Introduction

Marcus Garvey, on the verge of being imprisoned in Atlanta in 1925, told his followers to "[l]ook for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you." Garvey's words, urging his followers not to despair during his absence, are reflective not only of his condition but also of the situation of anglophone Caribbean people in Harlem in the early part of the twentieth century.[1] During the 1920s, the height of what was dubbed the era of the New Negro movement, historically associated with African Americans, one in four Harlemites was foreign-born, mostly from the anglophone Caribbean (Osofsky 131). Despite their ubiquity, as these immigrants have gradually died, moved away, or assimilated into New York's African American community, their achievements have been rendered virtually invisible. In fact, aside from Marcus Garvey and Claude McKay, the names of most of the Caribbean pioneers have held, until recently, scant significance for most people, including many scholars of the period. This anthology allows us to redress this significant lacuna in literary, political, and cultural history by collecting the writings of a variety of Caribbean authors in one place and in some cases reprinting their works for the first time since their original publication.

In the words of critic Roy Simon Bryce-Laporte, Anglophone Caribbean immigrants have suffered a "double invisibility . . . as *blacks* and as *black foreigners*" (31). Even major figures such as Garvey and McKay have not been generally thought of in relation to the large Caribbean community of which they were a part. Notwithstanding differences in their backgrounds and philosophies, these writers were linked by a common heritage and bound together in a new city, a new land, at a critical juncture. It was the age of the Harlem Renaissance, when the New Negro began to assert the necessity for political and economic equality for Blacks and to resist accommodation.[2] It was a period that produced an artistic movement unlike any Black America had previously known. Above all, it was a time that emphasized newness and "signified a manifestation that blurred the boundaries

between aesthetics, politics, and life style" (Watson 8). Caribbean immigrants were key contributors to the burgeoning developments of this seminal era, cogently adding their unique voice to a variety of issues, including race and image building, the development of a Black aesthetic, progressive politics, and the struggle to define the status of Blacks in America.

Anglophone Caribbean Immigrants during the Harlem Renaissance: An Overview

In order to better understand the contributions of these early figures, we must realize the status of Caribbean immigrants in New York City: why they came, who they were, what their concerns were. Migration has long been a way of life in the Caribbean; indeed, the area's history has been "a succession of waves of migration" (D. Marshall 15). The region's origin itself was one of uprootedness, born out of slavery and indentured labor. Emancipation throughout the British Empire in 1834 only increased migration, as it was one of the limited options by which West Indians could display their newly won liberation. They had been migrating within the region throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to work on the sugar estates in Trinidad, Cuba, and British Guiana; on banana plantations and the rail system in Costa Rica; and on the building of the Panama Canal (Chaney 7). Some twenty thousand had even come to the United States by 1900, particularly after the United Fruit Company began importing bananas in the 1880s, paving the way for fairly inexpensive travel (and increased tourism) between the Caribbean and the United States. By 1860, 20 percent of Black Bostonians had been born in the Caribbean (James, "Explaining Afro-Caribbean" 219). The number of immigrants to reach the shores of the United States increased rapidly between 1900 and 1930. Several factors were responsible for this increase, but the chief reasons, as always, were economic and political. Many of the islands were chronically overcrowded, with high unemployment rates and little land available (particularly for Blacks) for agriculture. The plantocratic system established by the colonial powers had helped create a system with pervasive class discrimination, allowing few opportunities for advancement. Natural disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, and droughts, made conditions even worse. The completion in 1914 of the Panama Canal, built primarily by Caribbean laborers in a highly segregated society, largely

ended migration to that part of the region. For all these reasons immigrants now turned to America (Holder 7–12; Palmer 1–8; James, *Holding Aloft* 9–49).

Caribbean immigrants viewed the United States as a land of opportunity and their favorite destination was New York City. The foreign-born Black population in the city increased steadily, from 3,552 in 1900 to almost 60,000 in 1930 (Holder 9).[3] Anglophone Caribbean immigrants began moving to New York about the same time that Black Americans began migrating from the South in large numbers. Hundreds of thousands of southern Blacks migrated to the North and West from 1916 to 1918 (Marks). The Caribbean immigrants and Black southern migrants joined with an already existent African American population to form the Black capital of America.

