it 'doubt no trouble, nor did it don'
us harm

An' be fresh an' ready fur de wuck nex' day.
We could dodge de patterrollers ef we didn't
hab a pass-

Dat kind ub thing wuz only fun fur us-
An' 'stid ub us kumplainin', we 'joyed it to de las',
An' wuz thankful to de Lord it won't no wuss.

Some would gather in de cabin, or in de cornhouse,
whar,

Wid tubs an' pots an' kittlez settin' roun',
Dey would rassle wid de Father in strong an' earnes' prayhr,
Whil' de water in de vessels ketched de sound.'
'Cause do' we mout be sinnuz, an' wander frum de fol',
Our 'zires wuz always right ez dey could be,
An' our 'pendunce in de Bible, whar ub de lan' we'z
tol',
Whar servant frum de marster is set free.

13
Quoted by Newman I. White and Walter C. Jackson.
An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes, pp.
98-99.

The attitude of complaint gets literary expression
in the following:

The Plan
B. J. Brawley
Far above the strife and striving,
And the hate of man for man,
I can see the great contriving
Of a more than human plan.

And day by day more clearly
Do we see the great design,
And day by day more nearlu
Do we footsteps fall in line;
For in spite of the winds repeating
The rule of the lash and rod,
The heart of the world is beating
With the love that was born of God.

Quoted by Newman I. White and Walter C. Jackson.


The Negro's Educational Creed

Joseph S. Cotter, Sr.

The Negro simply asks the chance to think,
To wed his thinking into willing hands,
And thereby prove himself a steadfast link
In the sure chain of progress through the lands.

He does not ask to loiter and complain
While others turn their blood into worth;
He holds that this would be the one foul stain
On the escutcheon of this brave old earth.

He does not ask to clog the wheels of state
And write his colon on the nation's creed.
He asks an humble freedman's estimate,
And time to grow were he essays to lead.

Quoted by Newman I. White and Walter C. Jackson.
At the Closed Gate of Justice

James D. Corrothers

To be a Negro in a day like this

Demands forgiveness. Bruised with blow on blow,
Betrayed, like him whose woe dimmed eyes gave bliss
Still must one succor those who brought one low,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this

Demands rare patience—patience that can wait
In utter darkness. 'Tis the path to miss,
And knock, unheeded, at an iron gate,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this

Demands strange loyalty. We serve a flag
White is to us white freedom's emphasis.
Ah! one must love when Truth and Justice lag,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this—

Alas! Lord God, what evil have we done?
Still shines the gate, all gold and amethyst,
But I pass by, the glorious goal unwon,
"Merely a Negro"— in a day like this!
We Are Black But We Are Men

Charles Dinkins

What's the boasted creed of color,
'Tis no standard for a race;
Justice's mansion has no cellar,
All must fill an even place.

We must share the rights of others,
Dwelling here as kin with kin;
We are black, but we are brothers;
We are black, but we are men.

Heaven smiles on all the dwellers
Of creation's varied breeds;
Virtue beameth not in colors,
But in kind and noble deeds.

Though in humble contemplation,
Driven here from den to den;
We're a part of this great nation;
We are black, but we are men.

Heaven hath your deed recorded,
Vengeance is Jehovah's own!
And though late, you'll be rewarded,
You must reap what you have sown!

Trusting, Father, to Thy goodness,

We shall in the conflict win;

Yet, forgive our brethren's rudeness;

Let us live like loving men.

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17


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A number of these poets between the Civil War and the World War transcend racial boundaries and write, not as Negroes, but as men. Their poetry becomes universal, and not partisan and sectional. Apparently there is no interest in the race question. These poets study the moods and traits of their race; the dialect, the pathos and tragedies, and the humor of the race. Dunbar is the peer in this field. He stresses material concerning his race that is of universal value. J. Mord Allen emphasizes the cheerful side of Negro philosophy of life. William Stanley Braithwaite neglects the racial characteristics, but writes of subjects that have cosmopolitan interest. A few poems exemplify this point of view.
Life
Paul Lawrence Dunbar
A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the moans come double;
And that is life!

A crust and a corner that love makes precious,
With the smile to warm and the tears to refresh us;
And joy seems sweeter when cares come after,
And a moan is the finest of foils for laughter:
And that is life!

Quoted by Newman I. White and Walter C. Jackson.
An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes, p. 89.

Expectation
Paul Lawrence Dunbar
You'll be wonderin' whut's de reason
I's a grinnin' all de time,
An' I guess you t'ink my sperits
Mus' be feelin'mighty prime.
Well, I 'fess up, I is tickled
As a puppy at his paws.
But you needn't think I's crazy,
I ain't laffin' 'doubt a cause.
You's a wonderin' too, I reckon,
    Why I don't seem to eat,
An' I notice you a lookin'
    Lak you felt completely beat
When I 'fuse to tek de bacon,
    An' don' settle on de ham.
Don' you feel no feah erbout me,
    Jes' keep eatin', an' be ca'm.

Fu' I's waitin' an' I's watchin'
    'Bout a little t'ing I see-
D'othah night I's out a walkin'
    An' I passed a 'simmon tree.
Now I's whettin' up my hungry,
    An' I's laffin' fit to kill,
Fu' de fros' done turned de 'simmons,
    An' de possum's eat his fill.


This Is My Life
Wm. S. Braithwaite
To feed my soul with beauty till I die;
To give my hands a pleasant task to do;
To keep my heart forever filled anew
With dreams and wonders which the days supply;
To love all conscious living, and thereby
Respect the brute who renders up its due,
And know the world as planned is good and true—
And thus—because there chanced to be an It
This is my life since things are as they are:
One half akin to flowers and the grass:
The rest a law unto the changeless star.
And I believe when I shall come to pass
Within the Door His hand shall hold ajar
I'll leave no echoing whisper of Alas!


*When De Fish Begin to Bite*

J. Mord Allen

Little kittens in de coal-house;

Little chickens in de lot;

Greens er comin' in de medder;

Sun er shinin' nyelly hot;

Gals, er wearin' lawn en gingham—

Lookin' right down scan'rous good—

Jes' kain't keep f'um actin' frisky;

Spring's done hit de neighborhood.
Yes, suh, Spring. Dat's whut's de matter—

Spring's er laffin' in de sky,

Hintin' bout de time fer fishin',

Teasin' at me on de sly.

21

Quoted by Newman I. White and Walter C. Jackson.

An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes, p.128.
Negro Poetry Since The World War.

Some emphasis has been placed upon the earlier Negro poetry for the purpose of determining attitudes and their relation to the social situation. In the period since the World War numerous Negro poets have appeared. Among those who have written since 1918 are Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Fenton Johnson, Claude McKay, Joseph S. Cotter, Jr., Raymond G. Danbridge, Leslie Pickney Hill, Charles Bertram Johnson, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and James Weldon Johnson. The first four of this group are usually rated as the more talented of the Negro writers, and their works compare favorably with those of the contemporary white poets.

The period since the World War shows the numerous attitudes developed in a conflict situation. Some of the Negro poets accept the definition of the situation; some complain; some protest; some despair; some ask for guidance; some hope for success in the future; and others praise their own race. Negativism saturates their poetry. Ambivalent behavior is frequent; identification becomes obvious. Each of these reactions is in a way an effort of the Negro to escape social ostracism.
An attitude of accommodation is still found in Negro poetry, but it plays a less important role than it did in the earlier poetry. Some of the poets acquiesce in an inevitable situation. They unwillingly surrender, accept a subordinate role, and ask for peace. Angelina Weld Grimke in "Surrender", Joseph S. Cotter, Jr. in "Supplication," and Georgia Douglas Johnson in "Old Black Men", and Claude McKay in "The Tired Worker" exemplify this point of view.

Surrender

Angelina Weld Grimke

We ask for peace. We, at the bound
O life, are weary of the round
In search of Truth. We know the quest
Is not for us, the vision blest
Is meant for other eyes. Uncrowned,
We go, with heads bowed to the ground,
And old hands, gnarled and hard and browned.
Let us forget the past unrest,-

We ask for peace.

Our stained ears are deaf,—no sound
May reach them more; no sight may wound
Our worn-out eyes. We gave our best,
And, while we totter down the West,
Unto that last, that opened mound,—
We ask for peace.


**Supplication**

*Joseph S. Cotter, Jr.*

I am so tired and weary,

So tired of the endless fight,

So weary of waiting the dawn

And finding endless night.

That I ask but rest and quiet—

Rest for days that are gone,

And quiet for the little space

That I must journey on.


**Old Black Men**

*Georgia Douglas Johnson*

They have dreamed as young men dream

Of glory, love and power;

They have hoped as youth will hope

Of life's sun-minted hour.
They have seen as others saw
Their bubbles burst in air,
And they have learned to live it down
As though they did not care.

Quoted by Countee Cullen. *Carolyn Dusk*, p.77

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**The Tired Worker**

Claude McKay

O Whisper, O my soul—the afternoon
Is waning into evening—whisper soft!
Peace, O my rebel heart! for soon the moon
From out its misty veil will swing aloft!
Be patient, weary body, soon the night
Will wrap thee gently in her sable sheet,
And with a leaden sigh thou wilt invite
To rest thy tired hands and aching feet.
The wretched day was theirs, the night is mine;
Come, tender sleep, and fold me to thy breast.
But what seals out the gray clouds red like wine?
O dawn! O dreaded dawn! O let me rest!
Weary my veins, my brain, my life,—have pity!
No! Once again the hard, the ugly city.

Quoted by J. W. Johnson. *The Book of American*
Many of the poems express a feeling of exclusion and neglect and a desire to escape the isolation of race and caste. It is perhaps inevitable that Negroes should express a desire that racial and social barriers be removed. Realizing their isolation they plead for admission or recognition in certain tabooed field. There is sometimes a pathetic knocking at the white man's door; plaintive whines and complaints result from the social isolation.

**The Barrier**

Claude McKay

I must not gaze at them although
Your eyes are dawning day;
I must not watch you as you go
Your sun-illumined way;

I hear but I must never heed
The fascinating note,
With th, fluting like a river-reed,
Comes from your trembling throat;

I must not see upon your face
Love's softly glowing spark;
For there's the barrier of race,
You're fair and I am dark.


As I Grew Older

It was a long time ago.

I have almost forgotten my dream.

But it was there then,

In front of me,

Bright like a sun,—

My dream.

And then the wall rose,

Rose slowly,

Slowly,

Between me and my dream.

Rose slowly, slowly,

Dimming,

Hiding,

The light of my dream.

Rose until it touched the sky,—

The wall.

Shadow.

I am black.

I lie down in the shadows.
No longer the light of my dream before me,
Above me.
Only the thick wall.
Only the shadow.

My hands!
My dark hands!
Break through the wall!
Find my dream!
Help me to shatter this darkness,
To smash this night,
To break this shadow
Into a thousand light of sun,
Into a thousand whirling dreams
Of sun!

Langston Hughes. The Weary Blues, pp. 55-56.

Four Walls
Blanche Taylor Dickinson
Four great walls have hemmed me in.
Four strong, high walls:
Right and wrong,
Shall and shan't.
The mighty pillars tremble when
My conscience palls
If for a moment Samson's strength
Were given me I'd shooe
Them away from where I stand;
Free, I know I'd love
To ramble soul and all,
And never dread to strike a wall.

Again, I wonder would that be
Such a happy state for me....
The going, being, doing, sham-
And never knowing where I am.
I might not love freedom at all;
My tired wings might crave a wall-
Four walls to rise and pen me in
This conscious world with guarded men.

28
Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk,
pp. 110-111.

The Suppliant
Georgia Douglas Johnson
Long have I beat with timid hands upon life's leadsen door,
Praying the patient, futile prayer my fathers
prayed before,
Yet I remain without the close, unheeded and
unheard,
And never to my listening ear is born the
waited word.

Soft o'er the threshold of the years there
comes this counsel cool:
The strong demand, contend, prevail; the beg-
gar is a fool! 29

29 Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk, p.76

In the following poem there is subtle pleading
for relief from social isolation, but prophetic chal-
lenge predominates.

I, TOO

Langston Hughes

I, Too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed,--

I, too, am America.

Quoted by Countee Cullen. *Caroling Dusk*, pp.145-146.

Since the Emancipation the Negro has been nominally free but in reality not a citizen. He has struggled for opportunity to participate in American democracy. His dilemma has been to be a Negro and at the same time a citizen. Denied citizenship he has become increasingly discontented. The following poems reveal the struggle in the Negro personality.

My people laugh and sing
And dance to death—
None imagining
The heartbreak underneath.

Prayer
Langston Hughes
I ask you this:
Which way to go?
I ask you this:
Which sin to bear?
Which crown to put
Upon my hair?
I do not know,
Lord God, 31
I do not know.

31
Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk, p.146

Because of this peculiar position and treatment
the Negro is divided in his sentiments: he may be
loyal to and hate the country at the same time. Claude
McKay expresses this ambivalence in his poem "America".

America
Claude McKay
Although she feed me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate.
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

32
Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk. p.83.

Mulatto

I am your son, white man!

Georgia Dusk

Amid the turpentine woods.

One of the pillars of the temple fell.

You are my son!

Like Hell!

The moon over the turpentine woods.
The Southern night
Full of stars
Great big yellow stars.
Juicy bodies
Of nigger wenches
Blue black
Against black fences
O, you little bastard boy,
What's a body but a toy?
The scent of pine wood stings the soft night air.

What's the body of your mother?
Silver moonlight everywhere.

What's the body of your mother?
Sharp pine scent in the evening air.

A nigger night,
A nigger joy,
A little yellow
Bastard boy,
Naw, you ain't my brother.
Niggers ain't my brother.
Not ever.
Niggers ain't my brother.
The Southern night is full of stars.
Great big yellow stars.

O, sweet as earth,
Dusk dark bodies
Give sweet birth
To little yellow bastard boys.
Git on back there in the night,
You ain't white.

The bright stars scatter everywhere.
Fine wood scent in the evening air.
A nigger night
A nigger joy.

I am your son, white man!

A little yellow Bastard boy.

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Langston Hughes. Fine Clothes to the Jew.
pp. 71-72.

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The Weary Blues

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway....
He did a lazy sway....
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody
O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.
O Blues!
In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—
"Ain't got nobody in all this world,
Ain't got nobody but ma self.
I'se gwine to quit ma frownin'
And put ma troubles on the shelf."
Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords then he sang some more—
"I got the Weary Blues
And I can't be satisfied.
Got the Weary Blues
And can't be satisfied—
I ain't happy no mo'
And I wish that I had died."
And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head,
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

Cross
My old man's a white old man
And my old mother's black.
If ever I cursed my white old man
I take my curses back.
If ever I cursed my black old mother
And wished she were in hell,
I'm sorry for that evil wish
And now I wish her well.
My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder where I'm gonna die,
Being neither white nor black?

Misery
Play de blues for me.
Play de blues for me.
No other music
'Il ease ma misery.
Sing a soothin' song.
Said a soothin' song,
'Cause de man I love's done
Done me wrong.

Can't you understand,
O, understand
A good woman's cryin'
For a no-good man?

Black gal like me,
Black gal like me
She got to hear a blues
For her misery.

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Recent Negro poetry is full of protest. A radical attitude characterizes much of the verse. Slavery hymns are still cherished and commercialized by the Negroes but the sentiments of these songs do not suffice for today. Some of the Negroes do not plead for kindly treatment. The attitude of the contemporary Negro poet is sullen. His poetry is carnal; it is self-assertive and rebellious; it is saturated with investigative toward white domination. This protesting attitude
is a reply to white prejudice. A few poems will illustrate this attitude.

**Cotton Song**

Jean Toomer

Come, brother, come. Let's lift it;
Come now, hew it! roll away!
Shackles fall upon the Judgment Day
But let's not wait for it.

God's body's got a soul,
Bodies like to roll the soul,
Can't blame God if we don't roll,
Come, brother, roll, roll!

Cotton bales are the fleecy way
Weary sinner's bare feet trod,
Softly, softly to the throne of God,
"We ain't agwine t'wait until th' Judgment Day!"

Mussur, mussur,
Hump.
Echo, echo, roll away!
We ain't agwine t'wait until th' Judgment Day!

God's body's got a soul,
Bodies like to roll the soul,
Can't blame God if we don't roll.
Come, brother, roll, roll!

Covc, brother, roll, roll!

Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk, p. 97-98.

The Day-Breakers
Arna Bontemps

We are not come to wage a strife
With swords upon this hill.
It is not wise to waste the life
Against a stubborn will.
Yet would we die as some have done;
Beating a way for the rising sun.

To The White Fiends
Claude McKay

Think you I am not fiend and savage too?
Think you I could not arm me with a gun
And shoot down ten of you for every one
Of my black brothers murdered, burnt by you?
Be not deceived, for every deed you do
I could match—out-match: am I not Africa's son,
Black of that black land where black deeds are done?

But the Almighty from the darkness drew
My soul and said: Even thou shall be a light
Awhile to burn on the benighted earth,
Thy dusky face I set among the white
For thee to prove thyself of highest worth;
Before the world is swallowed up in night,
To show thy little lamp: go forth, go forth!

39


The South

The lazy, laughing South
With blood on its mouth.
The sunny-faced South,
    Beast-strong,
    Idiot-brained.
The child-minded South
Scratching in the dead fire's ashes
For a Negro's bones.
    Cotton and the moon,
    Warmth, earth, warmth,
The sky, the sun, the stars,  
The magnolia-scented South.  
Beautiful, like a woman,  
Seductive as a dark-eyed whore,  
Passionate, cruel,  
Honey-lipped, syphilitic—  
That is the South,  
And I, who am black, would love her  
But she spits in my face.  
And I, who am black,  
Would give her many rare gifts  
But she turns her back upon me.  
So now I seek the North—  
The cold-faced North,  
For she, they say,  
Is a kinder mistress,  
And in her house my children  
May escape the spell of the South.

Langston Hughes. *The Weary Blues*, p. 54

Hatred

Gwendolyn B. Bennett

I shall hate you
Like a dart of singing steel
Shot through still air
At even-tide.
Or solemnly
As pines are sober
When they stand etched
Against the sky.
Hating you shall be a game
Played with cool hands
And slim fingers.
Your heart will yearn
For the lonely splendor
Of the pine tree;
While rekindled fires
In my eyes
Shall wound you like swift arrows.
Memory will lay its hands
Upon your breast
And you will understand
My hatred.

Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk, p.160.

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Time To Die
Ray G. Dandridge

Black brother, think you life so sweet
That you would live at any price?
Does mere existence balance with
The weight of your great sacrifice?
Or can it be you fear the grave
Enough to live and die a slave?
O Brother! Be it better said,
When you are gone and tears are shed,
That your death was the stepping stone
Your children's children cross'd upon.
Men have died that men might live:
Look every foeman in the eye!
If necessary, your life give
For something, ere in vain you die.

§2


The Lynching
Claude McKay

His spirit in smoke ascended to high heaven.
His father, by the cruelest way of pain,
Had bidden him to his bosom once again;
The awful sin remained still unforgiven.
All night a bright and solitary star
(Perchance the one that ever guided him
Yet gave him up at last to Fate's wild whim)
Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.
Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view
The ghastly body swaying in the sun:
The women thronged to look, but never a one
Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue;
And little lads, lynchers that were to be,
Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

43

There are advocates of open rebellion and revolt. The blacks should not whine but retaliate through the same means as used by the whites. That this appeals to a vast number of Negroes is evidenced by the popularity afforded Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" and Carita Owens Collins' "This Must Not Be". They portray an ultra-radical attitude.

**This Must Not Be**
This must not be!
The time is past when black men,
Laggard sons of Ham,
Shall tamely bow and weakly cringe
In servile manner, full of shame.
Lift up your heads!
Be proud: be brave!
Though black, the same red blood
Flows through your veins
As through your paler brothers.

And that same blood
So freely spent on Flanders fields
Shall yet reawak your race.
Be men, not cowards.
And demand your rights!

Demand, come not mock supplicant!
Demand, and if not given — take!
Take what is rightfully yours;
An eye for an eye;
A soul for a soul;
Strike, black man, strike!
This shall not be!

If We Must Die
Claude McKay

If we must die—let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot,
If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us still be brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but—fighting back!

45

Recently there has appeared in Negro poetry an attitude of despair and futility, of pessimistic cynicism. Fenton Johnson is sometimes said to be the most pessimistic of the Negro poets. The following poems express
the attitude that further struggle is useless.

Tired

Fenton Johnson

I am tired of work; I am tired of building up somebody else's civilization.

Let us take a rest, M'Lissy Jane.

I will go down to the Last Chance Saloon, drink a gallon or two of gin, shoot a game or two of dice and sleep the rest of the night on one of Mike's barrels.

You will let the old shanty go to rot, the white people's clothes turn to dust, and the Calvary Baptist Church sink to the bottomless pit.

You will spend your days forgetting you married me and your nights hunting the warm gin Mike serves the ladies in the rear of the Last Chance Saloon.

Throw the children into the river; civilization has given us too many. It is better to die than it is to grow up and find out that you are coloured.

Pluck the stars out of the heavens. The stars mark our destiny. The stars marked my destiny.

I am tired of civilization.
Red Silk Stockings

Put on yo' red silk stockings,
Black gal.
Go out an' let de white boys
Look at yo' legs.

Ain't nothin' to do for you, nohow,
Round this town,—
You's too pretty,
Put on yo' red silk stockings, gal,
An' tomorrow's chile'll
Be a high yaller.

Go out an' let de white boys
Look at yo' legs.

Oblivion

Jessie Fauset

I hope when I am dead that I shall lie
In some deserted grave—I cannot tell you why,
But I should like to sleep in some neglected spot
Unknown to every one, by every one forgot.
There lying I should taste with my dead breath
The utter lack of life, the fullest sense of death;
And I should never hear the note of jealousy or hate,
The tribute paid by passersby to tombs of state.

To me would never penetrate the prayers and tears
That futilely bring torture to dead and dying ears;
There I should lie annihilate and my dead heart
would bless
Oblivion—the shroud and envelope of happiness.


Many Negroes have used their energies in the struggle for recognition. They do not wish to surrender and they refuse to recognize that the struggle is futile. They have encountered an unsurmountable barrier and they plead to the whites for guidance. The attitude is expressed in the following poems.

Prayer
I ask you this:
Which way to go?
I ask you this:
Which sin to bear?
Which crown to put
Upon my hair?
I do not know, 
Lord God, 50. 
I do not know. 

50 Langston Hughes. Fine Clothes to the Jew, p.48

The White Ones
I do not hate you, 
For your faces are beautiful, too. 
I do not hate you, 
Your faces are whirling lights of love-
liness and splendor, too. 
Yet why do you torture me, 
0, white strong ones, 51 
Why do you torture me?

