ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN NEGRO LITERATURE

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY
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To

WALTER WHITE

IN ADMIRATION OF HIS COURAGE IN THE CAUSE OF HIS PEOPLE, AND IN TENDER APPRECIATION OF THAT FINE, INSPIRING WARMTH WHICH I HAVE FOUND IN HIS FRIENDSHIP.

PREFACE

THERE are a few words that ought to be said in explanation of the nature of this volume. It is an anthology which is representative above everything else. This does not mean that an attempt has not been made in every case to choose work of merit, but that in a number of instances it has been necessary to include material because of its representative value, although it is without fine, literary distinction. Certain nineteenth-century poems, for instance, which have been included are pathetically naïve and sentimental; yet in the development of Negro literature they undoubtedly have their place, and, therefore, have been used. In other words, these stories, poems, essays, and selected chapters from novels, purport simply to represent what the Negro in America has achieved in the art of literary forms.

Certain difficulties inherent in a volume of this kind should be obvious to every reader. In selecting chapters from various novels, there is always the danger that the chapters will seem strange and unconvincing when removed from their context. Naturally, in every case, those chapters have been chosen which stand most definitely apart, and convey meaning and movement within themselves, disengaged though they are from their surrounding substance. In the instance of the spirituals and blues, it is unfortunate that they must appear in this bare form, without notes, but in an anthology of this character the presence of scales would be somewhat incongruous.

Since this is the first anthology of Negro literature which, in terms of historical background as well as diversity of forms, has endeavored to be so inclusive, it is hoped that

it will be excused from inadequacies that are inevitable in such a work. It should be noted, also, that no selections were made from such recent novels as *Banjo, Plum Bun,* and *Passing,* or Walter White's very significant social study, *Rope and Faggot,* because they appeared at a time when it was too late to insert anything from them in this anthology.

In order to organize this volume into its present form, it was necessary to have the aid of many writers and publishers, and to thank them all in this quiet, formal way bespeaks little of the depth of my gratitude. In many cases, the authors of selections included in this volume lent their aid generously in the way of advice and suggestion. It would be extremely ungenerous, indeed, not to mention also, my great indebtedness to Mr. W. C. Handy for his wonderfully kind coöperation in aiding me in the matter of securing certain rights to publish the *Blues* which appear in this collection. For material directly used I am indebted to the following publishers:

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V.F.C.

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THE GROWTH OF NEGRO LITERATURE

By V. F. CALVERTON

NEGRO art and literature are, in many ways, as rich in ancient tradition as in modern challenge. The discoveries of archæologists, dating from the explorations of over a century ago, have disclosed the remnants of an African culture that hitherto was almost completely unknown. Tennyson's youthful apostrophe to Timbuctoo has a deeper meaning and import to-day. Timbuctoo stands now as but a single reminder of an ancient civilization that was, perhaps, as rare in diversity and as advanced in ways of life as any civilization, however adjacent or remote, of its time. The products of this civilization, or if we wish to include the civilizations of Ethiopia, Ghana, Melle, and the Songhay in separate categories, then of these civilizations are an eloquent testimony of their progress.

In the Songhay empire, for example, education was advanced to such a point that people came from all over the Islamic world to teach in its schools; and the savants of the Songhay were active also in the Mohammedan countries to the north and east. In fact, throughout the Sudan, university life was fairly extensive. Ahmed Baba, one of the strongly arresting figures of his period, stands out as a brilliant example of the sweep of Sudanese erudition. An author of more than forty books upon such diverse themes as theology, astronomy, ethnography and biography, Baba was a scholar of great depth and inspiration. With his expatriation from Timbuctoo—he was in the city at the time that it was invaded by the Moroccans in 1592 and protested against their occupation of it—he lost, in his collection of 1,600 books, one of the richest libraries of his day. Ahmed Baba, of course, although the most conspicuous, was only

one scholar among many. All through West Africa the Negroes had established many centers of learning. In their schools and universities, courses were given in rhetoric, logic, eloquence, diction, the principles of arithmetic, hygiene, medicine, prosody, philosophy, ethnography, music and astronomy.[1] The Negro scholars in many instances surpassed the Arabian. In Ethiopia their contributions to culture streamed far beyond the borders of their own nation in influence and power. Every exploration and excavation of African materials adds to this historical revelation. We see rising before us, in the form of obscure manuscript, relics of apparel, and architectural remains, the lives of peoples and the movements of civilizations once buried in the sands of a dead world. In this Negro ancestry there were discovered rulers who expanded their kingdoms into empires, generals who advanced the technique of military science, and scholars who brought with their wisdom an advancing vision of life.