Harlem was occupied almost exclusively by Whites until the early twentieth century; however, several events in the first decade of the new century radically transformed this demographic picture. Race riots in 1900 and 1905 made many Blacks, a number of whom lived in midtown Manhattan in the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill sections, fear for their safety. At about this same time many Blacks were being forced out of their homes by new construction projects such as the Pennsylvania Station. These people needed to find a place quickly to live, one close to where they worked and expansive enough to accommodate their rapidly increasing numbers. Harlem seemed the perfect fit. First, the opening of the IRT subway line in 1904 made the area accessible to a large number of people. In addition, the economic downturn of 1903–04 enabled African American real estate brokers such as Philip A. Payton to buy large amounts of property in Harlem (J. W. Johnson 145–59). Following a frequent though unfortunate pattern in American urban development, as Blacks began moving into the area, Whites living there rapidly sold their property. As a result, by 1930 the area from 128th to 145th streets bounded by Fifth and Seventh avenues was almost exclusively inhabited by Blacks (Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations* 39–53; De Jongh 5–14).

Race, Identity, and "Otherness"

The foreign-born Blacks moving into Harlem had all the problems of other immigrants adjusting to a different way of life; however, in addition to these obstacles, Black immigrants were forced to negotiate a

racial "otherness" most had never before encountered. This intersection of ethnicity and race was (and still is) at the nexus of the Black immigrant experience in the United States. Compounding this "otherness" was the hybridity of the anglophone Caribbean immigrant. While W. E. B. Du Bois, in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), spoke of the "double consciousness" of African Americans, the Caribbean immigrant took this one step further, loosely combining features of European, African, and American cultures into what critic Paul Gilroy has termed "the black Atlantic." These immigrants had "a desire to escape the restrictive bonds of ethnicity, national identification, and sometimes even 'race' itself" (19). They exhibited a fluidity of identity, describing themselves as Black, as West Indian or Caribbean, as British, as Jamaican (or whatever their homeland was), and, when it suited their purpose, American, and feeling no need to choose between these multiple identities. This, however, often left them feeling not as if they belonged to all of these worlds but rather that they did not quite fit in any of them. Upon coming to the United States, many Caribbean immigrants felt a displacement, "a transformation," as Heather Hathaway suggests, "that can leave one forever distanced and different from the land and people of one's origin, if also from the land of one's adoption" (2).

Once in the United States, these immigrants were often misunderstood by other Americans. West Indians were thought of as a monolithic group despite the significant historical and cultural differences between those from different homelands. To think of the many lands in the Caribbean as a uniform whole is a vast oversimplification. Despite a number of commonalities among the peoples of these lands, there are cultural and linguistic differences between them (attributable in part to the various colonial powers in the region) too subtle for most Americans to detect but readily apparent to anyone from the Caribbean. Often separated by different classes at home, even those from the same land did not fit well when thrust together in America. As Jervis Anderson observes, Caribbean immigrants "clung to the regional and insular attitudes of their particular backgrounds, and there were almost as many rivalries among them as there were between them and the majority of black Americans in Harlem—who viewed the West Indians with a mixture of reserve and resentment" (299).

As if the tensions among these immigrants were not enough, anglophone Caribbean immigrants also had to confront the often-

contradictory stereotypes that were held by Americans. Caribbean immigrants were considered to be crafty, intelligent, sensitive, hot tempered, proud, aggressive, ambitious, clannish, and frugal, stereotypes that continue today (Reid 107–08). These perceptions, of course, frequently depended upon the viewer and the particular situation. In some cases West Indians were looked upon more favorably by White Americans than were American-born Blacks. Author Claude McKay, for example, recounts an incident when, while relaxing in a cafe in Pittsburgh largely frequented by African Americans, he was rounded up in a police dragnet intended to catch "draft dodgers and vagrants." After the judge had given out numerous sentences to the American-born Blacks, McKay's turn came. He gave a short defense, after which the judge inquired whether he had been born in Jamaica. When McKay answered affirmatively, the judge replied, "Nice place. I was there a couple of seasons ago," and dismissed the case. Thereafter, McKay decided "to cultivate more my native accent" (7–9).