51 Langston Hughes. The Weary Blues, p.106

Grass Fingers
Angelina Weld Grimke
Touch me, touch me, 
Little cool grass fingers, 
Elusive, delicate grass fingers. 
With your shy brushings. 
Touch my face- 
My naked arms- 
My thighs-
My feet.
Is there nothing that is kind?
You need not fear me.
Soon I shall be too far beneath you,
For you to reach me, even,
With your tiny, timorous toes.

Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk, p.38.

And What Shall You Say?
Joseph S. Cotter, Jr.

Brother, come!
And let us go unto our God.
And when we stand before Him
I shall say—
"Lord, I do not hate,
I am hated.
I scourge no one,
I am scourged.
I covet no lands,
My lands are coveted.
I mock no peoples,
My people are mocked."

And, brother, what shall you say?

Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk, p.103.
Is It Because I am Black?
Joseph S. Cotter, Jr.

Why do men smile when I speak,
And call my speech
The whimperings of a babe
That cries but knows not what it wants?
Is it because I am black?

Why do men sneer when I arise
And stand in their councils,
And look them eye to eye,
And speak their tongue?
Is it because I am black?


Some of the poems express hope, and offer encouragement to the Negro people. Wishes are projected into the future.

Mother to Son
Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpets on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's hinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I's still goin', honey,
I's still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

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55.
Quoted by Countee Cullen. Caroling Dusk, pp. 151-152.

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From The Dark Tower
We shall not always plant while others reap
The golden increment of bursting fruit,
Not always countenance, abject and mute,
That lesser men should hold their brothers cheap;
Not everlastingly while others sleep
Shall we beguile their limbs with mellow flute,
Not always bend to some more subtle brute;
We were not made eternally to weep.

The night whose sable breast relieves the stark
White stars is no less lovely, being dark;
And there are buds that cannot bloom at all
In light, but crumple, piteous, and fall;
So in the dark we hide the heart that bleeds,
And wait, and tend our agonizing needs.


Negro poetry abounds in verse that praises the race by focusing attention upon the beauty of persons and upon the greatness of historical characters.

The Mulatto To His Critics
Joseph S. Cotter, Jr.

Ashamed of my race?
And of what race am I?
I am many in one.
Through my veins there flows the blood
Of Red Man, Black Man, Briton, Celt and Scot,
In warring clash and tumultuous riot.
I welcome all,
But love the blood of the kindly race,
That swarths my skin, crinkles my hair,
And puts sweet music into my soul.


---

**To A Dark Town Girl**

Gwendolyn B. Bennett

I love you for your brownness
And the rounded darkness of your breast.
I love you for the breaking sadness in your voice
And shadows where your wayward eye-lids rest.

Something of old forgotten queens
Lurks in the lithe abandon of your walk
And something of the shackled slave
Sobs in the rhythm of your talk.

Oh, little brown girl, born for sorrow's mate,
Keep all you have of queenliness,
Forgetting that you once were slave,
And let your lips laugh at Fate!

Quoted by Countee Cullen. *Caroling Dusk*, p.157
**Nigger**

Frank Horne

_(A Chant for Children)_

Little Black boy
Chased down the street—
"Nigger, nigger never die
Black face an' shiney eye,
Nigger...Nigger...nigger..."

Hannibal...Hannibal
Bangin' thru the Alps
Licked the proud Romans,
Ren home with their scalps—
"Nigger...nigger...nigger..."

Crispus...Attucks
Bullets in his chest
Red blood of freedom
Runnin' down his vest
"Nigger...nigger...nigger..."

Toussant...Toussant
Made the French flee
Fought like a demon
Set his people free—
"Nigger...nigger...nigger..."

Jesus...Jesus
Son of the Lord
–– Spit in his face
–– Nail him on a board
"Nigger...nigger...nigger..."

Little Black boy
Runs down the street––
"Nigger, nigger never die
Black face an' shiney eye,
Nigger...nigger...nigger..."

59
Quoted by Countee Cullen. *Caroling Dusk*, pp. 120-121-122.

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Poem

The night is beautiful
So the faces of my people.

The stars are beautiful,
So the eyes of my people.

Beautiful, also, is the sun,
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.

60
Langston Hughes. *The Weary Blues*, p. 58
The vast majority of contemporary poetry is highly race consciousness. The authors allow the "purely polemical phases of the race to choke their sense of artistry." There is, however, a trend toward artistic values. Some Negro poets disclaim any interest in race. They point out that poetry is not limited by racial boundaries; that it is cosmopolitan. They have "stopped speaking for the Negro — they speak as Negroes." Elizabeth Lay Green is a recent volume about Negro literature comments:

The New Negro has sloughed off his protective covering of self-praise, over-sensitivity, exaggerated accusation of his oppressor—. He stands upon certain pride in his history and the gifts of his race, but he looks beyond the limits of his particular group to a consciousness of national and international identity.

Elizabeth Lay Green. The Negro in Contemporary Literature, p. 60

A few poems are illustrative of the trend toward universality in Negro poetry.

Spring in New Hampshire
Claude McKay

To green the springing April grass,
Too blue the silver speckled sky,
For me to linger here, alas,
While happy winds go laughing by,
Wasting the golden hours indoors,
Washing windows and scrubbing floors.

Too wonderful the April night,
Too faintly sweet the first May flowers,
The stars too gloriously bright,
For me to spend the evening hours,
When fields are fresh and streams are leaping,
Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping.

Quoted by J. W. Johnson. The Book of American Negro Poetry, p.139

The Easter Flower
Claude McKay
From this foreign Easter damp and chilly
My soul steals to a pear-shaped plot of ground,
Where gleamed the lilac-tinted Easter lily
Soft-scented in the air for yards around;

Alone, without a hint of guardian leaf!
Just like a fragile bell of silver rime,
It burst the tomb for freedom sweet and brief
In the young pregnant year at Eastertime;

And many thought it was a sacred sign,

And some called it the resurrection flower;

And I, a pagan, worshipped at its shrine,

Yielding my heart unto its perfumed power.

Quoted by Newman I. White and Walter C. Jackson.

An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes, p. 204.

— Touch —

Countee Cullen

I am no longer lame since Spring

Came, daisy-decked, my way,

And charmed with flute and silver lute,

My laggard limbs to play;

Her voice is sweet as long-stored wine;

I leap like a hounded fawn;

I raise and follow o'er hill and hollow

To the flush of the crimson dawn.

I am no longer deaf who hear

The litany of Spring;

The choir celestial of thrush and throstle,

Of feathered breast and wing;

The matin hymns of airy folk;

The ave of the lark;
The vesper trill of the whippoorwill
To usher in the dark.

I am no longer blind who see
The little folk that pass,
With woodland talk through garden walk,
And o'er the shadow grass.

In iridescent hues arrayed,
The hooded flowers burst,
And nightly clouds drop dewy shrouds
To quench their wakened thirst.

There is no longer room for doubt,
For sorry mundane fears;
I garner gain from poignant pain
Reap joy from sowing tears;
Through all old things new beauty runs,
Defying any name;
I only know that this is so:
That earth is not the same.

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64
Quoted by Newman I. White and Walter C. Jackson.

An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes, pp.
310-311.

This contemporary Negro poetry when subjected to
evaluative techniques may not be of high caliber, but
it gives a vivid and spontaneous picture of what the Negro thinks. The subjective aspect of his culture, Negro psychology, reflects itself constantly in the Negro verse. Professor Park has expressed the worth of Negro Poetry briefly and convincingly:

Much of the poetry that Negroes write today is like much of our own—interesting but unconvincing. It has form but not conviction. Negro writers, however, have the inspiration of a great theme, and occasionally, when their songs arise spontaneously out of a deep racial experience, they speak with an authority of deep conviction, and with a tone of prophecy.

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Bibliography


Chapter 111

Negro Spiritual

It is only fairly recently that the Spirituals have been generally appreciated. For some decades this spontaneous music was relegated to the background. The tendency of the whites to loathe the Negro culture, and the refusal of the Negro to recognize the spirituals after the Emancipation because they brought back reminiscences of servitude, are perhaps the two chief contributory causes for the long dormancy of these cultural traits. As late as 1909 the Negro students were reluctant to sing them. Thomas Wentworth Higginson was the first to gather the spirituals from the lips of the black soldiers, and while his evaluation of them may have been too idealistic, nevertheless it awakened some interest in these songs. Later other white scholars

1 Thomas W. Higginson. *Army life in a Black Regiment.*

1

delved into these Negro contributions, both to study them musically and sociologically.

2

The Negroes, imitative as they are, began to realize the significance of their music only after the whites had emphasized its worth. Credit for the first introduction of the spirituals by the black belongs to the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Whether these singers possessed consciousness of the beauty of the songs, or whether the desperate financial state of their school forced them into commercialism of things aesthetic is still a controversial matter.

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At any rate in 1872 a choir of "Jubilee Singers" was organized at Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, which toured the North and East of the United States and ultimately Europe. In Europe their reception was favorable, they being entertained by Queens, Emperors, and eminent statesmen. Financially the venture proved successful, the net sum raised being $150,000. Not only did the trip result in monetary gain to the University, but it introduced the spirituals to the public. Shortly after the Hampton Institute (Hampton, Va.), Tuskegee Institute (Tuskegee, Ala.) and other Negro schools mimicked Fiske.
The vogue of the Spirituals was increased by other devices among the Negroes. Negro composers, like H. T. Burleigh, Nathaniel Dett, J. Rosamond Johnson and others, succeeded in making musical arrangements for the songs, thus making them available for the home. There is little relationship between the work of these composers and the early Negro folk music. These composers utilized the themes of the early Negro folksongs, and refined them into classical music.

A volume by John W. Work entitled *Folk Songs of the American Negro* succored the Negro cause. Perhaps the most appreciable work was published in 1925 by J. W. Johnson. *The Book of American Spirituals* became one of the American best sellers. This was followed in 1926 by *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals*, which was widely circulated but did not get the reception of his first attempt. At present it appears that interest in the Negro spirituals is beginning to wane.

The spirituals are often considered of biological origin. Writers on Negro music commonly speak of the inherent musical ability of this race. This idea is widespread. It is believed that the young Negroes are irresistibly dominated by music and invariably react to rhythm. This may be true, but it is also true that practically all young children are stimulated by rhythm.
The scientific studies thus far made do not vindicate the popular belief that "the Negro has music in his soul." Recent tests, incomplete perhaps, reveal no startling differences in the musical ability of the blacks and whites. In Africa the Negroes are apparently not a musical people. From the data available students have now generalized that the spirituals were not racial but social in origin.

From two points of view the origin of the spirituals are a product of the social and economic life. In the first place the slavery institution gave repressions which got relief "in the direction of emotional escape and religious delirium." The spirituals furnished an avenue of escape. In the second place the first attempt to promulgate the Christian religion among the Negro slaves was confronted with libelous criticism on the part of the slave holders, who rigidly maintained that religion ruined the slave. The argument of the slave owner may not be totally invalid because religion congregated these slaves and offered an opportunity to incite a rebellion, and

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the religious orgy experienced harassed and hampered the industrial efficiency of the slave. After being convinced that the conversion of the Negro would be more advantageous than detrimental by facilitating control, the masters sanctioned the introduction of religion. The spirituals embodied the main philosophy of the black's religion, and the alert profiteers again appreciated an agent of social control. When the Negroes began to sing these naive creations production increased and discipline became relatively simple. Much agitation and unrest was eliminated through the medium of song. Very early in slavery experience the Negroes were forced to sing in order to keep them happy by diverting their attention from the abuses of their status. This increased the vogue of these songs and it bespeaks that the spiritual in one phase of its origin is the outgrowth of white exploitation.

This technique of employing art as a device of social control reaches into antiquity. The use of monuments, buildings, dance, poetry, paintings, sculpture, and song has been, and is being manipulated to evoke desired behavior. Professor W. I. Thomas clearly demonstrates the value of song in relation to work.

Monotonous toil is alleviated by song. Music regulates and stimulates the work of the individual, and affects the cooperation and unity of the group. Especially is this true in the boatsongs and the gang songs. More work could be performed merely by speeding up the tempo.

Booker T. Washington in his preface to S. Coleridge-Taylor's Twenty-Four Negro Melodies says, "Oftentimes in slavery, as today in certain parts of the south, some man or woman with an exceptional voice was paid to lead the singing; the idea being to increase the amount of labor by such singing."

Quoted by Henry E. Krehbiel Afro-American Folk Songs, p. 47.

These early Negro folksongs were phenomena of collective behavior and not the artistic productions of individuals. They arose out of the religion of the time. The religious meetings of the Negroes were without form or order. Two or three songs were sung by the audience at the same time, three or four might try to talk at once, and the rest accompanied by moans. A phrase was uttered and either forgotten or repeated
and something added to it. Out of emotional situations of this character spirituals were created.

Many strange phenomena often arise out of crowdish behavior. Davenport in his book *Primitive Traits in Modern Revivals*, pictures beautifully the origin of the "jerks", barking at the devil, and other peculiar behavior incited by crowdish activities. Some have been even known to speak in unknown tongues. Psychologically the explanation of glossolalia is in terms of the mixing of different languages under emotional stress and strain. The person speaking has had a casual acquaintance, perhaps through some subtle suggestion, with different languages and in a period of great excitement these fragmentary bits of languages are jumbled together, and the one influenced utters words that are unintelligible. The Negro spirituals are of this nature. The Negroes knew some of the Bible and some of the white hymns. During a religious prayer meeting these particles of knowledge were woven into a song. The origin of the spirituals thus appears to be the fusion of Bible quotations and old Methodist and Baptist hymns under a high emotional state of religious ecstasy and hysteria. The end product was a spiritual.

The collective behavior out of which Negro spirituals grew has been described by Mrs. Burlin:
Minutes passed, long minutes of strange intensity; the mutterings, the ejaculations grew louder, more dramatic, till suddenly I felt the creative thrill dart through the people like an electric vibration, that same half-audible hum arose,—emotion was gathering atmospherically as clouds gather -- and then, up from the depths of some "sinner's" remorse and imploring came a pitiful little plea, a real Negro "moan", sobbed in musical cadence. From somewhere in that bowed gathering another voice improvised a response: the plea sounded again, louder this time and more impassioned; then other voices joined in the answer, shaping it into a musical phrase; and so, before our ears, as one might say, from this molten metal of music a new song was smithied out, composed then and there by no one in particular and by everyone in general.


Mrs. J. H. Smith reports the following statement of an old Negro woman:
We simply wanted a new song to sing in church, and we just started to sing this song. Our troubles weighted us down, and, of course, we were thinking of them more than anything else. It came to me this way: "Um' Most done toilin' here," and I sang it; another sister added something else, and it kept on until we have a "new song."

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Mos' done toilin' here, O brethren,
Lord, I'm mos' done toilin' here,
I long to shout, I love to sing,
I long to praise my heavenly King,
Mos' done toilin' here.

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Obviously the fundamental basis for the themes of the spiritual was the Bible. Christianity became a part of the social heritage of the Negroes. The
Bible being the only source of knowledge naturally became the object of imitation. A search through the songs in the two volumes of J. W. Johnson reveal such names as David, Goliath, Cain, Abel, Noah, Jonah, Pharoah, Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jacob, Mary, Jesus, Peter, and many other well-known Bible characters. A cursory investigation of the spirituals uncovers such trite religious stories as David and Goliath, The Egyptian Bondage, Jacob's Dream, Ezekiel's vision, and Noah's Ark.

The environmental situation of the Israelites and the Negro slaves were somewhat analagous. Both groups had been subordinated in bondage and servitude which resulted in certain definite reactions. Because of the similarity of experience a definite relationship arose, in the imagination of the Negro, between the two groups. The Negro slaves, perhaps unconsciously identified themselves with the Hebrew serfs in Egypt, until the experiences of the Israelites became the experiences of the Negroes. Early Hebrew religion offered the Negro an avenue of escape; therefore it readily fit into his scheme of things. Themes like The House of Bondage, Daniel in the Lion's Den and The Three Hebrew Children portray a community of interest. As God rescued the Hebrews from slavery so would He listen to the lamentations of the black
slave. As the Hebrews endure brutality so the Negroes would welcome persecution with the assurance of a victory in the end.

When Moses an' his soldiers, F'om Egypt's lan' did flee, His enemies were in behin' him, An' in front of him de sea. God raised de waters like a wall, An' opened up de way, An' de God dat lived in Moses' time Is jus' de same today.

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The effect of the Bible upon the philosophy of life of the Negroes is significant. Notice the close correlation between the themes of the Negro spirituals and certain biblical references.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Passages</th>
<th>Spiritual Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 37:1-11. Thus saith the Lord unto these bones: Behold I shall cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live.</td>
<td>Dese bones gwine rise again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 13:10. And the moon shall not cause her light to shine.</td>
<td>And the moon refuse to shine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 7:13. What are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?</td>
<td>Who's that comin' all dressed in white?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Peter 3:10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.</td>
<td>When de star from de elements is fallin'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 20:12. And another book was opened which was the book of life.</td>
<td>My name's been written in de book of life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oftimes, however, owing to defective memories, limited education, and a superficial knowledge of the Bible, these themes are misconstrued. The Creation myth received addition and Daniel in the lion's den elucidates strange phrases. Moses and his discovery by Pharaoh's daughter becomes distorted when the spiritual speaks of his discovery by a young woman who while hunting a rose stumbled over something. Cain destroys Abel with "the leg of a table", and Jonah is cast up in a "sweet 'tater patch." The version of heaven and the Resurrection undergo a thwarting, and Mary instead of washing the feet of Jesus washes her own feet.


The following song demonstrates misinterpretation of commonplace biblical experiences.

Well, de Good Book say dat Cain killed Abel,

Yes, Abel,

Dat he hit him in de head wid de leg of a ta-able,

Yes, good Lord.

Didn't Daniel in de Lion's den

Say unto dem collud men
Git yo' long white gown an' pass 'em around,
An' be ready when de great day comes.
Yes, Lord, I'm ready; yes, Lord, I'm ready;
I'll be ready when de great day comes.


Several attitudes are expressed in the Negro spirituals. Accommodation or resignation, patience for this life, hope for the next world, sorrow, and joy are the most common. Only occasionally do the spirituals reveal any complaint of the slave status.

The Negro spirituals represent very definitely accommodation literature. Accommodation is expressed in terms of compensation, patience in this life and hope for the next. Social pressure often keeps down certain response, but these responses usually influence conscious behavior. Most psychologists advocate that work is being performed in the subliminal self. Crushed wishes come to the surface in the form of dreams, day-dreams, or perhaps some Utopian ideal. Among the Negroes their antagonisms, wishes for freedom were held down by the whites. In our contemporary period the suppression of desires has facilitated the
developing of certain complexes, and in many instances the writings of the present Negro authors reveal paranoidic tendencies. But in the early slave era these balked wishes were compensated by the appearance of the spirituals. These songs became the "balancing and stabilizing factor" in the Negro personality. They used up the surplus emotional energy by acting as an outlet for the many crushed hopes upon a level acceptable to the social order. Relieving the burdensome life of the slave, they undoubtedly prevented the occurrence of anti-social behavior.

Compensatory behavior is a natural adjustment to certain handicaps in both the physiological and psychological fields. In the physiological world this phenomenon abounds. If one kidney or lung is impaired the other assumes the extra burden by overdevelopment; if a heart leakage occurs this is compensated for by the increase of cardiac muscular strength to assure adequate circulation. Psychologically old age, poverty, sickness, and inferiority occasion modes of compensatory activities. Inferiority of any sort reveals a need and a solution is often sought in terms of compensation. Socrates' flat nose enhanced his vision; Edison's deafness increased his powers of concentration; and Kant's loathsome physique aided his determination to become an intellectual genius. W. F. Vaughn says,
...An individual who realizes that he is deficient in one field sets out to conceal that incapacity by training his ability in another direction. The weakling becomes a scholar, the plain woman develops a pleasing disposition, the bore practices thoughtfulness of others. Socrates made up for his homeliness and domestic indifference by cultivating a beautiful soul. When a man fails to succeed along general lines, he turns to the training of his special abilities as a refuge.


If the normal activities of any group are impeded certain pathological behavior follows. Among the North American Indians myths about the happy hunting grounds being a place of perpetual drunkenness or a location where buffalo would abound, depict typical examples of projected wishes. Liquor and buffalo had been plentiful with the Indians and their disappearance created a crisis. Not being able to satiate their wishes here, satisfaction would occur in another world. Kant, the German philosopher, accounts for the Christian belief
in heaven and hell through this medium of compensation. Religious people who failed to enjoy happiness and justice here, day-dreamed of an ideal world, and being unable to punish their enemies, again imagined a place of torment. It didn't take long for these imaginary abodes of the righteous and the wicked to become objective realities. The same phenomenon appears in the spirituals. Being unable to find rest in slavery, they acquiesced but sang of a better world where sorrow would be unknown. The spirituals, then, are compensations and represent defensive techniques. Like the cunning of the European peasant and the business ability of the Jew these "sorrow songs" are efforts to succeed and to satisfy unfulfilled conditions. They may be called projected wishes or racial dreams.

The Negro spirituals being compensatory in their nature represent attempts at adjustment and escape from an inferior status by enhancing the joy of living. His religious songs allowed the Negro an avenue of escape from an intolerable situation. The biological organism, in the scheme of evolution, has developed the technique of avoiding dangerous and unpleasant situations. So in man's relations types of behavior usually result to meet intolerable situations. Many people in familial relationships escape unbearable
conditions by divorce or desertion, which are mechanisms of adjustments; attempts to reorganize the personality after a crisis situation. Insanity has been discussed as a result of disorganization and as an effort to flee from reality. Certain neurotic conditions, such as shell shock, are purely functional, due to the organism's inability to cope with its environment. An explanation of the appearance of the Negro spirituals may be found in an effort on the part of the Negro group trying to escape an inferior position, and to escape from reality.

The content of the songs reflects the effects of submission and disillusionment, unfulfilled wishes project themselves into the future, where this "sorry scheme of things" will undergo change. Professor Odum summarizes scholarly the content of the spirituals:

...The Negro's fancies of "Heaven's bright home" are scarcely exceeded by our fairy tales. There are silver and golden slippers, crowns of stars, jewels and belts of gold. There are robes of spotless white and wings all bejeweled with heavenly gems. Beyond the Jordan the Negro will outshine the sun, moon and stars. He will slip and slide the golden street and eat the fruit of the trees of paradise—-. With rest and ease, with a golden
band about him and with palms of victory in his hands and beautiful robes, the Negro will be indeed a happy being— To find a happy home, to see all the loved ones and especially the Biblical characters, to see Jesus and the angels, to walk and talk with them, to wear robes and slippers as they do, and to rest forever, constitute the chief images of the Negro's heaven. He is tired of the world which has been a hell to him. Now on his knees, now shouting, now sorrowful and now glad, the Negro comes from "hanging over hell" to die and "set by de Fadder's side!"