When we realize, then, that the Negro is not without a cultural past, we can readily understand his achievements in American art and literature in terms of environmental evolution. Most Americans, unacquainted with this past, and unappreciative of the potentialities of the black peoples, interpret the developments in Negro literature in ways that are immediately stultifying and absurd. One way is tragically familiar. Negro advance, according to this way of interpretation, is the result of the white blood infused in the black personality. The advocates of this interpretation have gone to great pains in their endeavor to prove that every Negro genius is a product of white miscegenation. Their argument that it is only through the presence of white blood that black genius can derive, is no more logical than the contention that it was only through the presence of black blood that Pushkin could develop into a white genius. Nevertheless this method of interpretation still prevails, even in circles that often pretend to be scientific. But there

[1] *Negro Culture in West Africa,* by G. W. Ellis.

are other ways of interpretation that are scarcely less unfortunate in their logic—or lack of it. Another is the one that tries to treat the growth of the new Negro literature as a fad, which, in its sudden flair, reflects nothing more than an interest in the curious. The Negro, in the eyes of the critics, is an oddity, and as an artist and intellectual is stranger far than fiction. Their explanation of his recent success is based mainly upon what they consider an aspect of patronage on the part of the reading public and the publisher. His work is greeted from the point of view of race and not of art. He is pampered as a Negro, and his work is praised often when it ought to be attacked. As a consequence, they are convinced that in a few years, as this illusion in reference to his work has begun to vanish, the interest in Negro literature will cease, and the urge in favor of its creation will correspondingly disappear.

Upon close analysis, these interpretations are seen to be at once irrelevant and futile. In the first place, the Negro did advance and achieve in Africa before white blood could make its intrusion, and many Negro geniuses in America show very little trace of white blood at all; and, in the second place, his contributions to American art and literature are far more free of white influence than American culture is of English. Indeed, we may say that the contributions of the Negro to American culture are as indigenous to our soil as the legendary cowboy or gold-seeking frontiersman. And, in addition, it is no exaggeration whatsoever to contend that they are more striking and singular in substance and structure than any contributions that have been made by the white man to American culture. In fact, they constitute America's chief claim to originality in its cultural history. In song, the Negro spirituals and to a less extent the Blues; in tradition, Negro folk-lore; and in music, Negro jazz—these three constitute the Negro contribution to American culture. In fact, it can be said, that they constitute all that is unique in our cultural life. Since Indian remains have been very largely exterminated, Indian cul-

ture, with its native originality, has been mainly lost. At least, enough does not remain to challenge the contributions of the Negro. When Dvorák sought to find an inspiration in American environment for his New World Symphony, he inevitably turned to the Negro. After all, the Negro, in his simple, unsophisticated way, has developed out of the American *milieu* a form of expression, a mood, a literary *genre,* a folk-tradition, that are distinctly and undeniably American. This is more than the white man has done. The white man in America has continued, and in an inferior manner, a culture of European origin. He has not developed a culture that is definitely and unequivocally American. In respect of originality, then, the Negro is more important in the growth of an American culture than the white man. His art is richer, more spontaneous, and more captivating and convincing in its appeal.

The social background of Negro life in itself was sufficient to inspire an art of no ordinary character. Indeed, the very fact that the Negro, by the nature of his environment, was deprived of education, prevented his art from ever becoming purely imitative. Even where he adopted the white man's substance, as in the case of religion, he never adopted his forms. He gave to whatever he took a new style and a new interpretation. In truth, he made it practically into a new thing. There were no ancient conventions that he, in his untutored zeal, felt duty-bound to respect, and no age-old traditions that instructed him, perforce, as to what was art and what was not. He could express his soul, as it were, without concern for grammar or the eye of the carping critic. As a result, his art is, as is all art that springs from the people, an artless art, and in that sense is the most genuine art of the world. While the white man has gone to Europe for his models, and is seeking still an European approval of his artistic endeavors, the Negro in his art forms has never gone beyond America for his background and has never sought the acclaim of any culture other than his own. This is particularly true of those forms

of Negro art that come directly from the people. It is, of course, not so true of a poet such as Phyllis Wheatley or of the numerous Negro poets and artists of to-day, who in more ways than one have followed the traditions of their white contemporaries rather than extended and perfected the original art forms of their race. Of course, in the eighteenth century when Phyllis Wheatley wrote, these Negro art forms were scarcely more than embryonic. To-day, on the other hand, their existence has become a commonplace to the white writer as well as the black.