The experiences of Caribbean immigrants in America, however, were often not so benign as McKay's. Many anglophone Caribbean immigrants had their first encounters with racial prejudice in the United States. In their homelands, even if they had not been in a position of power, they had been part of the majority. At home, although class and skin color (a lighter pigmentation defined social status in many Caribbean islands, particularly Jamaica) might have determined the level of advancement they could attain, their lives had not been circumscribed solely by race. In fact, the bipolar distinction of Black and White was alien to many Caribbean immigrants who had been brought up with many gradations between groups based upon racial complexion and class (Waters 29–31; N. Foner 12–13). They had been taught that advancement would come through hard work and merit and to deemphasize race as a means to social advancement. These immigrants soon realized, however, that in the United States upward mobility did not necessarily shield them from racism (Vickerman 5–6, 112–13). McKay succinctly explains this realization of the intractability of racism: "the first time I had ever come face to face with such manifest, implacable hate of my race . . . my feelings were indescribable" (286, this volume).

The prejudice against Caribbean immigrants as both foreigners and Blacks caused them to resist assimilation assiduously. They held tenaciously to their dress, culture, and religion (most American Blacks

were Baptists or Methodists, while anglophone Caribbeans tended to be Episcopalian or Roman Catholic). They also retained their ties to Great Britain, with more than five thousand of them attending a celebration for King George VI's coronation in 1937 (Reid 126–28). Confused and angered by American racism, West Indians often cried out in despair (generally in vain) to the British consulate. Many longed to return to their homelands, and, in fact, a great many did. They often thought of their stay in the United States, even if protracted, as merely "a visit," desperately holding on to the belief that they would someday be able to return to their land of birth (Reid 179). Tellingly, West Indians had the lowest rate of naturalization of any immigrant group. According to the 1930 census, 25.6 percent of foreign-born Blacks twenty-one years of age and older had become citizens, compared to 60.4 percent of foreign-born Whites (Walter, "Caribbean Immigrant" 539). Much of the resistance to assimilation among Caribbeans, no doubt, was due to the vicious racial prejudice they suffered as Blacks in America. Mary Waters, in speaking of contemporary anglophone Caribbean immigrants, makes a telling remark about the effects of racism that is equally applicable to their early-twentieth-century predecessors: "For these immigrants becoming American also entails becoming American black, which they perceive as lower social status than staying a West Indian" (93).

Anglophone Caribbean immigrants faced bias not only from White Americans. The juncture of West Indians and Black Americans from the South in northern urban areas was not always a harmonious one. The immigrants sometimes boasted about the progress they had made in their new land. Some also felt that African Americans were poorly educated and lacking in ambition, not fully understanding the difficulties they experienced every day in dealing with American racism, which often denied them proper education, housing, and career opportunities (Hathaway 21–22). Many American-born Blacks, on the other hand, maintained that anglophone Caribbean immigrants thought of themselves as superior. Their emphasis on schooling and on owning property, and their pride in their British training and in speaking "proper" English, made some American Blacks think they were arrogant. The main source of conflict between the groups was a perceived "competition for jobs, control of black businesses, political influence, and status in general" (Hellwig 185). The result was a frequent antagonism between anglophone Caribbean immigrants and American Blacks. Caribbeans were referred to as "monkey-chasers."

The lyrics to "The West Indies Blues," a popular song of the era, included lines such as "I'll make my livin' sure's you born, / A-divin' after qua'ters" and reflected these negative feelings (qtd. in Reid 114).