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Other worldliness with patience, hope and resignation is the slave's philosophy of life as expressed in the spirituals. This was recognized by Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

T. W. Higginson. "Negro Spirituals," Atlantic
This life gave them tragedy but in their compositions only Satan is made the scapegoat and becomes accountable for their troubles. The philosophy of the slave is embodied in his song; the primary elements of this is humility and resignation. Their hope centers around being humble and obedient to "God's Will," thus they acquiesced to a servile status. All these songs imply inferiority, suppression and social intimidation. Solace and comfort proceeded from the fragmentary songs, the religious sentiment alone sustaining him. They acted as an "individual catharsis," emotions being released by depicting hopes and fears, exhortations and warnings. Patience for this life is expressed in the following spirituals:

**Wait A Little While**

Wait a little while,

Then we'll sing the new song,

Wait a little while,

Then we'll sing the new song.

My heavenly home is bright and fair,

Then we'll sing the new song,

No pain or sorrow over there,

Then we'll sing the new song.
While the Negro submits to an inferior status here, he dreams that some day and somewhere he will find rest. No rescue in sight on earth, his hopes transcend this life and find repose in another world. This belated idea of reward is the essence of orthodox Christianity,
but nevertheless this theory of heaven presented an avenue of escape for the Negro. Misery and despair on earth concerned him little, victory in the next world absorbed his thoughts. In the spirituals no doubt is ever entertained about the Negro's reaching heaven. His "name is written in the book of life." Whether the conveyance be "dat gospel train," or in that sweet chariot "comin' for to carry me home" his ultimate arrival is assured.

**In Bright Mansions Above**

In bright mansions above,

In bright mansions above,

Lord, I want to live up yonder,

In bright mansions above.

My mother's gone to glory,

I want to go there, too;

Lord, I want to live up yonder,

19

In bright mansions above.

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19


**Good Lord, When I Die**

Good Lord, when I die,

Good Lord, when I die,

Good Lord, when I die, _shout one_,

...
Good Lord, when I die.
I want to go to heaven
When I die.
I want to go to heaven
When I die.
I want to go to heaven
When I die.
Good Lord, when I die.


Many of the Negroes convey the idea that the spirituals represent the souls of the blacks pathetically speaking to the world. Du Bois writes concerning the "sorrow songs," "They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they all tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways." Again J. J. Brawley says: "The

wail of the old melodies and the plaintive quality that is ever present in the Negro voice are but the reflection of a background of tragedy." Du Bois and Brawley attempt
to transfer modern sentiments to primitive situations where they will not fit.

In many of the songs plaintiveness is the dominant tone. Such spirituals as "Nobody knows the trouble I see," "O wretched man that I am," "Steal Away," and "Before I'd be a slave" express melancholy.

Nobody knows de trouble I see, Lord,
Nobody knows de trouble I see;
Nobody knows de trouble I see, Lord
Nobody knows like Jesus.

Brothers, will you pray for me,
Brothers will you pray for me,
Brothers will you pray for me
An' help me to drive ole Satan away.

Nobody knows de trouble I see, Lord,
Nobody knows de trouble I see,
Nobody knows de trouble I see, Lord,
Nobody knows like Jesus.
On the other hand to label all these religious songs as "sorrowful" is erroneous. In the majority of the spirituals the dominant expression is cheer and joy, even though the trials, tribulations, and longings of the blacks often come to the surface. Krehbiel says that only 12% of the spirituals are in a minor. Park reveals that only the Finnish folk-

23
H. E. Krehbiel. *Afro-American Folk-Songs*, p. 44.

songs contain more songs in the major mood. Others

24

argue that the minor is sad to us only because it is alien. If it were possible to prove that all the Negro songs were composed in minor that would not necessarily demonstrate that they are plaintive. Many cheerful pieces are composed in minor, while funeral hymns, surely meant to express grief, appear in major.
The Negro found extreme pleasure in his song, such as, "'Legion is so-o sweet." Playfulness and complete possession dominate "All God's Chillin Got Wings" in which the Negroes are 'Goin' to sing, goin' to shout, and goin' to play all over God's Heah'n." Familiarity is the keynote in the following:

'Ah'm gon'a have a little walk,
Gon'a have a little talk
With my Jesus.

Notice the joy expressed in the following song:

We'll run and never tire,
We'll run and never tire,
We'll run and never tire,
Jesus set poor sinners free.
Way down in de valley,
Who will rise and go with me?
You've heern talk of Jesus
Who set poor sinners free.

---

T. W. Higginson. "Negro Spirituals",
Atlantic Monthly, 19 (1867), 668.

Only a few insignificant references to slavery conditions find expression in the Negro spirituals. Higginson quotes several songs which refer to certain distasteful slavery experiences, such as the scanty
rations of the slave and the frequent use of the whip.

"No more peck o' corn for me,
   No more, no more,-
   No more peck o' corn for me,
   Many thousand go.

"No more driver's lash for me,
   No more, no more,-
   No more driver's lash for me,
   Many thousand go.

"No more pint o' salt for me,
   No more, no more,-
   No more pint o' salt for me,
   Many thousand go.

"No more hundred lash for me,
   No more, no more,-
   No more hundred lash for me,
   Many thousand go.

"No more mistress' call for me,
   No more, no more,-
   No more mistress' call for me,
   Many thousand go."

T. W. Higginson. "Negro Spirituals", Atlantic
"I Want To Go Home"

"Dere's no rain to wet you,
O, yes, I want to go home.
Dere's no sun to burn you,
O, yes, I want to go home;
O, push along, believers,
O, yes, I want to home,
Dere's no hard trials,
O, yes, I want to go home;
Dere's no whips a-crackin',
O, yes, I want to go home;
My brudder on de way side,
O, yes, I want to go home;
O push along, my brudder,
O, yes, I want to go home.
Where dere's no stormy weather,
O, yes, I want to go home;
Dere's no tribulation,
O, yes, I want to go home.


For years the objects of derision and scorn, the
spirituals suddenly burst into fame, and the gullible public, victims of social contagion, accepted them uncritically. It soon became the fashion or fad to acquaint oneself with Negro music, and any Negro music was treasured. A sane evaluation cannot terminate in an acceptance of the vast bulk of these songs as high class material. In fact, the opposite is true, and only a half dozen or so are worthy of the status and prestige that have been accorded them. Undoubtedly, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot", "Deep River", "Nobody Knows The Trouble I see", and "Steal Away", and several others merit preservation as art, but the majority of the residue must be categorized as valueless — only as interpreters of the early attitudes and motives of the Negro group. In face of the bold criticism offered above the Negro contribution in this field demands recognition. The statement of Alain Locke is true: "Whatever else the Negro may offer as his part there is already the general recognition that his folk-music, born of the pangs and sorrows of slavery, has made America and the world his eternal debtor."

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Chapter IV

Negro Narratives

A great body of historical narratives appeared early in Negro activities. Many of these have been preserved and are now accessible, while many others have disappeared. Starting perhaps with The Life of Gustavas Vasa or Olandah Equiano in 1789 the narratives reached their climax in Booker T. Washington's Up From Slavery and My Larger Education. Representative of the many volumes appearing between these are My Bondage and My Freedom by Frederick Douglass, Narrative of Sojourner Truth, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman, and A Narrative of the Adventure and Escape of Moses Rooter from American Slavery. The Heir of Slaves by Wm. Pickens, In Spite of a Handicap by Corrothers, The Autobiography of an Ex-colored Man, and Finding a Way Out by R. R. Moton appeared since the narratives of Booker T. Washington.

Personal narratives are of two types. Some of the autobiographies are artificial and fail to serve as authentic data for sociological study. For the most part these are broadcasted for propaganda and commercial purposes. They are tinctured with items that will realize these ends. Many of these bio-
graphies are written by proxy. Lindbergh’s *We* and the recent autobiographical documents of Alfred Smith and Calvin Coolidge were written for economic gain, and fail to reveal the subtle life of the authors. Incidentally these books serve as techniques to maintain a status by capitalizing early prestige.

On the other hand, some of the personal narratives are natural histories of the processes operating in the experience of the person. They reveal the social situation in which the authors have participated. They are valuable sources for studying conflicts and subsequent accommodations, and for discovering how these sequences of occurrences shape and influence the personality. In other words, this form of writing depicts the subjective aspect of human personalities; the dominant moods, the emotional attitudes, and life organizations, and mirrors the social environments productive of peculiar psychological types. They clearly demonstrate that attitudes are both resultant and producers of social experience.

Narratives of the above type usually result from isolation which affects the personality in various ways. Day-dreaming, melancholia, and forms of insanity often result from the interruption or absence of cultural contacts. Autobiography has its roots in isolation and therefore assumes a most intimate form. Auto-
biographies are almost invariably the work of introverts or self-centered, neurotic personalities and portray the inner life of the writer. The documents of St. Augustine, Katherine of Russia, in fact the work left by mystics, cripples, and men isolated by old age, are cases in point.

The narratives written before the Civil War fall into the former category. A cursory examination of the early personal narratives of the Negroes shows that these writings reveal not so much the subjective phases of personality as the startling incidents that appeal to popular interest. Many of them were written by some white sympathizer, and they lacked naturalness because only certain details were emphasized. Booker T. Washington stated that the early narratives were forced and superficial.

There are a considerable number of slave narratives, written by fugitives slaves with the assistance of abolitionist friends, but as these were composed for the most part under the excitement of the anti-slavery agitation they show things, as a rule, somewhat out of proportion. There is one of these stories, however, that gives a picture of the
changing fortunes and vicissitudes of slave-life which makes it especially interesting. I refer to the story of Charity Bower, who was born in 1779 near Edenton, North Carolina, and lived to be a considerable age after she obtained her freedom. She described her master as very kind to his slaves. He used to whip them, sometimes, with a hickory switch, she said, but never let his overseer do so.

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The Narrative of Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Moses Roper, and others are glaring examples of the superficiality of these early historical documents. However, no effort is made to conceal the purposes of these writers, many of the volumes openly declare that the material was intended for propaganda or private gain.

Permit me, with greatest deference and respect, to lay at your feet the following genuine narrative; the chief design of which is to excite in your August assemblies a sense of compassion for the miseries which the Slave-Trade
has entailed on my unfortunate countrymen.

Olandah Equiano. *Life of Olandah Equiano*, p. iii

He has drawn up the following narrative, partly with the hope of being assisted in this legitimate object, and partly to engage the sympathy of our countrymen on behalf of his oppressed brethren.

T. Price, (Editor) *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery*, Preface, p. VI.

It is hoped that the perusal of the following narrative may increase the sympathy that is felt for the suffering colored population of this country, and inspire to renewed efforts for the liberation of all who are pining in bondage on the American soil.

Mrs. F. W. Titus. (Editor) *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, Preface, p. VI, written
by Wm. Lloyd Garrison.

---The narrative was prepared on the eve of the author's departure for Europe, where she still remains. It makes no claim whatever to literary merit. Her hope was merely that the considerably numerous public already in part acquainted with Harriet's story, would furnish purchasers enough to secure a little fund for the relief of this remarkable woman. Outside that circle she did not suppose the memoir was likely to meet with much if any sale.

Sarah H. Bradford. Quoted in the introduction of Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman.

The personal narratives of the early Negroes are similar in form as well as in content. Apparently this similarity results from two causes, namely the similarity of experience, and the wish to conform to the desires of the abolitionists. Despite a few minor differences in slave life nearly all the blacks struggles under similar conditions. Naturally the related experiences in a common environment were
conducive to the creation of a uniform apperceptive mass. So when the slave wrote of his life this similar experience reflected itself in the writings. Then, too, many of these documents were encouraged by the abolitionists because they furnished valuable sentimental data to be used as propaganda favoring emancipation. Undoubtedly these illiterate slaves related the incidents that pleased the agitator. Often one can discern rationalizations and idealizations which are artificial. Negroes had been well trained in slavery to give their superiors exactly what they wanted. Nowhere is their cunningness at this technique more cleverly demonstrated than in the narratives.

After dinner, he appeared at Mr. Rutzer's, (a place the lawyer had procured for her, while she awaited the arrival of her boy,) assuring her, her son had come; but that he stoutly denied having any mother, or any relatives in that place; and said 'she must go over and identify him.' She went to the office, but at sight of her the boy cried aloud, and regarded her as some terrible being, who was about to take him away from
a kind and loving friend. He knelt, even, and begged them, with tears, not to take him away from his dear master, who had brought him from the dreadful South, and been so kind to him.

When he was questioned relative to the bad scar on his forehead, he said, 'Fowler's horse hove him'. And of the one on his cheek, 'That was done by running against the carriage'. In answering these questions he looked imploringly at his master, as much as to say, 'If they are falsehoods, you bade me say them; may they be satisfactory to you, at least.'

Mrs. F. W. Titus. Narrative of Sojourner Truth, pp. 52-53.

The content of the early Negro narratives reveal that they were techniques for the utilization of the sentimentality that some whites had for the black race. Negro biographies are saturated with the tragedies of slave life, which ordinarily would appeal to popular sentiment. Pleas for freedom, for sympathy, for pity, and for the breakdown of social isolation abound in
the historical documents. The predominating themes are the frequent whippings of slaves, partings of families, starvation of the blacks, neglect of disabled Negroes, and, in fact, any phase of slavery that involves mistreatment. A few excerpts are representative of the tone of these early narratives.

...This early, I got a foretaste of that painful uncertainty which slavery brings to the ordinary lot of mortals. Sickness, adversity and death may interfere with the plans and purpose of all; but the slave has the added danger of changing homes, changing hands, and of having separations unknown to other men. Then, too, there was the intensified degradation of the spectacle. What an assemblage! Men and women, young and old, married and single; moral and intellectual beings, in open contempt of their humanity, leveled at a blow with horses, sheep, horned cattle and swine! Horses and men—cattle and woman—pigs and children—all holding the same rank in the scale of social existence; and all subjected to the same narrow inspection, to ascertain their value in gold and silver—the only standard of worth applied by
slaveholders to slaves! How vividly, at that moment, did the brutalizing power of slavery flash before me? Personality swallowed up in the sordid idea of property! Manhood lost in chattelhood.

---They gave her a plenty to eat, and also a plenty of whippings. One Sunday morning, in particular, she was told to go to the barn; on going there, she found her master with a bundle of rods, prepared in the embers, and bound together with cords. When he had tied her hands together before he, he gave her the most cruel whipping she was ever tortured with. He whipped her till the flesh was deeply lacerated, and the blood streamed from her wounds—and the scars remain to the present day, to testify to the fact.

Mrs. F. W. Titus. Narrative of Sojourner
—His cruelty and meanness were especially displayed in his treatment of my unfortunate cousin, Henny, whose lameness made her a burden to him. I have no extraordinary personal hard usage toward myself to complain of, against him, but I have seen him tie up the lame and maimed woman, and whip her in a manner most brutal, and shocking; and then, with a blood-chilling blasphemy, he would quote the passage of scripture, "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Master would keep this lacedated woman tied up by her writts, to a bolt in the joist, three, four and five hours at a time. He would tie her up early in the morning, whip her with a cowskin before breakfast; leave her tied up; go to his store, and, returning to his dinner, repeat the castigation; laying on the rugged lash, on flesh already made raw by repeated blows. He seemed desirous to get the poor girl out of existence, or,
The predominating attitude reflected in these early narratives may be described as mild protest. Complaints are registered against the slave status and demands are made for liberty. Vassa, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Moses Roper, protest about slave treatment and seek to enlist agitation for their freedom. Frederick Douglass protests more bitterly and vigorously in his book *My Bondage and My Freedom*.

---He had bruised her flesh, but has left her invincible spirit undaunted. Such floggings are seldom repeated by the same overseer. They prefer to whip those who are most easily whipped. The old doctrine that submission is the best cure for outrage and wrong, does not hold good on the slave plantation. He is whipped oftenest, who is whipped easiest; and that slave who has the courage to stand up for himself against the overseer, although he may have many hard stripes at the first, be-
comes, in the end, a free man, even though he sustain the formal relation of a slave. "You can shoot me but you can't whip me," said a slave to Rigby Hopkins; and the result was that he was neither whipped nor shot. If the latter had been his fate, it would have been less deplorable than the living and lingering death to which cowardly and slavish souls are subjected.


Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the every-day practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

The more recent narratives of the Negro could be readily classified under the second type of biography. While the superficiality is not entirely missing, yet the results of isolation are more obvious. A study of these later biographies reveal definitely the effect that the struggle for status has had upon the Negro personality. Because of the underlying processes portrayed, these narratives assume great importance in the study of Negro behavior.

The presence of the two races in America for these 150 years has resulted in a struggle situation. Most any tension situation reflects itself some way or another in the lives of the participating parties. This tension situation produces either social or imaginary isolation because it interrupts the process of communication. The unrest extant among the Negroes at present evidences the need for wish fulfillment, which creates a characteristic mental state. In time this mental conflict crystallizes or is resolved into a definite attitude which dominates behavior. This systemization and integration of these attitudes result in a personal life organization. It is especially interesting to designate and analyze the behavior patterns of the less fortunate group in the American environment. Certain definite attitudes or activity
tendencies are discernable in Negro life. So long and tense has the struggle been that these behavior tendencies have succeeded in implanting themselves in the Negro personalities.

Not all Negroes react similarly to the stimuli received from their experience with the white race. The hard conditions produce rebellious, cynical, or hypocritical behavior. Some resort to the belligerent methods, demanding in drastic terms liberty with all its connotations. Others become passive and submissive willing to acquiesce until the race has proven itself worthy of recognition. Some despair and attempt to flee from the real situation by disclaiming membership among the Negroid race, by railing against the membership and depreciating their contributions. These would disown their race and escape the humiliation of their kindredship. Thus the mechanism of "passing" from the blacks and losing identity among the more favored group is prevalent. Then many Negroes imitate the dominating race with the hope of reducing discriminations. On the other hand some rationalize their present status in order to make life tolerable.

Perhaps the first behavior pattern manifested from this group conflict between the Negroes and the whites is that of accommodation, submission and seeming acquiescence in the treatment accorded the black
race. In some cases this attitude is taken because of despair, at other times the Negroes have used submission as a means to an end. The submissiveness of Booker T. Washington advocated in *Up From Slavery* and *My Larger Education* and that of Robert R. Moton in *Finding a Way Out* is commonplace. Both of these Negro leaders stress peaceful means of obtaining their goal. Bitterness is almost completely absent from their narratives, because they wish to elevate their race through cooperation and not conflict. Those who stress acquiescence are in no sense ignorant of discriminations but believe that conflict hinders the progress of their race. Washington sincerely believed that the only hope for the social development of the Negroes was through economic efficiency and through the maintaining of white friendship. Any incurrence of white enmity only impeded the upward struggles of the race. Both Moton and Washington place value upon the contacts with white leaders, and assume the genuineness of the white man's friendship. The way out of the difficulties for the race is evidenced in the following quotations:

During the later years of my experience I have had the good fortune to study not only white men and learn from them, but coloured men as well. In my earlier experiences I used to have sympathy with the col-
oured people who were narrow and bitter toward white people. As I grew older I began to study that class of coloured people, and I found that they did not get anywhere, and their bitterness and narrowness toward the white man did not hurt the white man or change his feeling toward the coloured race, but that, in almost every case, the cherishing of such feeling toward the white man reacted upon the coloured man and made him narrow and bitter.

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I think I was able to understand something of her feeling. In the history of the Negro race since freedom, one of the most difficult tasks has been to teach the teachers and leaders to exercise enough patience and foresight to keep the race down to a reality, instead of yielding to the temptations to grasp after shadows and superficialities. But the race itself is
learning the lesson very fast. Indeed, the rank and file learn faster than some of the teachers and leaders.

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The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we can be prepared for the exercises of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.
---I would counsel: We must be sure that we shall make our greatest progress by keeping our feet on the earth, and by remembering that an inch of progress is worth a yard of complaint. For the white race, the danger is that in its prosperity and power it may forget the claims of a weaker people; may forget that a strong race, like an individual, should put its hand upon its heart and ask, if it were placed in similar circumstances, how it would like the world to treat it; that the stronger race may forget that, in proportion as it lifts up the poorest and weakest, even by a hair's breadth, it strengthens and ennobles itself.


One of the most obvious, and common reactions arising out of group conflict is that of protest. Sometimes this protest is inarticulate and results in
pseudo-social behavior. Many Negroes have rebelled inwardly against white domination while they were in servitude, and yet they have pretended to acquiesce. Real behavior is subtly hidden and camouflage activity is expressed. In reality many Negroes become dual personalities. On the other hand protest as expressed in the narratives becomes articulate on many occasions. Pickens in The Heir of Slaves, Corrothers in his book In Spite of a Handicap, and Johnson in The Autobiography of an Ex-colored Man complain about white exploitation.

Nevertheless, I began to realise soon afterward that I had made a big mistake and lost a fine opportunity. Never before has such another opportunity come to me, anywhere. And never, in any Northern City, nor by any Northern person, was such a door opened to me, or such an offer made. No Northern newspaper has ever allowed me even to hope for such a place. Even now, after years of magazine writing and newspaper work, I may not aspire to even the smallest position on a daily newspaper. Personal habits; aptitude; experience; con-
geniality do not count. Not even the
needs of the paper count in the matter.

Nothing counts but colour.

---Do you know, I don't object to anyone
having prejudices so long as those pre-
judices don't interfere with my personal
liberty. Now, the man you are speaking
of had a perfect right to change his seat
if I in any way interfered with his ap-
petite or his digestion. I would have
no reason to complain if he removed to
the farthest corner of the saloon, or
even if he got off the ship; but when
his prejudice attempts to move me one
foot, one inch, out of the place where
I am comfortably located, then I object.

And so I have often lived through that hour, that
day, that week, in which was wrought the miracle of
my transition from one world into another; for I did
indeed pass into another world. From that time I looked out through other eyes, my thoughts were colored, my words dictated, my actions limited by one dominating, all-pervading idea which constantly increased in force and weight until I finally realised in it a great, tangible fact.

And this is the dwarfing, warping, distorting influence which operates upon each and every colored man in the United States. He is forced to take his outlook on all things, not from the viewpoint of a citizen, or a man, nor even a human being, but from the viewpoint of a colored man. It is wonderful to me that the race has progressed so broadly as it has, since most of its thoughts and all of its activity must run through the narrow neck on one funnel.