In a subtle way, Negro art and literature in America have had an economic origin. All that is original in Negro folk-lore, or singular in Negro spirituals and Blues, can be traced to the economic institution of slavery and its influence upon the Negro soul. The Negro lived in America as a slave for over two hundred and forty years. He was forced by the system of slavery into habits of life and forms of behavior that inevitably drove him in the direction of emotional escape and religious delirium. Existence offered him nothing to hope for but endless labor and pain. Life was a continuous crucifixion. The earth became a place of evil. As a downtrodden and suppressed race he had nothing to discover within himself that insured emancipation or escape. His revolts had all proved ineffectual. Inevitably he turned toward the white man for the materials of his "under-dog" logic. He accepted and absorbed the ideas of the ruling class, as do most subordinate groups and classes, until they became a part of his reaction. The white man's paradise suddenly became a consuming aspiration. He became enamored of it as a holy vision. His belief in it became a ferocious faith. Its other-worldly aspect only lent it a richer enchantment. There were no realistic categories to thwart or limit its undimensioned beauty and magnificence. The scarcities of this world had no meaning in the infinite plenitude of the next. Gold could be had for the asking, and everything was as dream would have it if in a land beyond the sun.

It was as an expression of this consecrated other-worldly ardor that the Negro spirituals came into being and grew into form. There is more, far more, than the ordinary Christian zeal embodied in them. These spirituals are not mere religious hymns written or recited to sweeten the service or improve the ritual. They are the aching, poignant cry of an entire people. Jesus to the Negro is no simple religious saviour, worshiped on Sundays and forgotten during the week. He is the incarnation of the suffering soul of a race. In such a spiritual as *Crucifixion,* one finds this spirit manifest:

They crucified my Lord,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
They crucified my Lord,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
Not a word, not a word, not a word.

They nailed Him to the tree,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
They nailed Him to the tree,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
Not a word, not a word, not a word.

They pierced Him in the side,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
They pierced Him in the side,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
Not a word, not a word, not a word.

The blood came twinklin' down,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
The blood came twinklin' down,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
Not a word, not a word, not a word.

He bowed His head an' died,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
He bowed His head an' died,
an' He never said a mumbalin' word;
Not a word, not a word, not a word.

Or in such a spiritual as *Swing Low Sweet Chariot,* we discover the other-worldly motif in fine, moving form:

Swing low sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home,
Swing low sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home.
O swing low sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home,
Swing low sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, and what
did I see,
Comin' for to carry me home,
A band of angels comin' after me,
Comin' for to carry me home;
If you get-a dere befo' I do,
Comin' for to carry me home,
Tell all my friends I'm comin' too,
Comin' for to carry me home.

O swing low sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home,
Swing low sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home,
Comin' for to carry me home.

When we turn to the Blues and the Labor Songs, the economic connection is more obvious. Here we have folklore in poetic form, springing spontaneously from the simple everyday life of an oppressed people. The Blues have a primitive kinship with the old ballads that is strikingly curious upon close comparison. While the rhyme-scheme employed in the Blues is often less clever and arresting than that found in the ballads, the incremental repetitions are not less effective, and the simple, quick descriptions are often as fine in this form as the other. The labor songs, growing up as part of the workaday rhythms of daily toil, have a swing about them that is irresistibly

infectious. The musical swing of the hammer, its sweeping rise and fall, is communicated, for instance with rhythmic power in the song entitled *John Henry*.

Dis is de hammer
Killed John Henry,
Killed him dead, killed him dead,
Busted de brains all outer my pardner
In his head, yes, in his head.

And in the familiar levee song, we meet with another but not less enticing rhythm.

Where wuz your sweet mamma
When de boat went down?
On de deck, Babe,
Hollerin' Alabama Bound.