While ethnic differences between American Blacks and foreign-born Blacks caused friction between the groups, it would be misleading to suggest that there was constant conflict between them. Some Black Americans were even enthralled by what the immigrants brought to America. Langston Hughes, for instance, praised what he witnessed in anglophone Caribbean Harlem, calling it "warm, rambunctious, sassy . . . little pockets of tropical dreams in alien tongues" (qtd. in Anderson 300). Carter Woodson hailed the spirit of cooperation that often unified those within the Caribbean community (9). Moreover, social conditions frequently forced the two groups into what Jamaican W. A. Domingo described as "reconciling contacts." These conditions brought West Indians into common, albeit tenuous, political and social alliances with Black Americans. As a result of these conflicting impulses, a complex dynamic arose between African Americans and West Indians, whereby the immigrants attempted to distance themselves from Black Americans because of perceived differences over cultural values while simultaneously bonding with them on issues of race (Vickerman 137–60). As Philip Kasinitz observes, "Caribbean New Yorkers of the 1920s and 1930s might have been immigrants in a city of immigrants, but it was race that structured their life chances. Being black determined where they lived and could not live, where they could and could not go to school, what type of job they could get and the way they were treated by Americans of all colors" (8).[4]

Success and the Myth of the Model Minority

Despite the obstacles they encountered, many immigrants flourished. Their success was often facilitated by their background and abetted by the strong bonds of community that prevailed. Caribbean immigrants, perhaps because of their familiarity with migration, often developed remarkably flexible survival skills in their new environment (Henke 38–42). The success of these immigrants is easily documented. For example, in *Who's Who in Colored America* (1930), 6 percent of those listed were foreign-born Blacks, although they made up less than 1 percent of the Black population nationally (Walter and Ansheles 51–52). Black periodicals were peppered with stories of their various achievements. They particularly excelled in business, from the wealthy

funeral director Howard A. Howell to the prosperous numbers banker Casper Holstein.[5] Indeed, there was a common expression in Harlem that "[w]hen a West Indian got 'ten cents above a beggar' . . . he opened a business" (qtd. in Osofsky 133). Many did struggle to open businesses, sometimes foraying into areas once off-limits for Blacks, yet their achievements were often tempered by the stranglehold of Whites in business.

This relative success does not mean, however, that Caribbean immigrants, as conservative African American critic Thomas Sowell has contended, were a "model minority," one whose members through hard work and grit alone could (unlike their American Black brethren) succeed despite their skin color. This image of success was one that developed, in part, due to a careful cultivation by West Indians themselves (see, for example, W. A. Domingo's "Gift of the Black Tropics" and Hubert H. Harrison's "Prejudice Growing Less and Cooperation More, Says Student of Question" in this volume).

It is important to consider some of the differences between these immigrants and most members of the African American community. In business, for example, Caribbean immigrants did not face in their home countries the harsh racism that many African Americans endured; therefore, when they came to the United States, "[s]tarting a business could be a realistic goal for those who had capital and experience" (Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations* 127). In addition, many Caribbean immigrants were far better off than their countrymen and women at home. The cost of transportation alone excluded the poorest members of Caribbean society from the ranks of immigrants to the United States.

While most Caribbean immigrants were far from wealthy, and they were often forced to take domestic positions, their immigration was, on the whole, from a higher social strata of educated and skilled individuals. This was especially true after the Literacy Act of 1917 was passed. Between 1918 and 1932, only about a third of anglophone Caribbean immigrants could be classed as unskilled (Holder 7–12). Between 1924 and 1932, more than 98 percent of Caribbeans immigrating to the United States were literate, a percentage far exceeding that of the general population in their homelands as well as that of the native-born American population, both Black and White (Walter, "Caribbean Immigrant" 524–28).

Winston James reminds us, "[w]hatever the virtues of a sound English common school education, not everyone in the British

Caribbean received one" ("Explaining Afro-Caribbean" 238). The typical Caribbean immigrant to the United States in the early part of the twentieth century, however, was from the segment of the population that did receive a quality education. In fact, it was the disparity in the Caribbean between the more prosperous, better-educated population and those less well off that prompted many to leave their homeland. Thus, it is not surprising that these early Caribbean immigrants often thrived in business and demonstrated upward social mobility.[6]

Gender Issues

Between 1900 and 1930, 48,135 foreign-born Negro women arrived in America, compared to 57,887 men (Reid 236). There are a number of reasons why fewer women than men joined the ranks of the immigrants in this period, unlike today, when women make up the majority of New York's Caribbean population (Scott A1). Some families were reluctant to allow single women to migrate, and the U.S. government, fearing that such women might turn to prostitution, was reluctant to grant them visas. Though their numbers were smaller, Caribbean women who emigrated often tended to stay in the country more permanently than did men, in part because they were more likely to enter the country legally (Watkins-Owens, "Early-Twentieth-Century" 29).