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In the biological world due to the struggle for existence animals have developed weapons of defense, such as horns, sharp talons and teeth, fleetness, cunningness, etc. Similarly in the social relations
devices of competition and accommodation arise in a struggle environment. Not the least of these is the psychological process called rationalization, which involves illogical reasoning to justify a status. George E. Vincent suggests that the Westerner prefers his free life to the conventionalities of the East, while the Easterner boasts of his civilization and greatly pities the social isolation of the Westerner. The elite group ridicule middle class behavior, while the middle class disdain the activities of the rich.


Often old people resort to this mechanism in such expressions as "I am 80 years old but I feel younger than I did twenty-five years ago." Recently an aged professor, who conceives his role as that of a teacher, was asked what books he had contributed to sociology. In an attempt to hide his embarrassment he answered, "I am glad that I haven't written anything." These reactions can be categorized as alibis made on the emotional level to satisfy the person. People may confront a tension situation by conjuring up some satisfying defensive explanation. In rationalization we
deceive ourselves by giving some excuse for our be-
havior, and then convince ourselves that this is true.
Rationalization becomes a type of philosophizing; a
type of self delusion which often functions to prevent
drastic mental conflicts. James Harvey Robinson de-
scribes the function of rationalization.

In our reveries we frequently en-
gaged in self-justification, for we can-
not bear to think ourselves wrong, and
yet have constant illustrations of our
weaknesses and mistakes. So we spend
much time finding fault with circum-
stances and the conduct of others, and
shifting on to them with great ingenuity
the onus of our failures and disappoint-
ments. Rationalization is the self-ex-
culpation which occurs when we feel our-
selves, or our group, accused of misan-
prehension or error.

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p. 44.

Negro writers utilize this technique cleverly
and successfully in order to lessen the strain upon
their personalities. In college competition if the
Negro fails to make the football team or if he fails
in an examination it is usually due to discrimina-
tion or to the unfair nature of the questions. This
rationalization helps him to locate satisfaction by
the projection of his failure, and through this tech-
nique he maintains his self-esteem.

In the narrative rationalization becomes apparent.
Status is rationalized; immoral behavior is justified;
and the dark complexion of the race is praised. The
intense rivalry of the two races in the American en-
vironment has caused the Negroes to elaborate a de-
fensive or protective philosophy which creates a men-
tal attitude on the part of the members that their con-
dition is to be desired above the conditions of all
other groups. Booker T. Washington proudly boasts
of his connection or relationship with the black
people. He emphatically asserts that if he were to
be born again he would consciously choose to be a
Negro, because the Negro group is fortunate enough
to have a problem to solve. Slavery granted him ex-
periences that would have been absent in freedom.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the
difficulties that the Negro has met since
emancipation have, in my opinion, not al-
ways, but on the whole, helped him more
than they have hindered him. For example,
I think the progress which the Negro has
made within less than half a century in the matter of learning to read and write the English language has been due in large part to the fact that, in slavery, this knowledge was forbidden him. My experience and observation have taught me that people who try to withhold the best things in civilization from any group of people, or race of people, not infrequently aid that people to the very things that they are trying to withhold from them.

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If I have not been born a slave, for example, I never could have had the opportunity, perhaps, of associating day by day with the most ignorant people, so far as books are concerned, and thus coming in contact with people of this class at first hand. The most fortunate part of my early experience was that which gave me the opportunity of getting into direct contact and of communing with and taking lessons from the old class of
coloured people who have been slaves. At the present time few experiences afford me more genuine pleasure than to get a day or a half a day off and go out into the country, miles from town and railroad, and spend the time in close contact with a coloured farmer and his family.

22
Booker T. Washington. My Larger Education.
p. 6.

As I have said before, I do not regret that I was born a slave. I am not sorry that I found myself part of a problem; on the contrary, that problem has given direction and meaning to my life and has brought me friendships and comforts that I could have gotten in no other way.

23
Booker T. Washington. My Larger Education.
p. 20.

In later years, I confess that I do not envy the white boy as I once did. I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has
reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed. Looked at from this standpoint, I almost reach the conclusion that often the Negro boy's birth and connection with an unpopular race is an advantage, so far as real life is concerned. With few exceptions, the Negro youth must work harder and must perform his task even better than a white youth in order to secure recognition. But out of the hard and unusual struggle through which he is compelled to pass, he gets a strength, a confidence, that one misses whose pathway is comparatively smooth by reason of birth and race.


From any point of view, I had rather be what I am, a member of the Negro race, than be able to claim membership with the most favoured of any other race. I have always been made sad when I have heard
members of any race claiming rights and privileges, or certain badges of distinction, on the ground simply that they were members of this or that race, regardless of their own individual worth or attainments. I have been made to feel sad for such persons because I am conscious of the fact that mere connection with what is known as a superior race will not permanently carry an individual forward unless he has individual worth, and mere connection with what is regarded as an inferior race will not finally hold an individual back if he possesses intrinsic, individual merit. Every persecuted individual and race should get much consolation out of the great human law, which is universal and eternal, that merit, no matter under what skin found, is in the long run, recognized and regarded. This I have said here, not to call attention to myself as an individual, but to the race to which I am proud to belong.

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Moton satisfies his internal struggle by comparing the status of the American Negro with that of the Southern European.

There is this difference, however, between these countries and our own, and that is that the peasant in Europe and Jamaica has no fear for his life; he need not fear the aggressions of the lawless element of his community. If a crime has been committed he knows that the guilty will be tried by the usual legal process and punished accordingly. He knows also that there is no probability of unoffending persons being oppressed and terrorized by any part of the community because of the alleged misconduct of some member of their social or racial group. However, at the end of this trip I landed on American shores with the feeling that whatever may be the disadvantages and inconveniences of my race in America I would rather be a Negro in the United States than anybody else in any other country in the world. My subsequent experiences abroad have confirmed me in this conviction.

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Before this I had been inclined to feel discouraged at times about my own race, and whatever people might say with reference to the advantages of the Negro in this country, I somehow felt that he was at the bottom of the scale of development, and of opportunities as well; but after seeing conditions in Southern Europe, especially among the peasant class, my ideas regarding my race changed entirely and I realized for the first time that the Negro in America, even the most backward Negro farmer, notwithstanding the unfairness and injustice which confront him, lives amidst surroundings much more encouraging and hopeful than is true of certain classes of the white race in Europe.


Suppressed personalities often permanently or temporarily evade conflict by withdrawing from the scene of struggle. Among the immigrants this technique is demonstrated through the activity of the second generation. These break with the traditions of their parents because of the odium and incon-
venience that these traditions cause. An attempt is made to forget the past by the repudiation of the old cultural heritage, especially the language and the religion.

In our early effort at Hull-House to hand on to our neighbors whatever of help we had found for ourselves, we made much of Lincoln. We were often distressed by the children of immigrant parents who were ashamed of the pit whence they were digged, who repudiated the language and customs of their elders, and counted themselves successful as they were able to ignore the past.

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This is a relatively easy task if tradition is all that must be cast off, but when the "badge of color" is added escape becomes difficult. However, among the Negro group there are many mulattoes who are light enough to avoid detection among the white group. These Negroes, regardless of their intellectual ability, must suffer abuse, contempt, and divers mistreatments. Rather than submit to this exploitation, and rather than stay and fight they simply resolve the conflict by de-
serting the down trodden group.

An Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man by J. W. Johnson perhaps furnishes us with the best account of this "passing" phenomenon. This book furnishes a searching revelation of Negro psychology. It points out Negro struggles and the extreme sensitiveness and jealousy arising out of the conflict. The following excerpt states vividly the reasons for withdrawal from the conflict.

All along the journey I was occupied in debating with myself the step which I had decided to take. I argued that to forsake one's race to better one's condition was no less worthy an action than to forsake one's country for the same purpose. I finally made up my mind that I would neither disclaim the black race, nor claim the white race; but that I would change my name, raise a mustache, and let the world take me for what it would; that it was not necessary for me to go about with a label of inferiority pasted across my forehead. All the while, I understood that it was not discouragement, or fear, or search for a larger field of action and opportunity, that was driving me out of the Negro race. I knew that it was shame, unbearable shame. Shame at being
identified with a people that could with impunity be treated worse than animals. For certainly the law would restrain and punish the malicious burning alive of animals.


However many of the Negroes "bear the mark of Cain" and cannot "pass"; so they react somewhat differently. In an effort to avoid discrimination many imitate the whites by creating physical resemblances. Negroes buy eagerly solutions for changing the skin color and hair shape.

Again this phenomenon to evade the conflict situation is not peculiar to Negroes, but is in vogue among the suppressed group. Differences in cultural and biological heritage incite prejudice and occasion mistreatment and conflict. The cultural patterns of any group carry with them emotional content so that divergent social rules stimulate an emotional reaction. People who act differently are afforded a lower status in the scale of evolution.

A great number of Poles are conspicuous because of name oddities, and therefore change their names to lessen the opprobrium. The writer is personally ac-
quainted with families whose original surname changed to meet American conditions. "Bagenski" became "Barnes;" "Loscowski" was abbreviated to "Lasco" in order to assure a more favorable response. This conscious imitation of the dominant group depicts inferiority with its attending discrimination, and represents another defensive technique to equalize social opportunity. The Negroes have learned that the whiteness of the skin and the straightness of the hair offer certain sacred privileges, so it isn't odd that in their struggles they bleach the skin and straighten the hair. Negro papers abound in advertisements of remedies for the elimination of these biological traits. The Poro establishment in St. Louis, Missouri, has accumulated vast wealth by capitalizing Negro ambitions. The Negroes feel that they increase their attractiveness and enhance their social status by approximating white norms or standards. This symbolizes their activities to escape social degradation.

That a premium has been placed upon whiteness is evidenced by the belief in the superiority of the Mulatto type. Closer research does not substantiate the idea that this superiority is due to the presence of white blood, but the lighter Negroes presumably are given greater cultural opportunities. Not only have the whites been discriminatory toward the mixed bloods, but even among the Negroes themselves the
mulatto is attributed a greater role. The selective process favors the hybrids. Herskovits states that the lighter men invariably are chosen for the fraternities and that the light Negro women are demanded by the darker Negro men.

A strong vindication of approximating the values which bring recognition may be found in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*.

---It's existence is rarely admitted and hardly ever mentioned; it may not be too strong a statement to say that the greater portion of the race is unconscious of its influence; yet this influence, though silent, is constant. It is evidenced most plainly in marriage selection; thus the black men generally marry women fairer than themselves; while, on the other hand, the darker women of stronger mental endowment are very often married to light-complexioned men; the effect is a tendency toward lighter complexions, especially among the more active elements in the race. Some might claim that this is a tacit admission of colored people among themselves of their own inferiority judged by the color line. I do not think so. What I
have termed an inconsistency is, after all, most natural; it is, in fact, a tendency in accordance with what might be called an economic necessity. So far as racial differences go, the United States puts a greater premium on color, or better, lack of color, than upon anything else in the world. To paraphrase, "Have a white skin, and all things else may be added unto you." I have seen advertisements in newspapers for waiters, bell boys, or elevator men, which read: "Light colored man wanted." It is this tremendous pressure which the sentiment of the country exerts that is operating on the race. There is involved not only the question of higher opportunity, but often the question of earning a livelihood; and so I say it is not strange, but a natural tendency. Nor is it any more a sacrifice of self respect that a black man should give to his children every advantage he can which complexion of the skin carries, than that the new or vulgar rich should purchase for their children the advantage which ancestry, aristocracy, and
social position carry. I once heard a colored man sum it up in these words: "It's no disgrace to be black, but it's often inconvenient."

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Very often those Negroes who believe themselves culturally superior essay to escape or withdraw from their race by railing against those Negroes assumed to be lower socially. Those who rail against their own kindred make others than themselves responsible for the present Negro status. This scapegoat philosophy acts as an emotional outlet and gives those guilty of criticizing their race an imaginary status. W. H. Thomas, a Negro lawyer, in The American Negro hurls the most virulent arraignment against his own race that may be found in literature. Imitative of Washington in some respects he discourages political activity and demands industrial development. But here he parts ways with Washington, and the remainder of his story scathes the Negroes from almost all possible approaches. He arraigns his race for being lazy, self-contented, ignorant, and superstitious. There have been some conjectures as to the reason for
Thomas' attitude. Perhaps his being born into freedom and his pleasant associations with the whites may have had some formative value. His railing against Negroes signifies his attempt to flee from Negro association. Quotations taken from The American Negro by Thomas and The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man by Johnson are illustrative of the railing attitude found in the narratives.

Washington shows the Negro not only at his best, but also at his worst. As I drove around with the doctor, he commented rather harshly on those of the latter class which we saw. He remarked, "You see those lazy, loafing, good-for-nothing darkies, they're not worth digging graves for; yet they are the ones who create impressions of the race for the casual observer. It's because they are always in evidence on the street corners, while the rest of us are hard at work, and you know a dozen loafing darkies make a bigger crowd and a worse impression in this country than fifty white men of the same class. But they ought not to represent the race. We are the race, and the race ought to be judged by us, not by them. Every race and every nation is
judged by the best it has been able to produce, not by the worst."


---The Negro not only lacks a fair degree of intuitive knowledge, but so dense is his understanding that he blindly follows weird fantasies and hideous phantoms. So great is his predilection in this direction, that he appears incapable of understanding the difference between evidence and assertion, proof and surmise. The facts warrant the conclusion that Negro intelligence is both superficial and delusive, because, though such people excel in recollections of a concrete object, their retentive memories do not enable them to make any valuable deductions, either from the object itself, or from their familiar experience with it. The explication of such intellectual states is to be found in the fact that the chief mental anxiety of the freedman is for the immediate gratification of his physical senses. He lives wholly in
his passions, and is never so happy as when enveloped in the glitter and gloss of shams.

---One might as well attempt to weave a rope of sand as to direct a people swayed by impulse, torn asunder by petty jealousies, and dominated by selfishness, people whose abnormal egotism is overlaid with dense ignorance of eternal verities, an ignorance, too, that, barren of satisfying resources within itself, is dependent upon external excitants for gratification, and in consequence is driven by restless and unappeasable desire to gross physical excesses. No people are to be regarded as morally sound who are willingly ignorant and vicious, and just so long as the greater number of them is averse to acquiring sound judgment and lofty ideals of truth and duty, their redemption will prove a chimerical conjecture.
So lacking in moral rectitude are the men of the negro race that we have known them to take strange women into their homes and cohabit with them with the knowledge, but without protest, from their wives and children. So great is their moral putridity that it is no uncommon thing for stepfathers to have children by their stepdaughters with the consent of the wife and mother of the girl. Nor do other ties of relationship interpose moral barriers, for fathers and daughters, brothers and sisters, oblivious of decent social restrictions, abandon themselves without attempt at self restraint to sexual gratification whenever desire and opportunity arises.

---It is therefore almost impossible to find a person of either sex, over fifteen years of age, who has not had actual carnal knowledge. But not only do the young negro girls who grow up in idleness become prematurely old in viciousness, but even those better reared are amazingly yielding

to licentious overtures, especially if a proposed meeting-place is sufficiently secluded to render detection improbable. For although abashed by discovery and chagrined by publicity, such girls are not easily deterred from following their inclinations, inasmuch as the greatest immoralities rarely disturb their social status or exclude them from church associations. Innate modesty is not a characteristic of the American negro women. On the contrary, there is observable among them a willing susceptibility to the blandishments of licentious men, together with a widespread distribution of physical favors among their male friends.

---In negro homes, on the contrary, their inmates, devoid of either modesty or discretion, indulge in the utmost freedom of speech and action, and the female members, regardless of the presence of their male relatives and friends, go about in scanty clothing which invites a familiar caress.
that is rarely forbidden or resented as an insult. Not only does the semi-nude attire of the adult negroes invite lascivious carousal at home, but their young daughters are permitted to parade the streets and visit their associates clad in a scantiness of attire that ought never to be seen outside a bedroom.

---For instance, the negro's ethical code sternly reprobates dancing, theatre attendance, and all social games of chance. It does not, however, forbid lying, rum-drinking, or stealing. Furthermore, a man may trail his loathsome form into the sanctity of private homes, seduce a wife, sister or daughter with impunity, and be the father of a score of illegitimate children by as many mothers, and yet be a disciple of holiness and honored by public confidence. So bestial are negro men that we have known them to lead wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters to the sensuous embraces of white men as readily
as it is said the Irish peasants led their virgin daughters to the arms of their English conquerors during the early conquest of that country.


While this struggle or tension situation results in some fleeing from the real environment and denouncing of kindred, it has also acted as a solidifying influence. Booker T. Washington has literally identified himself with the race and its activities. He feels with them, participates in their activities and finds the same meetings in their collective representations, in other words he shares completely in the consensus of his race. Like most psychological phenomena, identification functions as a survival technique. It is a device that will allow persons and groups to substitute for genuine actions imaginary achievements. Practically all the world's leaders have employed this mechanism. Mohammed, Jesus, Buddha, are classical examples of leaders who have expanded their personalities to include either all or a large portion of the inhabitants of the earth. Such an injunction as "love your neighbors as yourself" anticipates identification and expansion of personality. Eugene V. Debs furnishes us with an unsurpassable illustration of identification:
"Your Honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest of the earth. I said then, I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.

Survey, 57 (Nov. 15, 1926), 203.

Rather than rail against the race Washington and Moton identify themselves with the black group.

The most difficult and trying of the classes of persons with which I am brought in contact is the coloured man or woman who is ashamed of his or her colour, ashamed of his or her race, and, because of this fact, is always in a bad temper. I have had opportunities, such as few coloured men have had, of meeting and getting acquainted with many of the best white people, North and South. This has never led me to desire to get away from my own people. On the contrary, I have always returned to my own people and my own work with renewed interest.

p. 49.
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Chapter V

Negro Novels

Fiction may be considered as pure literature. As such it may relate a tale and portray a character, but it does reflect life situations. It incidentally reveals an attitude toward life, a social philosophy. As pure literature it carries no thesis, it simply pictures human life and human character. It may imply a thesis, but if this becomes polemic the nature of the fiction is changed from pure to controversial literature.

In addition to reflecting life or an attitude toward life the novel may perform other functions. It is a favorite medium of social criticism. In this role it has presented a message and advocated a cause. Dickens, Galsworthy, Shaw and Wells, are among those who have used literature as a vehicle of social criticism. Their condemnation expresses the attitude of their many followers. Dickens arraigns practically all of the cultural institutions of his time, pointing out their defects and implying reforms. Galsworthy fights incessantly against social stratifications and lack of social mobility. Shaw rails against conventionalities that prevent the development of personalities. Wells does not rest content with criticism of the social order; he builds a Utopia in which social relations reduce friction to the minimum.
A casual reading of the current novels shows them to be shot through with expressed or implied criticism of the existing social order.

Novels have been important, also, in moulding public opinion. Certain critics maintain that they are effective factors in the manufacturing of public opinion; others hold the position that they simply express the opinions current in the author's social world. Some persons, for example, have maintained that the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin created the anti-slavery opinion. The opposition to this point of view holds that it simply expressed more or less adequately a body of opinion that existed previous to the appearance of the novel.

In the present discussion the assumption is made that fiction expresses the opinion of the day: the novelist gives literary form to the existing ideas, belief, and prejudices. This formulation, however, is an important factor in subsequent opinion and practice. The novel thus becomes a vehicle of communication for the current opinion. It focalizes opinion upon an issue and thus becomes a casual factor in group behavior. Fiction may therefore be both a cause and an effect of opinion.

The effectiveness of the novel as a moulder of public opinion has not been measured; it is perhaps, not susceptible to measurement. It is possible, how-
ever, to give numerous examples of novels that appear to have had definite influence on the course of social events. Dickens's novels called attention to abuses in prisons and schools and were influential forces in initiating or promoting penal and educational reform. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin was a powerful weapon in the anti-slavery agitation. Ibsen's Doll's House gave an added impetus to the movement for the freedom of women. Bellamy's Looking Backward was reflected in municipal and governmental reform. Dixon's Leopard Spots and The Clansman articulated and perhaps formed and intensified prejudice toward the Negro. Sinclair's The Jungle is in part responsible for certain types of social legislation; his The Brass Check and The Goosestep focused attention upon certain social evils and modified public opinion toward them. Adam's Revelry exposed scandals and corruption in the national government, thereby arousing a public opinion that may ultimately function to reduce certain types of grafts.

Regardless of whether fiction creates the opinion or merely crystallizes and expresses the current opinion of the period, it does express social attitudes. Because it reflects and communicates social attitudes, fiction is important or significant for social analysis. This is true whether the literature is purely objective or whether it is onesided in the treatment of some prob-
As literature, the novels produced by the Negroes do not rank high. Using the best of European literature as the criterion, the Negroes have not produced much that would rank better than fourth rate. With the white American fiction as the standard of comparison the Negro has not produced anything above second rate material.

The present discussion, however, is not interested in fiction as such. Whether this Negro fiction is of high or low rank will not prohibit its use for sociological analysis. As suggested before it reflects social attitudes. The discovery of these is the concern of this discussion.

A similar classification is used in dealing with Negro fiction as was used in Negro poetry. This classification is built upon a temporal basis: it includes the period before the Civil War, the period between the Civil War and the World War, and the period since the World War. In each period the fiction is discussed in terms of the attitudes expressed. Emphasis is placed upon these attitudes.

In dealing with the attitudes expressed in the Negro fiction it will be discovered that these developed historically. The Negroes have been placed in a definite struggle environment and they have reacted differently at different times to their situation. In the early Negro novels the general attitude is
one of accommodation. Later the note of the fiction changed to whines and pleas for white sympathy. Still later is developed an attitude of belligerency. This attitude is expressed in terms of abuse and insult toward the superordinated group. It is also expressed in the efforts that the Negro makes to attain a higher status by exaggerating his own worth, by depreciating the superior group, and by hurling abuse against the inferior members of his own group. All these attitudes cited above are contemporary in Negro fiction but some started at an earlier period than others.

The period before the Civil War was characterized by poetry and personal narratives. A few novels were the products of this earlier period. Wm. Wells Brown wrote Glotel, Clotella, and Micalde or The Beautiful Quadroon. Other books appeared in semi-fictional form. The Memoirs of Archy Moore; Narratives of the Adventure and Escapes of Moses Roper; The Kidnapped and The Ransomed; The Narrative of Sojourner Truth; The Autobiography of a Fugitive Slave; and other stories were mixtures of fiction and personal narrative. Like other early writings they are filled with whines and pathetic pleadings.

The attitudes most frequently expressed in early Negro literature is that of resignation. In general, the black people acquiesced or submitted to an inferior role and developed a defensive philosophy for their
status. Habit mechanisms conducive to slave life had been formed and corresponding mental attitudes followed. This submissive attitude dominates the spirituals and the other poetry of this early period. The same attitude is a prevailing tone in the fiction of the time.