The Negro has retained unquestionably in his art a certain primitivism that is wonderfully refreshing in contrast to the stilted affectations of the more cultured styles and conceptions. We come closer to life with these primitivisms, feel beauty in its more genuine and intimate and less artificial and cerebral forms.

These primitivisms of the Negro are a singular evolution of our American environment. In describing them as primitive, we do not mean that they are savage in origin, or that the instincts of savagery linger in them, but that they are untutored in form and unsophisticated in content, and in these aspects are more primitive than civilized in character. The art of primitive peoples is often the very opposite in spirit to that of the American Negro. The art, for instance, of the African Negro is entirely without that exuberance which is so emphatically dominant in the art-expression of the American Negro. African art is rigid, economical of energy, and almost classic in its discipline. The exuberance of sentiment, the spirited denial of discipline, and the contempt for the conventional, that are so conspicuous in the

art of the American Negro, are direct outgrowths of the nature of his life in this country.

In jazz this vital and overwhelming exuberance of the American Negro reaches its apex in physical dynamics. If the origin of jazz is not entirely Negroid—that its fundamental form is derivative of Negro rhythms no longer can be disputed—its development of attitude and expression in America has certainly been chiefly advanced by the Negro. While the spirituals represent the religious escape of the Negro, the jazz rhythms vivify his mundane abandon. Today this mundane abandon has become a universal craving on the part of youth in Europe as well as in America. Since the war, the dance has become a mania. It is the mad, delirious dance of men and women who have had to seize upon something as a vicarious outlet for their crazed emotions. They have not wanted old opiates that induced sleep and the delusion of a sweet stillness of things and silence. They have not sought the escape which an artificial lassitude brings to minds tormented with worry and pain. They have demanded an escape that is active, dynamic, electrical, an escape that exhilarates, and brings restfulness only from exhaustion. Jazz has provided that escape in increasing measure as its jubilant antics and rhythms have become madder and madder in their tumult of release. To the Negro the riotous rhythms that constitute jazz are but an active translation of the impulsive extravagance of his life. Whether a difference in the calcium factor in bone structure or conjunction, accounting for an exceptional muscular resiliency, or a difference in terms of an entirely environmental disparity, be used to explain the Negro's superior response to jazz, his supremacy in this new departure in music remains uncontested. Jazz, Stokowski contends, "has effected a profound change in musical outlook." In this change, Stokowski adds:

"The Negro musicians of America are playing a great part. . . . They have an open mind, and unbiased outlook. They

are causing new blood to flow in the veins of music. The jazz players make their instruments do entirely new things, things finished musicians are taught to avoid. They are path-finders into new realms."

Jazz reflects something of the essential irresponsibility, or rather the irresponsible enthusiasms and ecstasies, that underlie Negro life here in America, and which give to Negro art such singular distraction in verse and spontaneity. While Jazz in its inferior forms is a vulgar removal from the idea of the exquisite which prevailed in music before our day, it nevertheless has the virtue of great originality and the vigor of deep challenge. In a very significant sense, indeed, it remains as the only original contribution to music that has been made by America.

If the spirit of jazz is captured almost to a point of precision in these lines from *Runnin' Wild*:

> Runnin' wild; lost control
> Runnin' wild, mighty bold,
> Feelin' gay and reckless too
> Carefree all the time; never blue
> Always goin' I don't know where
> Always showin' that I don't care
> Don' love nobody, it ain't worth while
> All alone; runnin' wild.

it would be a serious and most reprehensible exaggeration to maintain that it is this mood which permeates all Negro art in America. In fact, much of contemporary Negro poetry is as far removed in spirit from the jazz motif as the poetry of John Milton is from that of T. S. Eliot. There is indeed, an over-seriousness, even an affected dignity in the work of many Negro poets. This tendency to an artificial loftiness of utterance, verging often upon the pompous, is more marked in the work of the Negro writers of the nineteenth century than of the twentieth. In many cases education removed the Negro writer further from his people, and inclined his work in the direction of imitating

the artificial standards of other groups rather than of advancing and perfecting those of his own. As a result, a certain naturalness and fine vigor of style were lost. While this tendency has not disappeared, a reaction has already set in against it, and to-day Negro writers have begun to develop a more candid approach.