Caribbean women made substantial contributions to the social network of the immigrant community, though the subject has received little critical attention to date. In some cases, they were the first members of their families to arrive in America, helping to pave the way for others. Hubert Harrison, Cyril Briggs, W. A. Domingo, and Richard B. Moore, for example, all joined female family members upon first arrival in the United States.

While gender restrictions often had curtailed their educational opportunities in their home countries, most of the female immigrants from the Caribbean had received a primary school education or had some training in a skilled trade. In America, these women typically worked as domestics or laundry workers or in the higher-paying jobs in the garment industry (as finishers, dressmakers, and needlepoint

Women also were often central figures in the numerous benevolent and rotation credit associations (a means of building capital by pooling resources) that helped foster growth in the local community and provided support for those in their native lands. Furthermore, as will be explored in more detail later in my introduction, they also were frequent contributors to the political and literary arenas (Watkins-Owens, "Early-Twentieth-Century").

The Decline and Revival of the Caribbean Community

Although West Indian immigrants achieved great success in the first three decades of the twentieth century, hostility toward immigrants, and particularly toward people of color, increased markedly during and after World War I, as is evidenced by the anti-immigrant Alien Act of 1918. The effects of this hostility are also reflected in the Immigration Act of 1924, which greatly reduced immigration quotas for all but Northern Europeans. As a result of the Immigration Act, foreign-born Black immigration to the United States fell from 12,243 in 1924 to 791 in 1925 (Walter, "The Caribbean Immigrant" 542). Despite the obvious racism in the legislation, however, there was little American-born Black opposition. Fred R. Moore, for example, in an editorial in the conservative African American newspaper the *New York Age*, denounced newer West Indians for "flaunt[ing] their British allegiance" and for making "disloyal utterances." W. E. B. Du Bois, who had earlier written that he was "proud" of his own Caribbean heritage, essentially washed his hands of the whole matter: "The Nordic champions undoubtedly put one over on us in the recent immigration bill. If our West Indian friends had watched more carefully and warned us, we might have been able to take some effective step" (qtd. in Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations* 28).[7]

The 1924 act signaled the end of the first great wave of anglophone Caribbean immigration to the United States. The decline was hastened considerably by the onset of the Great Depression and the subsequent shortage of jobs. By 1933, as was the case with many immigrant groups at the time, more West Indians were leaving the

United States than were entering The number of Caribbean immigrants remained fairly small until the passage in 1965 of the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Nationality Act. This act and the subsequent amendments to it made it much easier for the next generation of anglophone Caribbean immigrants to come to America. Indeed, they continue to come, in remarkable numbers, often to New York City, just as their predecessors did. Jamaica and Guyana, for example, despite having relatively small populations, remain among the top five countries sending immigrants to New York (Dugger A1).

The continuing surge of immigration has caused many "to rethink, if not reconceive, the notion of *diasporic citizenship* so as to take stock of the newer facets of the globalization process" (Laguerre 5). As Holger Henke has stated, "While the rest of the world is only beginning to experience globalization, Caribbean people have been located at the center of this maelstrom for several hundred years" (153). The Caribbean person is almost from birth taught to look outward, because of overcrowding, political and environmental events, or limited educational and economic opportunities at home. Migration is thus a natural part of the Caribbean psyche.

The seeds of transnationalism were already present, then, in the early Caribbean immigrants. Their correspondence, remittances, rotating credit systems, and participation in nationalistic organizations (ranging from small groups such as the Montserrat Progressive Society to the broader Universal Negro Improvement Association) helped them maintain ties with their countries (or region) of origin at the same time that they were establishing themselves in their new lands. The close proximity of their native lands and the constant influx of new immigrants abetted this process, and this has increased exponentially over the past thirty-five years (Sutton 15–29; N. Foner 7–10; Thomas 45–58; Basch, Schiller, and Blanc). In these times of ever increasing global movement, as Michelle Stephens notes, historicizing the Caribbean experience can "teach us something new about the very construction and use of hegemonic categories of race, nation and ethnicity throughout the [twenty-first] century" (594).