In early fiction, however, complete resignation is not the only note expressed. Resignation abounds, but complaints are made against the subservient role. The Negro accepts the situation in which he is placed but he offers many complaints. In the spirituals the attitude of resignation is prevalent but in the early fiction and the personal narratives this attitude of patience is supplanted by unrest and dissatisfaction. The abuses of the slavery regime are stressed and demands are made for freedom. A few excerpts from the semi-fiction of this period are characteristic of this whole body of writing.

The news of his death reached the ears of John Ardinburgh, a grandson, of the old Colonel; and he declared that 'Bomefree, who had ever been a kind and faithful slave, should now have a good funeral'. And now, gentle reader, what think you constituted a good funeral? Answer—some black paint for the coffin, and — a jug of ardent spirits! What a compensation for a life of toil, of patient submission to repeated robberies
of the most aggravated kind, and, also, far more than murderous neglect! Mankind often vainly attempt to atone for unkindness or cruelty to the living, by honoring the same after death; but John Ardinburgh undoubtedly meant his point of paint and jug of whisky should act as an opiate on his slaves, rather than on his own seared conscience.

---In the beginning, he was only able — as he said — "to buy one slave;" and, scandalous and shocking as is the fact, he boasted that he bought her simply "as a breeder." But the worst is not told in this naked statement. This young woman (Caroline was her name) was virtually compelled by Mr. Covey to abandon herself to the object for which he had purchased her; and the result was, the birth of twins at the end of the year. At this addition to his human stock, both Edward Covey and his wife, Susan, were extatic with joy. No one dreamed of reproaching the woman, or of

1 Mrs. Francis Titus. Narrative of Sojourner Truth, p. 25.
finding fault with the hired man — Bill
Smith — the father of the children, for Mr.
Govey himself had locked the two up togeth-
er every night, thus inviting the result.

2
Frederick Douglass. My Bondage and My Freedom,
p. 218.

In the decades from the Civil War up to 1914 the
Negroes have made more use of fiction. It has been used
as a vehicle for the spreading of propaganda. Also some
attempts were made to produce literature which would
transcend racial boundaries. From 1898 to 1904 Paul
Lawrence Dunbar contributed four novels, namely, The
Uncalled, The Fanatics, The Love of Landry, and The
Sport of the Gods, and four volumes of short story,
namely, The Strength of Gideon, Folks from Dixie, In
Old Plantation Days, and The Heart of Haunty Hollow.
He utilized his energies in writing poetry and his
few volumes of fiction are not comparable in literary
merit to his poetical works, Dunbar expresses an at-
titude of resignation.

Negro fiction really makes its debut with Charles
W. Chesnutt. During the years 1899 — 1905, he pub-
lished In the House Behind the Cedars, The Marrow of
Tradition, The Colonel's Dream and the Wife of His
Youth. This novelist concerned himself with important
racial problems and suffered no timidity in voicing
his opinions. Chesnutt boldly assumes the superiority of the mulatto group and the inferiority of the full-blooded blacks. He emphasizes the tragedies of miscegenation, and other problems that arise out of the American situation. The Quest of the Silver Fleece published by Du Bois in 1911 perpetuates the sentiment of Chesnutt.

While Dunbar and Chesnutt were the important writers of the period between the Civil War and the World War other minor novelists appeared. Mrs. Francis E. Watkins Harper published Tola Leroy or Shadows Uplifted (1893); Albert A. Whitman Twasinta's Seminoles (1890); Pauline Hopkins Contending Forces (1900); Sutton Elbert Griggs Unfettered (1908), Wisdom's Call (1911) The Hindered Hand (1905), Pointing the Way (1908); James McCirt The Triumph of Ephrium (1907); and Robert Waring As We See It (1910).

One of the chief attitudes expressed in the fiction written between the Civil War and the World War is still that of accommodation. Paul Lawrence Dunbar's Novels, like his poetry, depict resignation. Bitterness is reduced to a minimum. He has no problem to solve or nothing about which to whine. In his stories the relationships between the whites and blacks are usually wholesome. In Old Plantation Days the powerful influence of an old Negress slave over her master and his family is evident. Masters invariably respected
their slaves. Often Dunbar hurls criticism at the ingratitude of the Negro slave. The following extract exemplifies Dunbar's fiction.

"Gome, Gidjun," she plead, "fu' my sake. Oh, my God, won't you come with us—it's freedom." He kissed her, but shook his head.

"Hunt me up when you do come," she said, crying bitterly, "fu' I do love you, Gidjun, but I must go. Out yonder is freedom," and she was gone with them.

He drew out a pace after the troops, and then, turning, looked back at the house. He went a step farther, and then a woman's gentle voice called him "Gideon!" He stopped. He crushed his cap in his hands, and the tears came into his eyes. Then he answered, "Yes, Mist' Ellen, I's a-comin'."

He stood and watched the dusty column until the last blue leg swung out of sight and over the grey hills the last drum-tap died away, and then turned and retraced his steps toward the house.

Gideon had triumphed mightily.

Paul Lawrence Dunbar, The Strength of Gideon.
"That's right, Ike! I can depend upon you. You're always faithful. Just you get things done up right for me, and I'll give you that broadcloth suit of mine. It's most good as new."

"Thanky, Mas' Bob, thanky." The old Negro said it as fervently as if he had not worn out that old broadcloth a dozen years ago.

Paul Lawrence Dunbar. *Folks From Dixie*, p. 73

Not only does this period evidence accommodation but complaints about status are often expressed. Here the blacks accept the situation but feel sorry for themselves. There are pathetic pleas for recognition, cringing and hysterical whines at white restrictive policies, and fantastical projection of wishes in terms of hope for the future. So fanatical have some of these Negroes become that they verge upon disorganization. With these writers the mechanism of self-pity assumes an important role. They demand special or preferential treatment which leads to isolation of pathos. The unfortunate experiences of the race are brought to the front presumably with the intention of
capitalizing current sentiment. No Negro novel is exempt from the above types of behavior patterns.

L'ENVOI

Lend me thine ears, O God the Reader, whose Fathers aforetime sent mine down into the land of Egypt, into this House of Bondage. Lay not these words aside for a moment's phantasy, but lift up thine eyes upon the Horror in this land;— the maiming and mocking and murdering of my people, and the imprisonment of their souls. Let my people go, O Infinite One, lest the world shudder at

The End.

5


"White people," said Miller to himself, who had seen these passengers from the window, "Do not object to the Negro as a servant. As the traditional Negro,—the servant,—he is welcome; as an equal, he is repudiated."

6

Charles W. Chesnutt. The Marrow of Tradition, p. 59.
"I want you to count, and I want to count, too; but I don't want us to be the only ones that count. I want to live in a world where every soul counts—white, black, and yellow—all. That's what I'm teaching these children here—to count, and not to be like dumb, driven cattle. If you don't believe in this, of course you cannot help us."

W. E. B. DuBois. The Quest of the Silver Fleece, p. 84.

"My dear Miss Smith," she said softly, with a tone that just escaped a drawl—"My dear Miss Smith, your work is interesting and your faith—marvelous; but, frankly, I cannot make myself believe in it. You are trying to treat these funny little monkeys just as you would your own children—or even mine. It's quite heroic, of course, but it's sheer madness, and I do not feel that I ought to encourage it. I would not mind a thousand or so to train a good cook for the Cresswells, or a clean faithful maid for myself—for Helene has faults—or indeed deft and tractable lab-
oring-folk for any one; but I'm quite through trying to turn natural servants into masters of me and mine. I—hope I'm not too blunt; I hope I make myself clear. You know, statistics show—"

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Much of the fiction of this period reflects a contentious attitude; an attitude of protest and hatred toward the white race. Intimations are made that direct action is the feasible reaction to the infringements of the whites. This invective and belligerent attitude reached its climax in the works of Chesnutt and Du Bois. In *The Mantle of Tradition* Chesnutt bitterly abuses and attacks the Southern whites demonstrating that this group revels and enjoys Negro lynchings as an appeaser for their thirst for blood. The *House Behind the Cedars* is also a belligerent arraignment against the impeding of Negro opportunities. Du Bois in *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* caustically criticises the attempts of the whites to maintain the present social arrangements.

"Yes, suh, I've l'arnt all dat in Sunday-School, an' I've heared de preach-ers say it time an' time ag'in. But it
'pears ter me dat dis fergiftness an' 
fergivniss is mighty one-sided. De W'ite 
folks don' fergive nothin' de niggers does. 
Dey got up de Ku-Klux, dey said, on 'count 
er de kyarpit-baggers. Dey be'n talkin' 
'bout de kyappit-baggers ever sence, an' 
de 'pears ter forgot all 'bout de Ku-Klux. 
But I ain' forgot! De niggers is be'n train' 
ter fergiveniss; an' fer fear dey might fer-
git how ter fergive, de w'ite folks gives 
'em somethin' new ev'y now an' den, ter 
practice on. A w'ite man kin do w'at he 
wants ter a nigger, but de minute de nig­
ger gits back at 'im, up goes de nigger, 
and don' come down tell somebody cuts 'im 
down. If a nigger gits a' office, or de 
race 'pears ter be prosperin' too much, de 
w'ite folks up an' kills a few, so dat de 
rest kin keep on fergivin' an' bein' thank­
ful dat dey're lef' alive. Don' talk ter 
me 'bout dese w'ite folks,—I knows 'em, 
I does! Ef a nigger wants ter git down on 
his marrow-bones, an' eat dirt, an' call 
'em 'marster', he's a good nigger, dere's 
room for him. But I ain' no w'ite folks' 
nigger, I ain'. I don' call no man 'marster'. 
I don' wan' nothin' but w'at I wo'k fer, but
I wants all er dat. I never moles's no w'ite man, 'less he moles's me fus'. But w'en de ole 'oman dies, doctuh, an' I gits a good chance at dat w'ite man,—dere ain' no use talkin', suh!—dere's gwine ter be a mix-up, an' a fune'ral, er two fune'als—er may be mo', if anybody is keerless enough to git in de way."


"All right, suht! Ef I don' live ter do it, I'll know it'll be 'tended ter right. Now we're gwine out ter de cotton compress, an' git a lot er colored men tergether, an' ef de w'ite folks' 'sturb me, I shouldn't be s'prise' ef dere'd be a mix-up,—an' ef dere is, me an' one w'ite man'll stan' befo' de jedgment th'one er God dis day; an' it won't be me w'at 'll be 'feared er de jedgment. Come along, boys! Dese gentlemen may have somethin' ter live fer; but ex fer my pa't, I'd rather be a dead nigger any day dan a live dog."

He could not approve of Josh's application of the Mosaic law of revenge, and yet the incident was not without significance. Here was a Negro who could remember an injury, who could shape his life to a definite purpose, if not a high or holy one. When his race reached the point where they would resent a wrong, there was hope that they might soon attain the stage where they would try, and, if need be, die, to defend a right.


The black boy, too, went his way in silent, burning rage. Why should he be elbowed into the roadside dust by an insolent bully? Why had he not stood his ground? Pshaw! All this fine frenzy was useless, and he knew it. The sweat oozed on his forehead. It wasn't man against man, or he would have dragged the pale puppy from his horse and rubbed his face in the earth. It wasn't even one against many, else how willingly, swinging his axe, he would have stood his ground before a mob.
Another attitude expressed in this period is that of superiority. This expresses itself in hatred of the Negro. This is shown by Chesnutt in his use of the mulatto as his chief character. Black Negroes are represented as being snobbish, pretentious, and superstitious. The mulattoes have a light color, superior education, and better cultural opportunities, and are therefore superior to the blacker personalities. Objections are made that for the mulatto to identify himself with the black group would be a backward step. Chesnutt consciously advocates the separation of the hybrid personalities from the pure-blooded Negroes. This evidences a tendency to escape blackness with its attending infringements; it is a conscious attempt to approximate white norms.

"I know," he would say, "that the white people lump us all together as negroes, and condemn us all to the same social ostracism. But I don't accept this classification, for my part, and I imagine that, as the chief party in interest, I have a right to my opinion. People who belong by half or more of their blood to the most virile and progressive race of
modern times have as much right to call themselves white as others have to call them negroes."

13
C. W. Chesnutt, The Wife of his Youth, pp. 94-95.

"Of course we can't enforce our claims, or protect ourselves from being robbed of our birthright; but we can at least have principles, and try to live up to them the best we can. If we are not accepted as white, we can at any rate make it clear that we object to being called black. Our protest cannot fail in time to impress itself upon the better class of white people; for the Anglo-Saxon race loves justice, and will eventually do it, where it does not conflict with their own interests."

14
C. W. Chesnutt. The Wife of his Youth, p. 95

"I have no race prejudice," he would say, "but we people of mixed blood are ground between the upper and the nether millstone. Our fate lies between absorption by the white race and extinction in the black."
The one doesn't want us yet, but may take us in time. The other would welcome us, but it would be for us a backward step. 'With malice toward none, with charity for all,' we must do the best we can for ourselves and those who are to follow us. Self-preservation is the first law of nature.'

15

Some of the literature of Dunbar approaches pure fiction. His works have no thesis or no message to convey. Tales are simply told and characters are cleverly portrayed. Most of the short stories of Dunbar are centered around the old plantation experiences. Direct and realistic pictures of certain groups of Negroes are given. The naive humor, the tragic pathos, the religious and superstitious life, and the real life are the important themes. This fiction is not sectional or racial, but it represents a universal expression of life situations. In short, much of the fiction of Dunbar reflects life as it is, which makes this fiction rise above controversial literature.

In the contemporary period or the period since the World War the Negroes have used the novel more extensively. Walter F. White in *The Fire in the Flint* and *Flight*
carries on the Chesnutt tradition of protest. W.E.B. Du Bois published *The Dark Princess*; Rudolph Fisher contributed *The Walls of Jericho*; Jessie Fauset *There is Confusion* and *Plum Bun*; Nella Larsen *Passing* and *Quicksand*; and Claude McKay *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*.

In this contemporary fiction the attitude of accommodation plays a minor role. A few instances show that the Negroes acquiesce and accept the situation with the hope of something better in the future. Others find the struggle futile and resolve the conflict by seeking peace.

Learn this, Joanna, and tell the rest of our folks. Our battle is a hard one and for a long time it will seem to be a losing one, but it will never really be that as long as we keep the power of being happy. And happiness has to be deliberately sought for, gained; even that doesn't solve the problem, but it does make it easier for us to fight. Happiness, love, contentment in our own midst, make it possible for us to face those foes without. 'Happy Warriors,' that's the ideal for us, 16

Only I realized it too late.

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16

"All people, all countries, have their ups and downs Joanna," he would tell her gravely, "and just now it's our turn to be down, but it will soon roll round for our time to be up, or rather we must see that we do get up. So every one of us has something to do for the race. Never forget that, little girl."

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To her sitting there in the semi-darkness came a vision of her own people which made her blood run fast. Whatever other faults they might possess, her own people had not been deadened and dehumanized by bitter hatred of their fellow men. The venom born of oppression practiced upon others weaker than themselves had not entered their souls. These songs were of peace and hope and faith, and in them she felt and knew the peace which so long she had been seeking and which so long had eluded her grasp.

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Many of the Negroes find themselves in a certain situation. Unable to escape from subordination they submit but they whine and complain about their status. Pleas for mercy and cries for justice abound in all these novels. Complaints are registered against the use of the lower strata as a criterion in terms of which to judge the entire race. Many of the pleas are petitions to the whites to treat them as individuals and judge them on the basis of their contributions.

"White people - and colored people - you didn't used to separate people into such definite classes before you left New Orleans, papa Jean!" she declared, somewhat confused. "After all, what real difference does it make? A difference in colour, different hair, different features, but what do those matter in the long run? Why can't people be just people and stop all this meanness?"

19


"Dey put me in an automobile an' carried me way out yonder in de woods by de fact'ry. Dey pull all my clothes off me and den dey whip me till I couldn' stan' up no mo'. Den dey tell me I been talkin' too much. Doc, I ain't said a word t' nobody 'cept
dat dey oughter do somethin' t' that man George Parker for killin' my man Bud....
Den dey po'ed tar all over me and kick me and spit on me som'mo'...... Said I oughter had mo' sense dan t' talk 'bout no white gemmen. Oh-oh-oh- ain't dey nothin' to he'p us po' cullud fo'ks- ain't dey nobody- ain't dey nobody"?

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And then he thought of Roy Ewing and the operation of the night before. Must have been a mighty terrible ordeal for them to have to call a Negro in to operate on their daughter. Race prejudice is a funny thing! A white man will eat food prepared by black hands, have it served by black hands, have his children nursed by a black nurse who most of the time was more a mother to them than their own mother, let his clothes be taken into a black home to be washed, allow all the most intimate details of his life to be handled by black folks.... Even lots of them would consort with black women at night to whom they wouldn't raise their
hats in the daytime.... But when it came to recognizing a Negro outside of menial service, then there came the rub.... Yet in a matter of life and death like Ewing's case, they forgot prejudice..... Maybe in time the race problem would be solved just like that..... when some great event would wipe away the artificial lines..... as in France..... He thought of the terrible days and nights in the Argonne..... He remembered the night he had seen a wounded black soldier and a wounded white Southern one, drink from the same canteen..... They didn't think about colour in those times..... Wouldn't the South be a happy place if this vile prejudice didn't exist?..... He wondered why folks didn't see it as clearly as he did....


"I'm glad you're telling me about this Joanna," he said seriously. "Now you'll understand my case better. You know how I feel about the white people and their everlasting unfairness. As though the
world and all that is in it belonged to them! I tell you, Jan, I'm sick of the whole business,—college, my everlasting grind, my poverty, this confounded prejudice. If I want to get a chance to study a certain case and it's in a white hospital you'd think I'd committed a crime. As though disease picked out different races! I'm a good surgeon, I'll swear I am, but I've got so I don't care whether I get my degree or not. You can't imagine all the petty fairness about me. Only the other day the barber refused to shave me in the college barber shop. Your own cousin, John Talbert, is a Zeta Gamma man if ever there was one—that's equivalent to Phi Beta Kappa in his school, you know. Do you think he got it? No, they black-balled him out."

22

Jessie Redmon Fauset. There is Confusion, pp. 155–156.

"Some day, perhaps, I don't know.

Marriage—that means children, to me.

And why add more suffering to the world?
Why add any more unwanted, tortured Negroes to America? Why do Negroes have children? Surely it must be sinful. Think of the awfulness of being responsible for the giving of life to creatures doomed to endure such wounds to the flesh, such wounds to the spirit, as Negroes have to endure."

Nella Larsen. *Quicksand*, p. 231.

This demand to be treated sympathetically rather than categorically is frustrated by the uncouth members of the race. So much criticism is heaped upon the traits and activities of the inferior Negroes. This typifies an effort to escape relationship with black society. This behavior pattern is the result of a mental state produced by constant frustration of struggles to maintain a status in a tabooed environment. Criticism is hurled against the race because they possess marks which are conducive to discrimination. Railing against the black race by its own members furnished an outlet for emotional tendencies. It reveals that the Negro realizes that the struggle is futile, and the only way to mitigate the internal struggle is by denouncing racial weaknesses. Nella Larsen in *Quicksand* depicts how this struggle
interaction creates bitter, pessimistic, and sarcastic personalities.

But she aped their clothes, their manners, and their gracious ways of living. While proclaiming loudly the undiluted good of all things Negro, she yet disliked the songs, the dances, and the softly blurred speech of the race. Toward these things she showed only a disdainful contempt, tinged sometimes with a faint amusement. Like the despised people of the white race, she preferred Pavlova to Florence Mills, John McCormack to Taylor Gordon, Walter Hampden to Paul Robeson. Theoretically, however, she stood for the immediate advancement of all things Negroid, and was in the revolt against social inequality.


With the waning summer the acute sensitiveness of Helga Crane's frayed nerves grew keener. There were days when the mere sight of the serene tan and brown faces about her stung like a personal insult. The care-free quality
of their laughter roused in her the desire to scream at them: "Fools, fools! Stupid fools!" This passionate and unreasoning protest gained in intensity, swallowing up all else like some dense fog. Life became for her only a hateful place where one lived in intimacy with people one would not have chosen had one been given choice."

Mella Larsen. *Quicksand*, p. 117.

Racial consciousness saturates the fiction of this contemporary period. The dominating tone is unrest and dissatisfaction. This unrest results from the frustration of the efforts of the Negro to satisfy his wishes. Negroes attempt to expand their personalities to include denied privileges. They attempt to participate and function in tabooed field with the hope of raising their status. The refusal of their demands results in increased unrest.

Undoubtedly unrest in fiction is emphasized by the use of characters from the mulatto or hybrid group. These mulattoes are marginal men who occupy a status between the whites and the blacks. These strangers are unwilling to identify themselves with the blacks, and they are refused conscious admittance to the
white group. Consequently the unrest among these mulatto personalities is intense.

Many attempts have been made to satisfy this form of collective behavior. Unrest led the Negro into war and higher education, but these experiences have resulted in disillusionment and increased the dissatisfaction of the group. McKay in *Banjo* suggests that the Negroes could find but few satisfactory relationships in American society so they shifted their attention and hopes to Europe. Paris was once a Paradise for the blacks. Mistreatment here, whether real or imaginary, is forcing the projection of wishes elsewhere. McKay contends that the Negro will receive no rest until he gets to heaven.

This unrest and dissatisfaction often expresses itself in passing white. After a futile struggle for recognition many Negroes escape the conflict by deserting the race. This type of reaction is the central theme in Jessie Fauset's *Plum Bun*, Nella Larsen's *Passing*, and Walter White's *Flight*.

"And it wasn't, as Irene knew, that Clare cared at all about the race or what was to become of it. She didn't. Or that she had for any of its members great, or even real, affection, though she professed undying gratitude for the small kindnesses which the Westover family had shown her when
she was a child. Irene doubted the genuineness of it, seeing herself only as a means to an end where Clare was concerned. Nor could it be said that she had even the slightest artistic or sociological interest in the race that some members of other races displayed. She hadn't. No, Clare Kendry cared nothing for the race. She only belonged to it."


On the whole the novelists are unfavorable to this attempt to desert the race. Negro fiction depicts this type of behavior as being temporary. The beauty and the idiosyncrasies of Negro life and personality invariably act as an irresistible urge for return to the race. Nella Larsen expresses this sentiment through one of her characters in *Passing*.

Brian interrupted: "It's always that way. Never known it to fail. Remember Albert Hammond, how he used to be forever hunting Seventh Avenue, and Lenox Avenue, and the dancing-places, until some 'shine' took a shot at him for casting an eye towards his 'sheba'. They always came back. 'I've seen it happen time and time again.'"
The attitude most frequently expressed in the fiction of contemporary period is that of belligerence. Negroes become contentious and bitter toward white domination and utter violent protests. Walter White's The Fire in the Flint openly assaults the white race. This book is a piece of romantic propaganda picturing all white people as malicious. Attention is focused upon the suffering resulting to the Negro because of this maliciousness. In this novel White criticized the Caucasian race as Dixon railed against the Negro in Leopard Spots. Du Bois in The Dark Princess hurls invective at the white race because it impedes Negro activities.