In the poetry of Langston Hughes, for instance, there is a freshness even in artifice that was absent in the poetry of the nineteenth century Negro. Even Dunbar, who was the leading Negro poet prior to our own day, avoided the affectations and conceits of his contemporaries only in his poems of dialect. In the verse of such writers as Albert A. Whitman, Mrs. Harper, George Moses Horton, James Madison Bell, Joseph Seamon Cotter and James David Corrothers this literary fallacy is unpleasantly conspicuous. They aspired at the stately, when they should have aimed at the simple. Their poetry, as a consequence, was hopelessly inept and sentimental. It is only with the present day, and the emergence of the contemporary school of Negro poets, led by such figures as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer and Claude McKay, that this type of verse has been condemned with scorn.

If the recent developments in Negro literature cannot be characterized as a renaissance, they certainly must be noted as marking off a new stage in the literary history of a people. Without question the work of Jean Toomer, Rudolph Fisher, Burghardt Du Bois, and Walter White in fiction; Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and Claude McKay in verse; and Alain Locke, Franklin Frazier, James Weldon Johnson, Charles S. Johnson, Abram L. Harris and George Schuyler in the essay, has been distinguished by fine intelligence and advancing artistic vision. Surely at no other period, and certainly never in so short a time, have so many Negro writers of genuine talent appeared. If among these writers, no great artist or great thinker has so far evolved, there is no reason for despair. The great achievement of Roland Hayes on the concert stage, and of

Paul Robeson in the theatre, gives promise at least of similar success in the literary art in the future. The appearance of these numerous artists and the growth of this newer spirit on the part of the Negro, is really not so much a rebirth in the sense of a renaissance, as it is the hastening of an old birth which had formerly been retarded in its growth and evolution.

Steadily the trend in this New Negro literature has developed in favor of the vigorous instead of the exquisite. Challenge has become more significant than charm. The submissive acquiescences of the Booker T. Washington attitude and era have now become contemptuously anachronistic. The sentimental cry of a nineteenth century poet such as Corrothers:

> To be a Negro in a day like this—
> Alas! Lord God, what will have we done

has been superseded by the charging defiance of a twentieth century poet such as McKay:

IF WE MUST DIE

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!

—CLAUDE MCKAY

The admission of inferiority which was implicit in so much of the earlier verse, the supplicatory note which ran like a lugubrious echo through so many of its stanzas, has been supplanted by an attitude of superiority and independence on the part of such poets as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Bennett.

In Cullen's lines:

> My love is dark as yours is fair,
> Yet lovelier I hold her
> Than listless maids with pallid hair,
> And blood that's thin and colder . . .

one discovers this attitude expressed with exquisite conviction. In Gwendolyn Bennett's stanza:

> 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 . . .

we are confronted with it again in definite form. Hughes gives to this same attitude a touch of African aspiration:

> We should have a land of trees,
> Bowed down with chattering parrots
> Brilliant as the day,
> And not this land where birds are grey . . .

and in *America* he whips it into a prophetic challenge:

I, Too

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.

George Schuyler in prose has given this same attitude a sharp, ironic turn. His clean-cut, biting style, inevitably in keeping with his theme and purpose, is at times superb. He meets his materials with a directness that compels by its vigor. His writing is never sentimental; rather it has a hard, metallic brilliance that convinces without endeavoring to caress. In *Our Greatest Gift to America,* which deals in satiric form with the Negro's position in this country, Schuyler's criticism is acute and devastating:

"It is fairly well established, I think, that our presence in the Great Republic has been of incalculable psychological value to the masses of which we are citizens. Descendants of convicts, serfs, and half-wits, with the rest have been buoyed up and greatly exalted by being constantly assured of their superiority to all other races and their equality with each other. On the stages of a thousand music-halls, they have their vanity tickled by black-face performers parading the idiocies of mythical black roustabouts and rustics. Between belly-cracking guffaws they have secretly congratulated themselves on the fact that they are not like these buffoons. Their books and magazines have told them, or insinuated, that morality, beauty, refinement and culture are restricted to Caucasians. On every hand they have seen smokes endeavoring to change from black to white, and from kinky hair to straight, by means of deleterious chemicals, and constantly they hear the Negroes urging each other to do this and that like white folks. Nor do the crackers fail to observe either—that pink epidermis is as highly treasured among blacks as in Nordic America, and that the most devastating charge that one Negro can make against another is that 'he acts just like a nigger.' Anything excellent they hear labeled by the race-conscious Negroes as 'like white folks,' nor is it unusual for them while loitering in the Negro ghetto, to hear black women compared to Fords, mulatto women to Cadillacs and white women to Packards. With so much flattery it is no wonder that the Caucasians have a very high opinion of themselves and attempt to live up to the lofty niche in which the Negroes have placed them. We should not marvel that every white elevator operator, school teacher and bricklayer identifies himself with Shakespeare, Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, Newton, Edison, Wagner, Tennyson and Rembrandt as creators of this great civilization. As a result we have our American society, where everybody who sports a pink color believes himself to be the equal of all other whites by virtue of his lack of skin pigmentation, and his classic Caucasian features.