Political and Social Aspects: The "Making" of a Radical

The America that the anglophone Caribbean immigrant entered at the turn of the twentieth century was one filled with racial tension. Jim

Crow laws were pervasive and Blacks had little political clout. Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, remained a powerful presence. Washington, an often maligned but complex figure, advocated racial accommodation, believing that conditions for American Blacks could best be advanced by industrial and agricultural expertise rather than agitation toward civil rights. Despite the opposition of other Black leaders, including W. E. B. Du Bois and Ida B. Wells Barnett, Washington's position, which had its base in the rural South, held sway in the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century.[8]

This period was among the most blatantly racist in America's history. Legal decisions such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) legitimized Jim Crow. Popular author Thomas Dixon celebrated the Ku Klux Klan in his novel *The Clansman* (1905), which was the basis for D. W. Griffith's classic film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). In fact, the Klan reorganized itself in 1915, emerging more virulent than ever in both the North and the South. Workplace discrimination was rampant, and lynching continued unabated. As the United States entered World War I, deep racial unrest divided the nation, culminating in a race riot in East St. Louis on July 2, 1917.

Black leaders were divided over whether Blacks should serve in World War I, but many, such as Du Bois, ultimately urged them to "close ranks" with White America and to participate in the struggle (the *Crisis*, July 1918). The hopes of many Black leaders were raised by President Woodrow Wilson's famous Fourteen Points speech on January 8, 1918, with its proposal for self-determination of subject peoples. Their aspirations, however, were quickly dashed when Wilson turned out to be unsympathetic to demands for equality at home.

Though close to 400,000 Blacks fought in the War, after its finish in 1918 many saw that their sacrifices had largely been in vain. This was particularly difficult to accept for those who had served in France, with its somewhat more egalitarian views on race. The North, too, was a source of disillusionment for the New Negro. Many Blacks, seeing the increased demand for labor during the war years and seeking escape from poverty, lynching, and Jim Crow, sought refuge in the North only to encounter de facto segregation there. Harlem was rife with social ills of its own, including overcrowding, job discrimination, a scarcity of Black-owned businesses, crime, and high tuberculosis and infant mortality rates (Wintz 24–29).

Thoroughly disillusioned, many Blacks began to fight back, particularly during the so-called Red Summer of 1919, when there were bloody uprisings in a number of cities, including Chicago and Washington (Lewis, *When Harlem* 3–24). The government waged an intensive war against those groups it considered radical—in the case of Blacks, essentially anyone advocating "racial change of which they [Whites] disapproved" (Kornweibel, *No Crystal Stair* 69). During the "Red Scare" of 1919–20, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer ordered a series of raids in which over ten thousand people were arrested and some three hundred deported. Many people were under surveillance, radical organizations were routinely infiltrated with government informers, and publications were examined and in some cases detained by the mail service. Black publications such as the *Messenger*, the *Negro World*, the *Crusader*, and even the more moderate organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the *Crisis*, were deemed seditious. In November 1919, Palmer submitted a report on Black periodicals to the Justice Department that was a scathing indictment of the revolutionary tendencies of these publications. In that same year, New York State Senator Clayton R. Lusk headed a committee to trace the impact of "Bolshevism" in New York and the dangers it posed. Lusk conducted his research by making illegal raids on the socialist Rand School, seizing material, and reporting on the committee's research in 1920 (P. Foner, *American Socialism* 292–315; Kornweibel, *No Crystal Stair* 66–104).[9] In such a climate, when any Black who dared aspire to full equality with Whites was branded a radical, only the boldest (or most disaffected) would choose to belong to subversive groups.