A quotation or two from the different novels will suffice to exemplify this belligerent attitude.

"Yes, Kautilya, I believe that with fire and sword, blood and whips, we must fight this thing out physically, and literally beat the world into submission and a real civilization. The center of this fight must be America, because in America is the center of the world's sin. There must be developed here that world-tyranny..."
which will impose by brute force a new
eaven on this old and rotten earth."


"But, Mr. Ewing, Bob tells me that
hey say some pretty raw things. Sup­
se one of them said the same things to
Mrs. Ewing, how could you feel then?"

Ewing flushed.

"That's different. Mrs. Ewing is a
white woman."

"But can't you see that we feel towards
our women just as you do towards yours? If
one of those fellows ever spoke to my sister,
there'd be trouble, and the Lord knows I
want to get along with all the people here,
if I can. If this thing called democracy
that I helped fight for is worth anything
at all, it ought to mean that we coloured
people should be protected like anybody
else."


"No," yelled Perigua. "We're tame
tabbies; we're fawning dogs; we lick and
growl and wag our tails; we're so glad to
have a white man fling us swill that we wriggle on our bellies and crawl. We slave that they may loll; we hand over our daughters to be their prostitutes; we wallow in dirt and disease that they may be clean and pure and good. We bend and dig and starve and sweat that they may sit in sweet quiet and reflect and contrive and build a world beautiful for themselves to enjoy.

"And we're not ready even to protest, let alone fight. We want to be free, but we don't dare strike for it. We think that the blows of white men—of white laborers, of white women—are blows for us and our freedom! Hell! you damned fool, they have always been fighting for themselves. Now, they're half free, with us niggers to wait on them; we give white carpenters and shop girls their coffee, sugar, tea, spices, cotton, silk, rubber, gold, and diamonds; we give them our knees for scrubbing and our hands for service,—we do it and we always shall until we stand and strike."

Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, America, those were the two united terrors confronting the colored man. He was the butt of the white man's indecent public prejudices. Prejudices insensate and petty, bloody, vicious, vile, brutal, raffine, hypocritical, Christian. Prejudices. Prejudices like the stock market—curtailed, diminishing, increasing, changing chameleon-like, according to the place and time, like the color of the white man's soul, controlled by the exigencies of the white man's business.


Often this abuse assumes the form of white deprecation. Walter White in *The Fire in the Flint* denounces the white race severely, showing that only the exceptional white personality is respectable. The whites are primitive and must practice atrocious behavior to appease a primitive tendency. Caucasian cowardice and immorality come in for much emphasis. Notice how the whites have sloughed off the inhibiting factors of civilization and have retrograded to savages.

...Into the dying flames darted a boy of twelve. Out he came, laughing hoarsely, triumphantly exhibiting a charred bone
he had secured, blackened and crisp.....
Another rushed in.....Another.....Here a rib
.....There an arm*bone.....A louder cry.....
The skull.....Good boy! Johnny!.....We'll
put that on the mantelpiece at home.....Five
dollars for it, Johnny!.....Nothin' doin'!
.....Goin' to keep it myself!.....

The skull. Good boy! Johnny! We’ll put that on the mantelpiece at home. Five dollars for it, Johnny! Nothin' doin'! Goin' to keep it myself!

The show ended. The crowd dispersed.

Home to breakfast.

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32

The following quotation delineates the bravery and courageousness of the Negro and the cowardice of the so-called "crackers."

Bang! Listen at 'im howl? That's music for you! Listen to the damn "Peck" squalling! What's th' matter? Looks like they've gone! Wonder if I can make a run for it? Th' damn cowards! Fifty-one hundred — a thousand — five thousand — to one! That's the way "Crackers" always fight coloured folks! Never heard yet of one "Cracker" fighting one Negro! Have to have thousan' to kill one little fellow like Bob Harper!

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33
Negroes when compared to whites are moral. The blacks become immoral only by coming in contact with white behavior and imitating it.

"Lord, Mis' Plummer, I don't know what's gettin' into these coloured folks--they gettin' Mo' like white folks ev'ry day. Comes from workin' in white folks' houses and in these here hotels--seein' all their dirt and thinkin' they got to do the same things white folks does."


"Yes, but white people don't make jokes like that about themselves," maintained Goosey.

"Especially the one-hundred-per-cent Yankees. You fellows don't know anything about the race movement. Ray knows better, yet he holds in with you. You don't know why the white man put all his dirty jokes on to the race. It's because the white man is dirty in his heart and got to have dirt. But he covers it up in his race to show himself superior and put it on to us. The Yankees used to make jokes out of the Germans. Then when the Germans got strong enough to stop that, they got it out of the Irish and the Jews. When the Irish and Jews got too rich and powerful
in politics, they turned to Italians and Negroes.

Claude McKay. *Banjo*, p. 182.

Another interesting expression of the belligerent attitude, besides that of abusing the dominating race, is the phenomenon of self-elevation. Refused recognition by the whites the Negro often employs techniques to raise his own status. While this is a type of rationalization, it acts as an accommodation to a conflict situation, and thereby lessens the tremendous strain upon the Negro personality. Self-elevation may assume the form of self-praise which leads to an exaggeration of their own worth, or it may descend into conscious depreciating of the white group.

Undoubtedly this mechanism of self-elevation expresses itself on numerous occasions in terms of self-praise. Negroes desire social approval and desire to perform a more important role in American society; so they often emphasize out of all proportion the Negro contributions.

"Didn't colored people ever do anything, Daddy?" But Joel was prepared for that. He told her himself of Douglass and Vesey and Turner. There were great women, too, Harriet Tubman, Phillis Wheatley,
Sojourner Truth, women who had been slaves, he explained to her, but who had won their way to fame through their own efforts.

"O yes, but seldom as menials, while Negroes in America are always expected to be menials. It's natural, but—no, I couldn't do it. So at last I got a job in Washington in the medical statistics department of the National Benefit. This is one of our big insurance concerns. O yes, we've got a number of them; prosperous, too. It was hard work; indoors, poor light and air; but I was interested—worked overtime, learned the game, and gave my thought and ideas.

Oftimes certain groups of Negroes attempt to elevate their status by assuming a superior culture. This is accomplished through emphasizing the best in their cultural heritage. This, in part, is an effort to counteract the negative judgment of the whites toward
the black people. By sublimating the offensive side of the Negro culture and by focusing attention upon the finer aspects, it is hoped that the status of the group may be elevated. This faction recoils against anything that doesn't flatter the race, regardless of its veracity. Bathbubs, formal parties, fine gowns, and excellent homes are the chief objects of interest. Notice the obvious, and somewhat pathetic, methodology used in the following excerpt.

Mrs. Marshall agreed, Maggie's mother was consulted, Maggie came in ecstasy. Her first sojourn away from home! And what a sojourn! Naturally neat though she was, she learned of toilet mysteries, of rites of which she had never dreamed. Nightly hairbrushings and the discovery that of course each one had her own brush and comb! Frequent washings of both, talcum powders! Joanna the ascetic used scentless ones, but Sylvia's were highly fragrant. These Maggie preferred. A bath every night.

"If you don't mind," said Sylvia, "I'll take mine first and then you can stay in as long as you like. I hope that pig Joanna hasn't used up all the hot water!"

Delicacies for breakfast, lunch and dinner! Dinner at six instead of the mid-
dle of the day! Mrs. Marshall complained of a headache Saturday morning and Joanna took her breakfast up to her on a silver tray. Mr. Marshall kept box and box of cigars in his den. Sandy and Phillip wore superlatively blackened shoes.

Jessie Redmon Fauset. There is Confusion, p. 66.

The technique of consciously focusing attention upon the so-called higher phases of culture is evidence that the Negroes are being assimilated into American culture. Any group in the process of assimilation is chagrined and humiliated when the vices of their members become the object of discussion. This phase of life should be neglected for fear that other groups will use this as a criterion to judge the race. This symbolizes an effort to increase status and prestige.

By assuming equality with the other races the Negroes resolve, temporarily at least, a mental conflict. The fact that they are forced to assume equality with the other races indicates that perhaps they are not exactly sure whether they are equal or not. Negro leaders are hypersensitive to any behavior on the part of the dominating group which belittles them.
They demand that other groups herald the blacks as equal in all ways to any race. A few quotations will exemplify how Negro novelists try to raise their status by assuming equal ability with other groups.

"Colored people," Joanna quoted from her extensive reading, "can do everything that anybody else can do. They've already done it. Some one colored person somewhere in the world does as good a job as anyone else,—perhaps a better one. They've been kings and queens and poets and teachers and doctors and everything. I'm going to be the one colored person who sings best in these days, and I never, never, never mean to let color interfere with anything I really want to do."

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Jessie Redmon Fauset. There Is Confusion, p. 45.

"I reckon," he began—then something changed within him. It was as if he had faced and made a decision, as though some great voice, crying and reverberating within his soul, spoke for him and yet was him. He had started to say, "I reckon there's as much high-born blood among American
Negroes as among any people. We've had our kings, presidents, and judges—" He started to say this, but he did not finish. He found himself saying quite calmly and with slightly lifted chin:

"I reckon you're right. We American blacks are very common people. My grandfather was a whipped and driven slave; my father was never really free and died in jail. My mother plows and washes for a living. We come out of the depths—the blood and mud of battle. And from just such depths, I take it, came most of the worth-while things in this old world. If they didn't,—God help us."

40


"You assume then," said the Princess at last, "that the mass of the workers of the world can rule as well as be ruled?"

"Yes — or rather can work as well as be worked, can live as well as be kept alive. America is teaching the world one things and only one thing of real value, and that is, that ability and capacity for culture is not the hereditary monopoly of a few, but
Among the Negroes are certain controversial points of view which are expressed in their fiction. One group of novelists employ the refined and educated mulatto type as the leading character. In connection with such characters the fine aspects of Negro culture are emphasized. Walter F. White in The Fire in the Flint uses a doctor as the prominent character and in Flight his story is centered around an attractive Creole girl; Jessie Fauset in There is Confusion uses a dancer; Nella Larsen in Passing emphasizes a doctor and in Quicksand weaves her story about a school teacher; and Du Bois in The Dark Princess utilizes an aristocratic woman.

Another faction takes the opposite point of view. Their characters are chosen from the proletarian group. No attempt is made to emphasize the best in Negro culture, but stress is placed upon the dirty and vulgar aspects. Rudolph Fisher in The Walls of Jericho uses piano-movers and workingmen as his characters and in The City of Refuge he employs dope peddlers. Claude
McKay in *Home to Harlem* weaves his story around prostitutes and other immoral Negro characters, and in *Banjo* he described the illiterate inhabitants of an isolated cultural area, the Ditch in Paris.

Both Fisher and McKay rail against the educated Negroes who approximate white norms. A few quotations will clarify this point of view.

"The best Negroes are not the society Negroes. I am not writing for them, nor the pork-chop-abstaining Negroes, nor the Puritan Friends of Color, nor the Negrophobes, nor the Negrophiles. I am writing for people who can stand a real story no matter where it comes from."

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**Claude McKay. *Banjo*, p. 117.**

"You are like many Negro intellectuals who are belly-aching about race," said Roy. "What's wrong with you—all is your education. You get a white man's education and learn to despise your own people. You read biased history of the whites conquering the colored and primitive peoples, and it thrills you just as it does a white boy belonging to a great white nation.

"Then when you come to maturity you
realize with a shock that you don't and can't belong to the white race. All your education and achievements cannot put you in the intimate circles of the whites and give you a white man's full opportunity. However advanced, clever, and cultivated you are, you will have the distinguishing adjective of 'colored' before your name. And instead of accepting it proudly and manfully, most of you are soured and bitter about it—especially you mixed-bloods.

"You're a lost crowd, you educated Negroes, and you will only find yourself in the roots of your own people. You can't choose as your models the haughty-minded educated white youths of a society living solid on its imperial conquests. Such pampered youths can afford to despise the sweating white brutes of the lower orders.

"If you were sincere in your feelings about racial advancement, you would turn for example to whites of a different type. You would study the Irish cultural and social movement. You would turn your back on all these tiresome clever European novels and read about the Russian peasants,
the story and struggle of their lowly, patient, hard-driven life, and the great Russian novelists who described it up to the time of the Russian Revolution. You would learn all you can about Ghandi and what he is doing for the common hordes of India. You would be interested in the native African dialects and, though you don't understand, be humble before their simple beauty instead of despising them."

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Because of this tendency to be ashamed of the vice connected with their people, Sterling Brown accuses the Negroes of mental cowardice.

But we are reluctant about heeding the injunction. We resent what doesn't flatter us. One young man, Allison Davis, who spoke courageously and capably his honest observation about our life has been the target of second rate attacks ever since. George Schuyler's letter bag seems to fill up whenever he states that even the slightest something may be rotten on Beale Street or Seventh Avenue. Because of their candor, Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer, humane,
fine grained artists both of them, have been received in a manner that should shame us. This is natural, perhaps, but unfortunate. Says J. S. Collis in a book about Bernard Shaw: "The Irish cannot bear criticism; for like all races who have been oppressed they are still without mental bravery. They are afraid to see themselves exposed to what they imagine to be adverse criticism.... But the future of Ireland largely depends upon how much she is prepared to listen to criticism and how far she is capable of preserving peace between able men." These last words are worthy of our deepest attention.

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Another controversial point among the Negro novelists is that of the nature of fiction. Some advocate that the novel should portray Negro characters and should carry a message of protest. Others claim that the fiction should be made universal and transcend racial boundaries. In the contemporary novels there is very little evidence that Negroes are dealing with
universal values. There are, however, intimations that Negro art should not be sectional.

"Not much she didn't. But she kept me in the back of her head, I'll swear. While with your singing and dancing and your wildcat schemes of getting on the stage! Better stick to your own Joanna, and build up colored art."

"Why, I am," cried Joanna, astonished. "You don't think I want to forsake—us. Not at all. But I want to show us to the world. I am colored, of course, but American first. Why shouldn't I speak to all America?"

45

Jessie Redmon Fauset. There is Confusion, p. 76.

As has been suggested evaluations of Negro novels in terms of white literary norms proves them of thin quality. Their value inheres in their revealing of reactions to environmental situations. The underlying attitudes contained in these works are those of a human group struggling to find a way out of difficulty. Mechanisms, such as holding out the best in their culture and scorning any criticism, protest, pleading, surrender, self-deprecation and self-elevation, abound in these novels. These behavior patterns are natural to any suppressed group as an analysis of the litera-
ture of the Russian Jews, the Irish and the Poles will obviously demonstrate. Regardless of the naturalness of such activities, it is unfortunate that any group must exhaust its energy in defensive techniques.

The Negro novels are saturated with racial consciousness. Practically all of their energy has been spent in defending themselves rather than in creating fiction that would be artistic. They have made their novels nothing more than vehicles for race propaganda. As suggested above the energies spent in defensive tactics might have yielded literature worth while if they would have been focused upon universal values.

In predicting the future of Negro novels as to quality one can be influenced only by the present trends. If the prevailing tendencies exist these novels will still demonstrate mediocrity. It appears that in some ways the earlier novels of Chesnutt surpassed the later contributions of Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen, thus representing a backward step.

There is something in Negro psychology and Negro life that is of universal interest. In the whole American situation there is a classic setting for tragedy, which is not concerned with groups but with irreconcilable mental conflicts. Dunbar seems to be the only one to discover these. Only when these Negro novelists transcend racial boundaries and write as humans and not as Negroes will their literary pro-
ductions be worthy of artistic consideration! As long as they resort to whinings and complaints for preferential treatment, which facilitates their social isolation, their works will be valuable chiefly as data for the interpretation of Negro psychology, which is the resultant of a tension situation.
Bibliography


Chapter VI

Controversial Literature.

The argumentative writing of the Negro has its roots in the anti-slavery and abolitionist movements. These anti-slavery discussions were in the main the work of the white men: the Negroes had only a minor part in them. Such white men as William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, John Greenleaf Whittier and Benjamin Lundy, espoused the cause of the slave and violently attacked the slave system. They argued that slavery was in contradiction to the natural rights of humanity; that it produced an evil psychological effect upon the Southern whites, and thus indirectly handicapped the American nation as a whole. They treated slavery as a sin—contrary to the laws of the Deity. They demanded immediate and complete emancipation of the Negro slaves. Their arguments were often sentimental and moralistic. They usually neglected the future of the Negro, the consequence of his liberation. Attention was focused upon the one problem of freedom. There was little realization that freedom would mean other problems perhaps more complicated and complex than slavery itself.

There were some Negroes actively engaged in the anti-slavery movement. William Wells Brown, Charles L. Reason, and Charles B. Ray were representative.
Narratives of slave experiences were written by or for Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Moses Roper, Frederick Douglass, and others. These were attempts to gain white sympathy by directing attention to the glaring abuses of Negro slavery.

Since the Civil War the Negroes have produced a large amount of controversial literature. This is due to the psychological bondage to which they have been subjected. These works are characterized by complaints of peonage and discriminatory practices, pleas for mercy and equality with the dominating race, and demands for justice. An attitude of inferiority is general. It expresses itself as pathos, abuse, and resentment.

About 1900 Booker T. Washington became active in Negro affairs. A certain race philosophy crystallized in the activity of this leader. His primary interest was racial; his energies were used in working for the Negro in America. His solution of the Negro problem was in terms of industrial education, health improvement, higher living standards, home ownership, and other practical things. He assumed that the whites should accept the Negro on an equal basis only when the Negro revealed his capabilities. He urged the Negroes to start at the bottom and become economically independent. He was diplomatic in his relations with the whites; he avoided any race conflict. His attitude was always conciliatory. He did not advocate rebellion
or the use of force. He did not advocate submission, he did not complain. He found and accepted the facts of life. He compromised in order to exalt his race. He neglected higher education, though he did not oppose it, and stressed industrial training. This was to him a means to an end. He hoped that the areas for Negro participation would be enlarged. Social equality was a minor item in his philosophy; economic adjustment was the thing which he thought would ultimately bring recognition and equal treatment. His philosophy appears in the following quotation.

There is still doubt in many quarters as to the ability of the Negro, unguided, and supported, to hew out his own path, and put into visible, tangible, indisputable forms the products and signs of civilisation. This doubt cannot be extinguished by mere abstract arguments, no matter how ingeniously and convincingly advanced. Quietly, patiently, doggedly, through summer and winter, sunshine and shadow, by self-sacrifice, by foresight, by honesty and industry, we must re-enforce arguments with results. One farm bought, one house built, one home neatly kept, one man the largest tax-payer and depositer in the local bank, one school or church maintained,
one factory running successfully, one truck-
garden profitably cultivated, one patient
cured by a Negro doctor, one sermon well
preached, one office well filled, one life
cleanly lived—these will tell more in our
favor than all the abstract eloquence that
can be summoned to plead our cause. Our
pathway must be up through the soil, up
through the swamps, up through forests,
up through the streams and rocks; up
through commerce, education, and religion!

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The writings of Washington contained little
protest or invective, but his attitude was violently
attacked. Much of the controversial literature was
directed at his point of view. Certain Negroes op­
posed the policy of Washington and heaped criticism
upon him. He was accused of educating the Negroes
for menial labor and of assuming the inferiority of
the black race.

The chief opponent of Washington was W. E. B.
Du Bois. With him controversial literature really
makes its debut. Readily does this Negro assume the
leadership of the militant Negro group. The tone of the writings changes; the conciliatory attitude is supplanted by one of lamentation, rebellion, and revolt.

In the early life of Du Bois, the attitude of pathos dominates his works. The Souls of Black Folk (1903) may be characterized as a lamentation over the humiliations to which his race had been subjected. This work contains ardent pleas for denied rights, complaints against discrimination. This book is only slightly tinctured with protest. The pathetic pleas and lamentations represent methods of escape. It is interesting to compare these with the ironic pathos of the enslaved Hebrews.

Weeping, she has wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: there is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her: all her friends have despised her, and are became her enemies. Lam. 1:2

Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress, my bowels are troubled; my heart is turned within me, for I am full of bitterness: abroad the sword destroyeth, and at home there is death alike. Lam. 1:20.

All they that passed by the way have clapped their hands at thee: they have
clapped their hands at thee: they have hissed, and wagged their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying: Is this the city of perfect beauty, the joy of all the earth? Lam. 3:15.

We were dragged by the necks, we were weary, and no rest was given us. Lam. 5:5.

O Southern Gentleman! If you deplore their presence here, they ask, Who brought us? When you cry, Deliver us from the vision of intermarriage, they answer that legal marriage is infinitely better than systematic concubinage and prostitution. And if in just fury you accuse their vagabonds of violating women, they also in fury quite as just may reply: The rape which your gentlemen have done against helpless black women in defiance of your own laws is written on the foreheads of two million of mulattoes, and written in ineffaceable blood. And finally, when you fasten crime upon this race as its peculiar trait, they answer that slavery was the arch-crime, and lynching and lawlessness its twin abortion; that color and race are not crimes, and yet they it is which
in this land receive most unceasing condemnation, North, East, South and West.


I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in
arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded
halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and
the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will,
and they come all graciously with no scorn
nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I
dwell above the Veil. Is this the life
you grudge us, O knightly America? Is
this the life you long to change into the
dull red hideousness of Georgia? Are you
so afraid lest peering from this high Pis-
gah, between Philistine and Amalekite, we
sight the Promised Land?

Similarly the pleas of Du Bois are for mercy.

Hear my cry, O God the Reader: vouchsafe that this my book fall not still-born into the world-wilderness. Let there spring, Gentle One, from out its leaves vigor of thought and thoughtful deed to reap the harvest wonderful. Let the ears of a guilty people tingle with truth and seventy millions sigh for the righteousness which exalteth nations, in this drear day when human brotherhood is mockery and a snare. Thus in Thy good time may infinite reason turn the tangle straight, and these crooked marks on a fragile leaf be not indeed.


The complaints registered by Du Bois in his early writings are mild and humble.

---If you wish to ride with me you must come into the "Jim Crow Car". There will be no objection,—already four other white men, and a little white girl with her nurse, are in there. Usually the races are mixed in there; but the white coach is all white.
Of course this car is not so good as the other, but it is fairly clean and comfortable. The discomfort lies chiefly in the hearts of these four black men yonder—and in mine.

---They are ignorant of the world about them, of modern economic organization, of the function of government, of individual worth and possibilities,—of nearly all those things which slavery in self-defense had to keep them from learning. Much that the white boy imbibes from his earliest social atmosphere forms the puzzling problems of the black boy's mature years. America is not another word for Opportunity to all her sons.