"It is not surprising, then, that democracy has worked better in this country than elsewhere. This belief in the equality of all white folks—making skin color the gauge of worth and the measure of citizenship rights—has caused the lowest to strive to become amongst the highest. Because of this great ferment, America has become the Utopia of the material world; the land of hope and opportunity. Without the transplanted African in their midst to bolster up the illusion, America would have unquestionably been a much different place; but instead the shine has served as a mudsill upon which all white people alike can stand and reach toward the stars. I submit that here is the gift par excellence of the Negro to America. To spur ten times our number on to great heights of achievement; to spare the nation the enervating presence of a destructive social caste system, such as exists elsewhere, by substituting a color caste system that roused the hope and pride of teeming millions of ofays—this indeed is a gift of which we can well be proud."

As the racialism of the Negro has become more assertive and radical, a new attitude has begun to reveal itself in his fiction. There has been a marked tendency in the past, except in stories of dialect, for Negro writers to center their attention upon the more enlightened and prosperous members of the race. In *Fire in the Flint,* for instance, Walter White has chosen a doctor for his protagonist; in *There is*

Confusion, Jessie Fauset has featured a dancer as her star; in *Quicksand,* Nella Larsen has selected a school teacher for her main character; and in *The Dark Princess* Du Bois has made an aristocratic woman into his heroine. To-day in the novels of Rudolph Fisher and Claude McKay the class of characters has shifted. In *The Walls of Jericho* and *Home to Harlem* the main characters are proletarian types, piano-movers and stevedores, who are endowed with little education and less culture. The lives of these lower types are seen to be as fascinating and dramatic as those of the upper. In fact, a certain native drama is revealed in the lives of these colored folk that is absent in the lives of most white people in the same class of society. This added drama flows from the freer and more irresponsibly spontaneous way in which these black men live. In time no doubt these proletarian types, since the Negro, dating from his vast migrations from southern to northern latitudes during and immediately following the war, is becoming rapidly proletarianized, will occupy an increasingly large part in the entire literary scene.

This new challenge on the part of the contemporary Negro was first expressed in 1912 by W. Burghardt Du Bois in his famous Atlanta speech, which was dynamitic in its various provocations. This speech in its statement of purpose chalked off the beginning of a new era in the intellectual life of the American Negro:

> "We plan an organization so effective and so powerful that when discrimination and injustice touched one Negro, it would touch 12,000,000. We have not got this yet, but we have taken a great step toward it. We have dreamed, too, of an organization that would work ceaselessly to make Americans know that the so-called 'Negro-Problem' is simply one phase of the vaster problem of democracy in America, and that those who wish freedom and justice for their country must wish it for every black citizen. This is the great and insistent message of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."

This meant that the Booker T. Washington philosophy, which had prevailed for over a generation, had been at last criticized and condemned. The intellectual acquiescence which Washington had encouraged and endorsed was supplanted by a doctrine of resistance. The American Negro henceforth, through the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other organizations, would fight rather than surrender. The World War, of course, was enormously instrumental in strengthening this change of attitude on the part of the Negro.

This change in intellectual conviction, this shifting from an attitude of compromise to one of challenge, is reflected, as we have seen, in the literature of the Negro during the recent decade.

If this new literature of the Negro in America does not constitute a renaissance, it does signify rapid growth in racial art and culture. It is a growth that is as yet unfinished. Indeed, we may say it illustrates a growth that in a dynamic sense has just begun. It indicates more than the rise of a literature. It marks the rise of an entire people.