Many of those who did so were Caribbean immigrants; in fact, Kelly Miller, conservative dean of Howard University, said that by definition, a Negro radical is "an *over*-educated West Indian without a job" (James, *Holding Aloft* 2). The large-scale involvement of Caribbean immigrants in radical American political movements is remarkable, especially when one considers that since many were not citizens, they could not vote, hold office, or even register in a political party. This radicalism chiefly manifested itself through a somewhat permeable involvement in militant trade unions, Black nationalist, or socialist or communist organizations (Walter, "Black Immigrants" 131).[10]

There has been much discussion of the reasons for anglophone Caribbean radicalism. Kelly Miller, for example, believed that

Caribbeans were conservative while in their home countries but became "radical abroad" (qtd. in Henry 29). Ira Reid, Harold Cruse, Dennis Forsythe, and Keith Henry all, to varying degrees, advance a similar theory of political transformation on the part of Caribbean migrants. There are several flaws, however, in such reasoning. First, it is inaccurate to assume the submissiveness of Caribbean people at home. Caribbean rebelliousness has a long history, dating back to the Maroons, runaway slaves who established their own communities. Many Caribbean immigrants, such as Marcus Garvey and W. A. Domingo, had already exhibited radical tendencies in the West Indies, having been part of trade unions or nationalist organizations. The seeds for their behavior were planted in their homelands, only to reach fruition under differing conditions in their new land.

Upon arriving in the United States, anglophone Caribbean people, like many immigrants, felt a loss of status and prestige from what they had known in their homelands. Black immigrants, having been among the elite in the Caribbean, had generally received a solid primary and secondary school education and job training, giving them the skills that would allow them to expect good positions; therefore, many were genuinely shocked when they faced discrimination in America that they had not endured at home. They had been unaccustomed in their homelands to Jim Crow laws, let alone more heinous crimes such as lynching.

In addition, because they often had been forced to move abroad due to limited higher educational and employment opportunities, Caribbean immigrants, like other immigrants who tended to be at the fore of radical politics, generally had a more international viewpoint than many native-born Americans. The experience of seeing life in other countries and interacting with other Blacks helped lead Caribbean immigrants to a more Pan-African perspective. Furthermore, the immigrants, unlike most Black Americans, who were linked to the Republican party, felt no special allegiance to any one political party and had few qualms about aligning themselves with other parties (James, *Holding Aloft* 50–91; Walter, "Caribbean Immigrant" 532–35).

Garveyism

Arthur A. Schomburg

Arthur (Arturo) Alfonso Schomburg, the famous bibliophile and champion of Black culture, was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on January 24, 1874. His mother, a Black migrant worker from the Virgin Islands, raised him with little assistance from his father, the son of a Puerto Rican woman and a German immigrant. The nurturing influence of his mother and his maternal grandparents seems to have been the shaping factor in his life (James 201–02). Schomburg gained some formal education in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands but he was largely self-taught. His interest in Black culture dates back to his school days in Puerto Rico, when the taunting of his White teachers and classmates that Blacks had no significant achievements pushed him to seek out as many works by Black authors as he could. While in Puerto Rico, Schomburg also took an active interest in the Cuban and Puerto Rican independence movements.

Schomburg arrived in the United States on April 17, 1891, soon finding employment in a law office. While in America, he continued his interest in Cuban and Puerto Rican independence. In 1892, he published his first article, a description of a political club he had helped form, in *Patria*, a journal founded by Cuban revolutionary and author Jose Martí.

Schomburg took a position at Bankers Trust Company in 1906. During his years as a law clerk and banker, he explored Black culture, making trips to Central America, the Caribbean, and throughout the United States, where he collected materials. He was also one of the

founders of the Negro Society for Historical Research in 1911 and became president of the American Negro Academy in 1922.

By 1926 he had amassed a collection of several thousand items—books, pamphlets, prints, and manuscripts—which the New York Public Library purchased for $10,000 through a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. This was to be the basis for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (a part of the New York Public Library), the largest collection of materials on the subject in the world. The cost paid for the collection was a fraction of the expense incurred by Schomburg, a man of limited financial resources, in assembling it. As Schomburg said, "Because I have a lot of books does not mean that I have a lot of money" (qtd. in Walrond 6). Still, the materials had long outgrown the space available for them at his residence in Brooklyn, and he was happy to have the collection housed at the 135th Street Library, in the center of Harlem. The library quickly became a meeting place for many of the rising young talents and greatly facilitated the flowering of the Harlem Renaissance. The vast resources Schomburg compiled provided aid and assistance, not always acknowledged, to many authors and researchers, including James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Jessie Fauset, Alain Locke, and Claude McKay.