Du Bois states that the history of the Negro race is a struggle "to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American." This results in a mental conflict; a futile attempt to unite irreconcilable ideals. The resolving of this struggle is
inhibited by the American environments, thus producing a tragic situation. The Negro must function through someone else. He must wear the "mask" and live within the "veil". Because of this the blacks are becoming reflective and introspective. This expresses itself in terms of dissatisfaction with the prevailing definition of the situation.

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

Within the Veil was he born, said I; and there within shall he live,—a Negro and a Negro's son. Holding in that little head—ah, bitterly!—the unbowed pride of a hunted race, clinging with that tiny dimpled hand—ah, wearily!—to a hope not hopeless but unhopeful, and seeing with those bright wondering eyes that peer into my soul a land whose freedom is to us a mockery and whose liberty a life. I saw the shadow of the Veil as it passed over my baby, I saw the cold city towering above the blood-red land. I held my face beside his little cheek, showed him the star-children and the twinkling lights as they began to flash, and stilled with an even-song the unvoiced terror of my life.


These are the things of which men think, who life: of their own selves and the dwelling place of their fathers; of their neighbors; of work and service; of rule and reason and women and children; of Beauty and Death and War. To this thinking I have only to add a point of
view: I have been in the world, but not of it. I have seen the human drama from a veiled corner, where all the outer tragedy and comedy have reproduced themselves in microcosm within. From this inner torment of souls the human science without has interpreted itself to me in unusual and even illuminating ways.


The later writings of Du Bois display attitudes of protest and bitterness resulting from the developing racial conflict. Failing to find a way out of isolation through begging he resorts to invective and keen hatred. *Darkwater* is the sternest indictment against the whites and their activities that has ever been produced by a Negro. His militancy is evidenced by the fact that he repudiates any compromise; that he refuses to accept any deferred paradise as did the Negroes in slavery, but fights for an immediate world in which the Negroes can have equality and unhampered freedom. Du Bois refuses to relinquish the struggle, and continuously battles against an exploitation which uses his personality to promote the well-being of another race.
Rebellion on the part of Du Bois is almost hysterical. So intense are his antipathies and antagonisms that cooperation is impossible. His faith in the dominating race has been shattered. His sensitiveness and suspiciousness have become pathological. He has narrowed his consciousness until his reasoning is distorted. Universal wrongs are attributed specifically and race discriminations applied specifically to the Negro race. He suffers and feels the injury of the whole race. He hurls abuse at the white race. His expressions are freighted with intimidations and threats of retaliation. All these are mechanisms to escape social isolation.

I built great castles in Spain and lived therein. I dreamed and loved and wandered and sang; then, after two long years, I dropped suddenly back into "nigger"-hating America.


After this the descent to Hell is easy. On the pale, white faces which the great billows whirl upward to my tower I see again and again and again, often and still more often, a writing of human hatred, a deep and passionate
hatred, vast by the very vagueness of its expressions. Down through the green waters, on the bottom of the world, where men move to and fro, I have seen a man—an educated gentleman—grow livid with anger because a little, silent black woman was sitting by herself in a Pullman car. He was a white man. I have seen a great, grown man curse a little child, who had wandered into the wrong waiting-room, searching for its mother: "Here, you damned black——" He was white. In Central Park I have seen the upper lip of a quiet, peaceful man curl back in a tigerish snarl of a rage because black folk rode by in a motor car. He was a white man. We have seen, you and I, city after city drunk and furious with ungovernable lust of blood, mad with murder, destroying, killing, and cursing; torturing human victims because somebody accused of crime happened to be of the same color as the mob's innocent victims and because that color was not white! We have seen,—Merciful God! in these wild days and in the name of Civilization, Justice, and Motherhood,—what have we not seen, right here in America, of
orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder done to men and women of Negro descent.

---Slowly, but surely white culture is evolving the theory that "darkies" are born beasts of burden for white folk. It were silly to think otherwise, cries the cultured world, with stronger and shriller accord. The supporting arguments grow and twist themselves in the mouths of merchant, scientist, soldier, traveler, writer, and missionary: Darker peoples are dark, in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent; of frail­er, cheaper stuff; they are cowards in the face of mausers and maxims; they have no feelings, aspirations, and loves; they are fools, illogical idiots,—"half-devil and half-child."

What did they see? They saw nine and one-half millions of human beings. They saw the spawn of slavery, ignorant by law
and deviltry, crushed by insult and debauched by systematic and criminal injustice. They saw a people whose helpless women have been raped by thousands and whose men lynched by hundreds in the face of a sneering world. They saw a people with heads bloody, but unbowed, working faithfully at wages fifty percent lower than the wages of the nation and under conditions which shame civilization, saving homes, training children, hoping against hope. They saw the greatest industrial miracle of modern days,—slaves transforming themselves to freemen and climbing out of perdition by their own efforts, despite the most contemptible opposition God ever saw,—they saw all this and what they saw the distraught employers of America saw, too.

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No longer should the Negroes be submissive; direct action should supplant political action.

What, then, is this dark world thinking? It is thinking that as wild and awful as this shameful war was, it
is nothing to compare with that fight for freedom which black and brown and yellow men must and will make unless their oppression and humiliation and insult at the hands of the White World cease. The Dark World is going to submit to its present treatment just as long as it must and not one moment longer.

---


But to-day we return! We return from the slavery of uniform which the world's madness demands us to don to the freedom of the civil garb. We stand again to look America squarely in the face and call a spade a spade. We sing: This country of ours, despite all its better souls have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.

It lynch—

And lynching is barbarism of a degree of contemptible nastiness unparalleled in human history. Yet for fifty years we have lynched two Negroes a week, and we have kept this up right through the war.
It disfranchises its own citizens.

Disfranchisement is the deliberate theft and robbery of the only protection of poor against rich and black against white. The land that disfranchises its citizens and calls itself a democracy lies and knows it lies.

It encourages ignorance.

It has never really tried to educate the Negro. A dominant minority does not want Negroes educated. It wants servants, dogs, whores and monkeys. And when this land allows a reactionary group by it stolen political power to force as many black folk into these categories as it possibly can, it cries in contemptible hypocrisy: 'They threaten us with degeneracy; they cannot be educated.'

It steals from us.

It organizes industry to cheat us. It cheats us out of our land; it cheats us out of our labor. It confiscates our savings. It reduces our wages. It raises our rent. It steals our profit. It taxes us without representation. It keeps us consistently and universally poor, and then feeds us on charity and derides our poverty.

It insults us.

It has organized a nation-wide and lat-
terly a world-wide propaganda of deliberate and continuous insult and defamation of black blood wherever found. It decrees that it shall not be possible in travel nor residence, work nor play, education nor instruction for a black man to exist without tacit or open acknowledgment of his inferiority to the dirtiest white dog, and it looks upon any attempt to question or even discuss this dogma as arrogance, unwarranted assumption and treason.

This is the country to which we Soldiers of Democracy return. This is the fatherland for which we fought! But it is our fatherland. It was right for us to fight. The faults of our country are our faults. Under similar circumstances, we would fight again. But by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that that war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a stern, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.

We return

We return from fighting.
We return fighting.
Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.

15

Another method is used by Du Bois in order to lessen the strain upon his personality. He identifies himself with the black race. He emphasizes the beauty of the Negro and proudly proclaims his color.

I believe in God, who made of one blood all nations that on earth do dwell. I believe that all men, black and brown and white, are brothers, varying through time and opportunity, in form and gift and feature, but differing in no essential particular, and alike in soul and the possibility of infinite development.

Especially do I believe in the Negro Race: in the beauty of its genius, the sweetness of its soul, and its strength in that meekness which shall yet inherit this turbulent earth.

I believe in pride of race and lineage
and self; in pride of self so deep as to scorn injustice to other selves; in pride of lineage so great as to despise no man's father; in pride of race so chivalrous as neither to offer bastardy to the weak nor beg wedlock of the strong, knowing that men may be brothers in Christ, even though they be not brothers-in-law.

16


Back beyond the world and swept by these wild, white faces of the awful dead, why will this Soul of White Folk,—this modern Prometheus,—hang bound by his own binding, tethered by a fable of the past? I hear his mighty cry reverberating through the world, "I am white!" Well and good, O Prometheus, divine thief! Is not the world wide enough for two colors, for many little shinings of the sun? Why, then, devour your own vitals if I answer even as proudly, "I am black!"

17

Over a period of twenty years K. Miller published four volumes that readily fall in this group of controversial literature. In each of these books a number of ways out of the tension situation are advocated. At times Miller considers the race question intelligently. He recognizes that education enhances the unrest of his group. To him the logical solution to the whole conflict situation must be favorable to all parties concerned.

The presence of the African element in the United States gives rise to a tripartite problem. The white man of the North, the man of the South, and the Negro are the parties in interest. The only possible satisfactory solution of this problem must depend upon the united wisdom and conciliatory spirit of this triple alliance, and must be just and honorable to all.

This serious attitude does not consistently characterize Miller's works. He projects his racial bias upon every page. He resorts to old religious platitudes as solutions for the race difficulties. He hurls abuse at the whites because a double standard of morals operates in negro and white relationships. Often he appeals to the whites for justice. He resorts to various types of defensive mechanisms for the sake of his race. The Negroes, according to his version, are incapable of hatred, and are the embodiment of Christian virtues. A few quotations express his attitude.

The two races will continue to exist side by side. They are linked to a common destiny of good or evil and their relations should be characterized by amity rather than by enmity. The Negro appeals to the white race in the language of Ruth to Naomi:

Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried.

The Negro is in quest of a fair chance to work out his own destiny, and to contribute his share to the common honor and glory of the nation. This he cannot do if handicapped and circumscribed by laws separating him from the rest of his fellow men. Already handicapped by tradition and environment, it is poor sportsmanship on the part of his white fellow citizens still further to handicap him in the race of life. Equality of opportunity is the most that the Negro asks, and the least that a democratic nation can afford to grant.

They sometimes tell us that America is a white man's country. The statement is understandable in light of the fact that the white race constitutes nine-tenths of its population, and exerts the controlling influence over the various forms of material and substantial wealth and power. But this land belongs to the Negro as much as to any other, not only because he has helped redeem it from the wilderness by the energy of his arm, but because he bathed it in his
blood, watered it with his tears, and
hallowed it with the yearnings of his
soul.


Protest is the dominating attitude in the follow­
ing excerpts, although retaliation is also evident.

---The nation cannot expect to humiliate
the Negro eternally with Jim Crow cars, dis-
franchisement, segregation, and lynching,
and expect him to assign his love and de-
votion in perpetuity. If the victims of
mob violence were equally distributed through­
out the nation, there would be standing a
blood-stained tree in every county in the
United States as a ghastly reminder to the
Negro of the crucifixion of his race. Unless
this barbarous tendency is checked, lynching
will become ingrained in the warp and woof
of the national character. Would the nation,
then, have the moral right to demand the Ne-
gro's love and devotion? The nation must
destroy lynching or lynching must destroy
the nation. Let us fondly hope that the
Negro will be forever true to the nation;
but let us fervently pray that the nation
will prove itself worthy of his affection.

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--The tide is now at flood and cannot be stemmed. The most conspicuous opponents of democracy, for fear it might include the Negro, with dying gasp of defiance, were driven from places of public power under the excoriating lash of President Wilson, Southerner. The logic of event overrides the narrow purposes of men. The sign of democracy is written across the sky, in letters so bold and pronounced, that he who runs may read; and those who are too foolish to read will be compelled to run.

24
K. Miller. The Everlasting Stain, p. 84.

Practically all of Walter F. White's writings are of the controversial type. His philosophy is embodied in his recent book Rope and Faggot, a study of lynching in America. This book is full of protest and invective. White attacks lynching on the basis that certain mental attitudes are produced in the young. The preferential treatment offered by the
southern white men to their wives reflects upon the
morality and integrity of these women. This book
argues that the years of experience with the Negro
in the South has convinced even the intellectuals that
the black is mentally inferior, and that he is gener­
ally uncontrollable in reference to sex relations.
Therefore pressure and force become justifiable
measures to be used against the Negro. If the Ne­
groes become educated, says White, the phobia of fear
results in the creation of defensive mechanisms on
the part of the whites. He attacks the South by
postulating that no amount of scientific data is
sufficient to eradicate the opinion of the Souther­
ner, whose mind is utterly closed to common sense and
reason. The following quotations are illustrative of
White's attitude.

The clothes burned from her crisply
 toasted body, in which, unfortunately,
 life still lingered, a man stepped to­
 wards the woman, and, with his knife,
 ripped open the abdomen in a crude Caesar­
ean operation. Out tumbled the premature­
ly born child. Two feeble cries it gave—
 and received for answer the heel of a
 stalwart man, as life was ground out of
 the tiny form. Under the tree of death
 was scooped a shallow hole. The rope
about Mary Turner's charred ankles was cut, and swiftly her body tumbled into its grave. Not without a sense of humour or of appropriateness was some member of the mob. An empty whisky-bottle, quart size, was given for headstone. Into its neck was stuck a half smoked cigar—which had saved the delicate nostrils of one member of the mob from the stench of burning human flesh.


As far back as 1691 the number of children born of slave fathers and white women had increased so alarmingly that Virginia, which seems to have been usually the state to legislate against what appeared to be evils arising from slavery, sought to end this intermixture by means of a law which prohibited marriage between a white man or woman with "a Negro, mulatto, or Indian man or woman, bond or free," on pain of banishment; and which prohibited sexual relations between a white woman and a Negro or mulatto. The care exercised not
to interfere with sexual relations between white men and Negro or mulatto women will be noted. Any white woman who bore a Negro's child was liable to be fined or, in default of payment of that fine, to be sold into service for five years; the child was "bound in servitude to the church wardens until thirty years of age."


During the year 1929 appeared Robert R. Moton's What the Negro Thinks. Moton, being the successor of Booker T. Washington, does not abuse the white race in the treatise, but he does modify his attitude as expressed in Finding A Way Out. His complaint of white domination while mild is necessarily obvious. His analysis of the peculiar isolation afforded the Negro due to legal, racial, and social mechanisms warrants consideration. All through the discussion Moton emphasizes how the thinking of the Negro is being moulded by his experiences. The Negro reacts in various ways to white domination. He smiles but he reflects; inwardly he burns with indignation; often he pities the whites who resort to any device to secure a spurious superiority; sometimes he resorts to open violence; and often he assumes equality with the superordinated
The following excerpts depict self-praise as a mechanism to obtain and maintain status.

By any standard of beauty Negro children of this type are just as attractive and pleasing to the eye as any other children in America. It will not do to claim they are more so, in spite of such things as variations in colour and differences in type. The beauty of Negro womanhood is not often exposed to the public gaze. School girls may be seen at certain hours of the day; but except as sheer necessity requires an occasional excursion for shopping or business, Negro women of refinement and culture are not often seen in public places, except among their own people. They prefer the protection and shelter of their own homes, for it happens more frequently than even our white friends are aware that such women are constantly exposed to unwelcome and uninvited attentions of a certain type of white men without any sort of redress or protection in the law.
In response to this same sentiment, even "impartial" history is coloured by the same discrimination whether it be ancient or modern or current. School children in America learn very early about the great Hannibal of Carthage, but nobody breathes that he was just as much a Negro as are, to be conservative, at least one fifth of the Negroes, of America. Reams of paper have been used to disprove any connection of the Negro with the glories of ancient civilization, in spite of the very obvious Negroid characteristics of the Sphinx and other personages well known to archaeologists. It is carefully concealed that highly creditable records associate the names of Pushkin, Dumas, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and even our own Alexander Hamilton with the Negro race. Crispus Attucks, the first martyr of the Revolution; Phillis Wheatley, the most distinguished poet of the time of George Washington; Benjamin Banneker, the first American to make a calendar; Jan Matziliger, whose in-
vention revolutionized the shoe-making industry of America and laid the foundation for its present supremacy over all the rest of the world; Toussaint L'Ouverture, who virtually drove France out of the Western Hemisphere, are tacitly ignored in the record of the white man's history because they are unmistakably and indisputably of Negro origin.

---There are two phrases current in the language into which this sentiment has crystallized—one that a certain accomplishment is "very good for coloured people," and the other that a given thing is "good enough for a Negro." Against all such condescension the spirit of the Negro rebels. In no phase of American life are the standards too high for his aspiration, and he has immeasurable satisfaction in doing things as well as or better than a white man—this because of the generally implied and often expressed sentiment, which is at the same time quite widespread, that a Negro, just because he is a Negro, cannot attain to the standards of what is called white civilization. Given
the chance, he feels that to do so is a vindication of his race and its claim to essential equality with all other races.


At the bottom of his heart the Negro believes that he has capabilities of culture and character equal to that of any other race; he believes that his gifts and endowments are of equal worth to those of any other people; and even in the matter of mingling of racial strains, however undesirable it might seem to be from a social point of view, he would never admit that his blood carries any taint of physiological, mental, or spiritual inpriority. However long it may take, therefore, through however many generations of social progress it may extend, the Negro expects ultimately to live in America with such freedom of movement, such equality of opportunity, and such measure of common respect for his person and personality as will leave him, even though distinguished in physical characteristics, without any lower status than that of the average American citizen.
The extreme sensitiveness of the American Negro manifests itself in Moton's *What the Negro Thinks*. Failure to capitalize the letter "N" in Negro is resented, the term "nigger" is offensive, signs designating "white ladies" or "colored women" create a negative reaction, and the failure to address members of the race by titles of respect like "Mr." and "Mrs." results in indignation on the part of the Negro. This sensitivity is permeating the poorer Negro groups. No book written by a Negro furnishes more glaring illustrative material for Negro sensitivity than this recent contribution by Moton.

News editors with such scruples, when they receive copy referring to colored women as "Mrs. Jane Smith" or "Mrs. John Smith," either delete "Mrs." entirely or refer to the individual as the wife or widow of John Smith, or Professor Smith, as the case may be. When Mrs. Booker T. Washington died in June of 1925, newspapers of this class referred to her simply as the widow of Booker T. Washington. Some of them referred to her as a "Noted Negress." When occasionally the fact that the woman re-
ferred to is of the Negro race escapes the attention of the proof reader, and her name appears as Mrs. John Smith, coloured people regard it usually as a joke on the editor. The situation, however, becomes more serious when it is a matter of direct address.


The first lesson in race prejudice acquired by American children is in learning to say "nigger", and it is not long before the child senses that the implication is that all persons to whom this epithet is applied are beneath him in consideration and respect, as well as inherent worth. The thrust at the Negro's self-respect conveyed in this term is always keenly resented by every class of Negroes. It is true that many members of the race accept it with a smile under certain circumstances, when they dare not openly disclose their resentment. It is furthermore true that certain elements of the race bandy this term lightly back and forth among themselves; but this does not
confute the fact that all Negroes everywhere resent being called "nigger" by any white person under any circumstances.

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The thinking Negro no longer finds opprobrium in the term, but he would insist that it be spelled with a capital "N" and not "n". Many newspapers and magazines, both North and South, have ungrudgingly accorded this consideration to the self-respect of the Negro. There are many that still do not. But the limit of contumely is reached in the use of the word "negress". In this more than in anything else is reflected the habit of mind persisting from the days of slavery that places the Negro in the category of "things", of goods and chattels, as when a planter in reckoning his property referred to his possessions as "negroes, hogs, cattle, mules, horses, etc." 33

33

To many such people Negroes in evening
clothes, appear ridiculous except in the capacity of dining-room waiters or actors on the stage. Much the same spirit it was that prompted the stripping of his clothes from a Negro soldier in another city who was wearing his uniform as a commissioned officer of the United States Army. It is reflected even in such a little thing as this, that in the railroad stations of some cities signs may be seen over rest rooms for female patrons reading "white ladies" on one side of the room, and on the other side "coloured women," as though it were preposterous to think of coloured women as "ladies." Although the stilted expression is happily passing out of usage, most people, black as well as white, regard the term "woman" as the stronger of the two, with a feeling that there is something meretricious in the word "ladies".

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Chapter VII

Negro History.

Negro History had its beginnings prior to the Civil War. But in this early period it was not distinct; it constituted a part of American history, a footnote to the record of anti-slavery agitation. This evidences that the Negroes had little racial pride and that they were not group conscious. The chief historians of this period were William C. Nell and Wm. Wells Brown. Their historical writings are moralistic and attempt to convert white sympathizers to the Negro's point of view.

From the Civil War until about 1880 little interest was manifested in history by Negro writers. Since 1880 a number of black historians have appeared. Among them are William T. Alexander, J. W. Hood, G. W. Williams, B. T. Washington, Emmet Scott, W. E. B. Du Bois, John Cromwell, B. J. Brawley, and C. G. Woodson.

The most significant trend in contemporary Negro historical writings is the development of a distinct Negro history; a history separate from that of the whites. This trend demonstrates that the Negroes are becoming a nationality. They are militant and in the struggle or conflict for status they are developing group consciousness.
The problem of the Negroes has always been a matter of getting along in a nation where they are hopelessly in the minority. These black people have found themselves, through no fault of their own, situated in a hostile and intolerable social organization. Like any normal group they have struggled intensely for recognition and status. Out of this conflict situation is emerging a Negro history and a black tradition, which is both a protest and a means to and an expression of nationalism.

Negro history as presented by these writers has its roots in the exploitation policy of the dominating group. Because of exclusion from theaters, restaurants, ready-to-wear shops, etc., the Negroes are developing these places of their own. Owing to the fact that white lawyers, dentists and doctors either entirely refuse to extend their profession to include Negro patronage, or do so reluctantly, professional classes are developing among the blacks. Certainly one of the factors resulting in the appearance of Negro history is either real or imaginary neglect on the part of the whites to give the Negro due consideration. This history is a direct protest against white neglect.

As the Negro becomes more group conscious, his sensitivity increases. This sensitivity becomes obvious in his demands upon the white race. Feeling
that they have been snubbed, indignantly Negroes form organizations to herald to the world the part they have played in cultural development. Some of the Negro newspapers carry pictures showing high lights that American history neglects. Societies are coming into existence everywhere in America to study Negro activities and to supply missing pages in United States history. Following is a statement made as to the purpose of the Society of Descendants of Early New England Negroes.

While it is the intention of the society to carry out a program during the Tercentenary, its first purpose is to supply what have been called "Some Missing Pages in American History," to present the black men of New England who fought in the French and Indian wars, who mingled with the white farmers at Lexington to oppose the British, who fought all through the Revolution, to present these men, not as "slaves" (although they had been brought to America in chains) but as men, who worked, fought and died not only to obtain their own liberty, but for the liberty of the Colonies also, men whose valor was recognized by the government with pensions, grants of land and bodily free-
dom, men who were farmers, coopers, wheelwrights, workers as well as fighters!

The following excerpt taken from a leaflet on history week is illuminating in explanation of the origin of Negro history.

In our own particular history we would not dim one bit the lustre of any in our firmament. We would not learn less of George Washington, "First in War, First in Peace and First in the Hearts of his Countrymen"; but we would learn something also of the three thousand Negro soldiers of the American Revolution who helped to make this "Father of Our Country" possible. We would not neglect to appreciate the unusual contribution of Thomas Jefferson to freedom and democracy, but we would invite attention also to two of his outstanding contemporaries, Phyllis Wheatly, the writer of interesting verse, and Benjamin Banneker, the mathematician, the astronomer, and the advocate of a world peace plan set forth in 1793 with every principle of Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations. We would in no way de-
tract from the fame of Perry on Lake Erie
or Jackson at New Orleans in the second
struggle with England; but we would remem-
ber the gallant black men who assisted in
winning these memorable victories on land
and sea. We would not cease to pay trib-
ute to Abraham Lincoln as the "Savior of
the Country"; but we would ascribe praise also
to the 178,000 Negroes who had to be mustered
into the service of the Union before it could
be preserved, and won by their heroism de-
monstrated that they were entitled to free-
dom and citizenship.

Even the conciliatory Booker T. Washington protests
against the absence of Negro history in schools and the
unfair tactics of white chronicles in selecting facts
to elevate the white soldier and totally ignoring the
bravery and courageousness of the Negro soldier.

The numberless histories of the Spanish-
American War that have been published and
which all have given national praise to the
white soldiers, the patriotism, the valor
and bravery of the colored soldiers has
scarcely, if ever, been mentioned. I hope
that these chapters will be accepted as an
authentic statement of the thrilling ex-
periences and daring acts of the brave,
black men, both regulars and volunteers, who faced the perilous exploits of war with indomitable courage and have made what ought to be an imperishable impress upon the whole country, teaching a lesson in patriotism, which speaks volumes for the stability of our struggling race.


So closely interwoven are Negro history and Negro nationalism that a brief discussion of the latter appears to be necessary. The thwarting of individual wishes, according to Freud, Dewey, and Thomas, occasions a conflict situation. The resulting restlessness often leads to strange behavior phenomena. In the individual, conflicts may be met or avoided by lying, daydreaming, or by drawing away from reality through rationalization or compensation. The same phenomena will invariably occur in case of group suppression. Professor H. A. Miller claims that if a group is oppressed it develops a mental disease called "oppression psychosis," which is a mental state resulting from domination.

Miller has analysed the process of this mental malady and discovers definite symptoms among groups contracting it. Usually these suppressed groups are
hypersensitive and carry a "chip on their shoulder". Any remark may be interpreted personally. The Japanese constantly complain unless direct statements are forthcoming as to their equality with the Caucasian Race. This demonstrates their uncertainty as to their status.

In the conflict situation the subordinated group contrives some technique to maintain self-esteem. The European peasants, crushed as they are, demonstrate a surprising keenness and cunningness in certain economic relations. Aggressiveness to overcome an inferior status usually results. Finally, compensations in the form of emphasizing certain cultural traits, usually language and religion, become obvious. The resultant of all this is a group unity which becomes intensified by the addition of hatred of the suppressed.

There is a noticeable trend toward nationalism among the American Negroes. Undoubtedly this movement has its roots in the period before the Emancipation owing to the racial characteristics, association and community of interest. The greatest force that has made nationality necessary has been the exclusion policy of the whites. Lynching, discrimination in politics, education, labor, and convivial and recreational activities constitute a few of the exploitations heaped upon the blacks.

Many evidences of this growing racial conscious-
ness of the Negro could be cited. In America we have the bi-racial development which tends to separate the races. Because of white attitudes, Negro leaders and Negro institutions are appearing rapidly. Negroes are reacting negatively to certain white cultural traits and are developing cultural patterns of their own. They demand that the "N" in Negro be capitalized. The Garvey Movement emphasized a black God, Christ, and Madonna. Finally this suppressed group emphasizes a history of its own.

This history is both a means to and an expression of nationalism. In an effort to facilitate nationalism and to intensify group-consciousness Negroes are creating their history. Some of the Negro leaders have consciously defined the situation for the younger generation. They attempt to direct attitudes toward values. The range of contacts of the Negro is restricted, and only a few desired behavior patterns are brought into the focus of attention. Great Negro leaders and Negro cultural achievements are held up before the race to the exclusion of all other patterns. Future Negro students are to be placed in this controlled environment. As a result racial consciousness will be greatly facilitated.

Annual Negro History Week, sponsored largely by Carter G. Woodson, is observed practically everywhere
in the United States. Consciously efforts are made to "popularize the study of Negro life and history and to secure more support for its promotion." Elaborate organizations are perfected for the celebration of this week. Negroes are urged to appeal to boards of education for the adoption of Negro history textbooks, or to induce libraries and schools to purchase Negro literature and pictures of notable men of the race. All Negroes are appealed to for knowledge of Negro family history or for any knowledge pertinent to Negro history. This Negro history week arose as a protest against biased historical instruction. According to the Negroes, white historians select facts creditable to the Caucasian race. In such selected historical material, racial and national prejudice abounds and the dominating race verifies and maintains its superiority.

Another device which unquestionably increases the vogue of Negro history is The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History which spreads propaganda in order to keep Negro incidents in the range of the consciousness of the race. A quarterly magazine The Journal of Negro History emphasizes material dealing with all phases of Negro life. This journal appeared because the Negroes felt that they were neglected in civil and historical matters. Both history week and
The Journal of Negro History are mechanisms for the
development of group consciousness which will ultimately
create voluntary segregation and more group solidarity. These devices facilitate Negro ethnocentrism
and assist in the formation of a body of Negro achievements to which the race can point with pride.

The rapid development of Negro history is an expression
of growing nationalism. Every group must have some
collective representation around which to rally in order
to develop nationalism. The Irish focused their attention upon their language and religion, while the
Poles rallied around their language, religion and history. The Negroes possessed no distinct language or
religion, no extensive body of literature, or no great historical record around which to organize their emotions. The race had no historical background besides barbarism, slavery, and isolation. However, this lack of historical greatness is no longer acting as a stumbling block to racial pride. They are undertaking to create a history. They are gathering meagre materials and enlarging and embellishing these into elaborate myths.

Obviously much of this history of the Negro is fictitious, but this matters little as far as its unifying powers are concerned. Truthfulness or falsity matters little; it is faith and belief in the recorded
accomplishments that cement persons together and help them to cooperate relatively permanently in the group. History has always played an important organizing role because it supplies collective representations to integrate the group. Practically every people writes its history from a biased point of view, manipulating events to serve its needs and aspirations. It is said that Canadian history maintains a false pride by claiming victory in the war of 1812, and that the United States suppresses certain materials in order to have it appear that they were victorious. Many classical examples could be produced to prove that imaginary accomplishments recorded in history control the activities of people. The present Greek population take pride in their supposed early ancestors, although it is now well established that little relationship exists between ancient and contemporary Greece.

Of recent years so-called radical historians have begun to undermine some of the legends in American history. Professor Hodder and Professor A. B. Hart argue that much propaganda abounds in American history.

A. B. Hart

"American Historical Liars,"

Harpers, 131 (1915) 726-735.
Writers have manipulated records until over-emphasis upon certain events has resulted. Propaganda or ex-parte argument in support of causes saturated early

F. H. Hodder.

"Propaganda in American History,"
The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 9 (1932) 3-18

as well as contemporary, American affairs. Perhaps this propaganda is not by nature dishonest, but is always one-sided and prejudiced. The great heroes, constantly held up before the American youth for emulation, lose some of their glory when subjected to critical scrutiny. Washington and his cherry tree episode, his truthfulness and his refraining from obscene language are no longer the unifying factors as of old. It is clearly recognized that the prestige and glamour attributed to the Adams family was notoriously out of proportion. Daniel Boone and his bravery no longer occupy important roles in American history. The legend of Whitman and his part in the saving of Oregon, and the supernatural bravery of John Paul Jones are now matters of dispute. John Brown's accomplishments are not nearly as far reaching as we have been led to believe.
Yet, like many other Americans of mediocre talent, Brown has come to enjoy a posthumous fame that is grossly disproportionate to his actual acts, and often at variance with them. So wide, indeed, is the disparity between what he did and what he is venerated for that it may be fairly argued that the Brown of America legend is not the real Brown at all, but merely the hypostasis of an idea, the personification of that remote ideal which the Nineteenth Century called Liberty.

L. H. Jenks.

"The John Brown Myth,"

American Mercury, 9 (1924), 267-268.

As suggested as one of the techniques used to develop and express nationalism among the Negroes is the stressing of exploits of certain Africans. Great men and great women of the race become objects of pride. Negro educators go way back in their history and discover personalities that they can mythologize. The objectives of the group become embodied in these men and women. If the Negroes create great personages around whom they may rally, integration and group consciousness will inevitably result.
A few quotations will exemplify the emphasis placed upon the exploits of great Negroes.

It is true always, however, that "God makes the wrath of man to serve him," and out of the War of the Rebellion the slave fought his way to freedom. What a glorious record the Afro-American made in that war! It is one of the brightest pages in all history. In the early stages of the war he was not even allowed to drive the teams or to throw up breastworks for the Union Army; before the close of the war he was a regularly enlisted soldier to the number of 200,000, who had fought with such valor, such heroism, from Battery Wagner to Fort Fisher, from Newmarket Heights to Petersburg, that when the victorious Union Army at last marched into Richmond, the fallen and deserted capitol of the Lost Cause, he was accorded the place of honor at the head of the Column. In the sententious language of General Benjamin F. Butler—who first declared the straggling refugees to be "contraband of war" and put them to work—"the coloured troops fought nobly." So they did; so nobly that never more in the lifetime of our grand Republic
will a patriotic white soldier refuse to allow a black soldier to drink out of his canteen, and Colonel Theodore Roosevelt of the Rough Riders expressed it, after fateful San Juan Hill, thirty-six years after Colonel Robert Gould Shaw was "buried with his 'niggers'" in the silver sands of 6 Morris Island.

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In nearly every age and land men of Negro descent have distinguished themselves. In literature there is Terence in Rome, Nosseyyeb and Antar in Arabia, Es-Sa’idi in the Sudan, Puskin in Russia, Dumas in France, Al Kanemi in Spain, Heredia in the West Indies, and Dunbar in the United States, not to mention the alleged Negro strain in Aëspp and Robert Browning. As rulers and warriors we remember such Negroes as Queen Nefertari and Amenhotep III among many others in Egypt. Candace and Ergamenes in Ethiopia; Mansa Musa, Sonni, Ali, and Mohammed Askia in the
Sudan; Diaz in Brazil, Toussaint L'Ouverture in Hayti, Hannivalov in Russia, Sakanouye Tamuramaro in Japan, the elder Dumas in France, Calembe and Chaka among the Bantu, and Mane-lik, of Abyssinia; the numberless black leaders of India, and the mulatto strain of Alexander Hamilton. In music and art we recall Bridgewater, the friend of Beethoven, and the unexplained complexion of Beethoven's own father; Coleridge-Taylor in England; Tanner in America, Gomex in Spain; Ira Aldridge, the actor, and Johnson, Cook and Burleigh, who are making the new American syncopated music. In the Church we know that Negro blood coursed in the veins of many of the Catholic African fathers, if not in certain of the popes; and there were in modern days Benoit of Palermo, St. Benedict, Bishop Crowther, the Mahdi who drove England from the Sudan, and Americans like Allen, Lot Carey, and Alexander Crummel. In science, discovery, and invention the Negroes claim Lislet Geoffroy of the French Academy, Latino and Amo, well known in European university circles; and in America the explorers Dorantes and Henson; Banneker, the almanac maker; Wood, the telephone im-
prover; McCoy, inventor of modern lubrication; Matseliger, who revolutionized shoe-making. Here are names representing all degrees of genius and talent from the mediocre to the highest, but they are strong human testimony to the ability of this race.

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Some incipient myths are beginning to materialize in Negro affairs. Negro heroic legends are recorded by every black historian, and in the repetitions, details are arranged, enlarged, and emphasized in terms of Negro needs and desires.

The protomartyr of the Revolutionary War was Crispus Attucks, a Negro, who was the leader in the Boston massacre on the memorable 5th of March, 1770. Attucks led the citizens in the charge, shouting, "The way to get rid of these idlers is to attack the main guard; strike at the root; this is the nest!" These were perhaps his last words, as his men threw a shower of clubs, stones and brickbats at the soldiers, which they returned with a galling fire.

Attucks was the first to fall, being conspicuous on account of his height which
was six feet and two inches, and the still more important fact that he was in advance of his men.


One of the most brilliant exploits of the Revolution was the capture of Stony Point by Mad Anthony Wayne. But it must not be forgotten that the countersign and password, "The Fort is Ours", was obtained by the shrewdness of a patriotic Negro who was in the habit of selling strawberries to the British. This same Negro guided the troops through the inky darkness, to the causeway over the marsh, around the foot of the hill. Then going in advance up the hill, he gave the countersign to the sentinel and engaged him in a friendly conversation, always keeping his back down the hill; until he was suddenly seized from behind and gagged; the rest was easy.

The historian will tell us that Washington planned, and Wayne executed this glorious exploit; but we maintain that but
for this nameless black hero, the impregnable Stony Point could not have been taken.


"Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have the best places every whar. Nobody eber help me into carriages, or ober mud puddles, or gives me any best place." (and raising herself to her full height and her voice to a pitch like rolling thunder, she asked), "and ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm!" (and she bared her right arm to the shoulder, showing her tremendous muscular power.) "I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well—and ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and 'een 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard—and aint I a woman?"
Den dey talks 'bout dis ting in de head—what dis dey call it?" ("Intellect," whispered some one near.) "Dat's it honey. What's dat got to do with women's rights or niggers' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?"....She ended by asserting that "If de fuat woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down, all 'lone, dese togedder" (and she glanced her eye over us,) "ought to be able to turn it back and get it right side up again, and now dey is asking to do it, de men better let 'em...."

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pp. 253-264.

With this emphasis upon great personalities the Negro historian is attempting to give American history a racial slant. Woodson stresses the part that Negroes have played in American affairs. Du Bois is more than ethnocentric in his emphasis upon the gift of the Negro to America. Negroes have furnished labor power for economic exploitation; they have performed an im-
important role in all American wards; they have enriched America's artistic culture by their literary genius; they have contributed to America's broad democracy; and finally they have brought a distinct spiritual quality into American life.

Undoubtedly this stress upon the Negroid contribution to American civilization is fallacious. Negroes furnish us with an example of assimilation. They have absorbed American culture, but they have added little. In the transition to America the African language, magical practices, religion, and family life were forgotten and today we have only a few vestigial remnants of African culture in our society. This sloughing off of their culture resulted from the physical isolation from their kind and the only practices left for them to imitate were those of the whites. Perhaps it is logical to state that the Negro has influenced American civilization directly by his labor, and indirectly by his very presence.

Several excerpts will serve as concrete illustrative material to exemplify the tendency of the Negro to give American history a racial slant.

This essay is an attempt to set forth more clearly than has hitherto been done the effect which the Negro has had upon American life. Its thesis is that despite slavery, war, and caste, and despite
our present Negro problem, the American Negro
is and has been a distinct asset to this coun-
try and has brought a contribution without
which America could not have been; and that
perhaps the essence of our so-called Negro
Problem is the failure to recognize this
fact...."

II
W.E.B. DuBois. The Gift of Black Folks,
Foreword, pp. ii-iii

A moment’s thought will easily convince
open minded persons that the contribution
of the Negro to American nationality as
slave, freedman and citizen was far from
negligible. No element in American life
has so subtly and yet clearly woven itself
into the warp and woof of our thinking and
acting as the American Negro. He came with
the first explorers and helped in explora-
tion. His labor was from the first the
foundation of the American prosperity and
the cause of the rapid growth of the new
world in economic and social importance.
Modern democracy rests not simply on the
striving white men in Europe and America
but also on the persistent struggle of the
black men in America for two centuries. The military defense of this land has depended upon Negro soldiers from the time of the Colonial wars down to the struggle of the World War. Not only does the Negro appear, reappear and persist in American literature but a Negro American literature has arisen of deep significance, and Negro folk lore and music are among the choicest heritages of this land.

W.E.B. Du Bois. The Gift of Black Folk, Foreword iii

In a peculiar way, then, the Negro in United States has emancipated democracy, reconstructed the threatened edifice of Freedom and been a sort of eternal test of the sincerity of our democratic ideals. As a Negro minister, J. W. C. Pennington, said in London and Glasgow before the Civil War: "The colored population of the United States has no destiny separate from that of the nation in which they form an integral part. Our destiny is bound with that of America. Her ship is ours; her pilot is ours; her storms
are ours; her calms are ours. If she breaks upon a rock, we break with her. If we, born in America, cannot live upon the same soil upon terms of equality with the descendants of Scotchmen, Englishmen, Irishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Hungarians, Greeks and Poles, then the fundamental theory of America fails and falls to the ground.


The Negro's work as a pioneer extends down until our day. The late Commodore Peary who discovered the North Pole said: "Matthew A. Henson, my Negro assistant, has been with me in one capacity or another since my second trip to Nicaragua in 1877. I have taken him on each and all of my expeditions, except the first, also without exception on each of my farthest sledge trips. This position I have given him primarily because of his adaptability and fitness for the work, and secondly on account of his loyalty. He is a better dog driver and can handle a sledge better than any man liv-
ing, except some of the best Esquimo hunters themselves." This leaves Henson today as the only living human being who has stood at the North Pole.

14


It has often occurred to me that people who talk of removing the Negro from the Southern states and colonising him in some distant part of the world do not reflect how deeply he is rooted in the soil. In most that the white man has done on this continent, from the time Columbus landed at San Salvador until Peary penetrated farthest North, the Negro has been his constant companion and helper. Any one who considers what the Negro has done, for example, in the Southern states alone, in cutting down the forests, clearing the land, tilling the soil, and building up the farms and the cities, will recognise that, directly and indirectly, his labour has been an enormous contribution to the civilisation of the Western World. Any one, on the other hand, who will listen to the songs that we
sing, and the anecdotes that are told by
the Negro and concerning him; any one who
will read the literature and the history
of the Southern states, will see that the
Negro has contributed, not merely his lab­
our, but something also of his inner life
and temperament to the character and equal­
ity of the South.

15
Booker T. Washington. The Story of the Ne­
gro, p. 7.

Negro historians are striving to raise their sta­
tus by capitalizing Negro activities in world affairs.
The greatness of the African culture is posited. The
influence that Negroes have had upon other cultures
is often mentioned. Most anything of importance is
shown to be Negroid in origin. Africans first invented
iron, African education was efficient, Africans were
the first to discover America, and to explore the
Southwestern part of this country, and Africans built
the sphinx.

The Africans in the Lake Region seemed
not to make as much general progress as the
others in Ethiopia and Egypt; but they gave
the world the most useful of all things, the
smelting of iron and the use of it in the industrial arts. The large iron industry of today had its beginning in this part of Africa. Africans were also great traders and merchants. They carried their wares across the Desert of Sahara to the people around the Mediterranean and taught them their fine arts and the use of iron. The Greeks passed these ideas on to Romans, and from the latter they have come down to us through the Middle Ages.

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The black people of this ancient world were not of low caste or marked as inferiors in any special way. They were by no means a slave or servile class; the blood of their veins was poured all through the civilized and half-civilized world, and its traces are clear today in southern Asia as far as India and in Southern Europe. Does the traveller not notice the black people among the Turks, and the beautiful brown face that is occasionally met among the Italians? It is said, too, that these
African people had a cotton industry before England, and that they originated the smelting of iron. Think of what the invention of iron conferred upon civilization. Our civilization without the iron would be like the human body without its skeleton; it would collapse, it could not stand and go, it could only crawl and creep.

---Wm. Pickens, *The New Negro*, p. 10

Their recent historical works are characterized by racial bias, moralizations, and rationalizations. Practically all of the black historians are compiling data in order to interpret world history from the racial point of view. They are partisan and sectional. They record with the conscious purpose of gaining converts to the Negro group. They pass ethical judgments upon the events chronicled. Whatever realistic pictures they give are incident to racial and moral objections. The following excerpt is typical of the moralizings found in Negro history.

---Said A. J. McKelway: "Tuesday every house in the town (i.e., the suburb referred to above) was entered by the soldiers, and some two hundred and fifty Negroes temporarily held, while the search
was proceeding and inquiries being made. They were all disarmed, and those with concealed weapons, or under suspicion of having been in the party firing on the police were sent to jail." It is thus evident that in this case, as in many others, the Negroes who had suffered most, not the white men who killed a score of them, were disarmed, and that for the time being their terrified women and children were left defenseless. McKelway also says in this general connection: "Any Southern man would protect an innocent Negro who appealed to him for help, with his own life if necessary." This sounds like chivalry, but it is really the survival of the old slavery attitude that begs the whole question. The Negro does not feel that he should ask any other man to protect him. He has quite made up his mind that he will defend his own home himself. He stands as a man before the bar, and the one thing he wants to know is if the law and the courts of America are able to give him justice—simple justice, nothing more.

18

Rationalizations abound in Negro history. Many of these historians describe the status of the Negro and then rationalize the situation. The stigma of Negro servitude, according to B. T. Washington, is somewhat eradicated after the discovery that the whites were the first American slaves. Slave life is presented as more valuable than detrimental to the Negro.

Perhaps it will not be out of place for me to say here, at the beginning of the book, that the more I have studied the masses of the race to which I belong, the more I have learned not only to sympathise but to respect them. I am proud and happy to be identified with their struggle for a higher and better life.

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People differ, and will always differ no doubt, as to whether the desire to civilise the African was a sufficient excuse for bringing him to America, at the cost of so much suffering and expense. For my own part, I am disposed to believe that it
was worth all that it had cost. At any rate, now that the black man is here and permanently settled in the midst of the white man's civilisation, there can be no good reason for depriving him of the benefits of being here. If any race other than the Anglo-Saxon has earned a right to live in this country and to enjoy the opportunities of American civilisation, it seems to me the Negro has earned that right.  


There was much in slavery besides its hardship and its cruelties, much that was tender, human and beautiful. The heroic efforts that many of the slaves made to buy their own and their children's freedom deserve to be honoured equally with the devotion that they frequently showed in the service of their masters. And after all, considering the qualities which the Negro slave developed under trying conditions, it does not seem to me that there is any
one who wishes him well should despair of the future of the Negro, either in this country or elsewhere.

31


In so far as Negro history is racial or biased, and saturated with moralization and rationalizations it fails to measure up to the historiographic standards and loses its objectivity. Much of it is not history but it is yet valuable for sociological purposes.
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