In 1929, Schomburg retired from Bankers Trust on a medical pension (he had been suffering from chronic headaches and nosebleeds) and became curator of the Negro Collection at Fisk University, greatly adding to their library. Due to diminishing resources at Fisk, however, Schomburg was forced to leave his position. In 1932, the Carnegie Corporation provided funding for Schomburg to return to New York City and curate his own collection at the 135th Street Library. He held this position until his death on June 10, 1938, following complications from a tooth infection.

Schomburg's lifelong interest in Black culture throughout the diaspora is reflected not only in the research center that bears his name but also in his published work. Although he was not the most skillful author in either English or Spanish (the essays in English required frequent editing before publication), his writings never failed to reflect his erudition. This is best illustrated by "The Negro Digs Up His Past" (first published in the Harlem edition of *Survey Graphic* March 1925 and reprinted in Locke's *The New Negro*), where Schomburg acknowledges the desire for Blacks to claim their racial identity, concomitantly stressing the need for scrupulous accuracy in studying Black history.

He fervently believed that "[h]istory must restore what slavery took away." Schomburg admired Garvey, a fellow Pan-Africanist and staunch Black nationalist, and, like him, felt the way to achieve Black liberation was through the education of the Black masses.

Despite his lack of formal education, Schomburg was an astute collector of Black heritage, utilizing whatever means he could to acquire materials. He made frequent appeals to booksellers and friends to track down Black artifacts. The result of his relentless efforts was the creation of a collection of unparalleled scope and breadth. This is the legacy by which he will be best remembered.

The bulk of Schomburg's papers are at the Schomburg Center. Other materials are located at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University and the Charles S. Johnson Collection at Fisk University.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, James Egert. *The Legend of Arthur A. Schomburg*. Cambridge, MA: Danteer, 1975.

Gubert, Betty Kaplan. "Schomburg, Arthur Alfonso." *American National Biography*. Ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. 422–24.

James, Winston. *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Verso, 1998.

Kaiser, Ernest. "Schomburg, Arthur Alfonso." *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*. Ed. Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston. New York: Norton, 1982.

Ortiz, Victoria. "Arthur A. Schomburg: A Biographical Essay." *The Legacy of Arthur A. Schomburg: A Celebration of the Past, a Vision for the Future*. New York: New York Public Library, 1986.

Rivera, Flor Piñeiro de. *Arthur A. Schomburg: A Puerto Rican's Quest for His Black Heritage*. San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1989.

Claude McKay

Born to a middle-class family in the hills of Jamaica on September 15, 1889, Festus Claudius McKay became one of the leading literary figures of the Harlem Renaissance. McKay, the youngest child in a large family, was influenced by both his parents, who instilled in him a sense of Black pride. His deeply felt love for his mother is evident in such poems as "My Mother." Though he felt no such strong affection for his father, who told him folk stories about Africa, Claude always harbored a respect for him. The family's influence continued through his eldest brother, Uriah Theodore (known as U. Theo), an elementary school teacher, who was responsible for the boy's early education.

McKay was further educated by Walter Jekyll, a wealthy Englishman who had written a book on Jamaican folk song and literature, *Jamaican Song and Story* (1907). Jekyll encouraged McKay to write Jamaican dialect poetry. The result, in 1912, was *Songs of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads* (McKay had been employed for a time in the constabulary). In these volumes, McKay wrote of the simple beauties of Jamaica and the vibrancy of the common people, who often overcame oppressive economic and political conditions. In these poems, as Winston James points out, "McKay's lifelong concern with race, color, class, justice and injustice, oppression and revolt are all given expression" (56).[1]

Having begun to establish himself as a poet, McKay felt he had to escape the narrow confines of his rural home and strike out elsewhere. The budding author came to study agronomy at Tuskegee Institute in 1912 and later at Kansas State University; however, soon,

as he said, "[t]he spirit of the vagabond, the daemon of some poets, had got hold of me" (*Long Way from Home* 4). He knew that he had literary rather than agrarian ambitions and came to New York City in 1914. Though he was forced into a number of menial jobs, he reveled in the excitement of Harlem. Despite fondly remembering his days in the hills of Jamaica, McKay was fascinated by the city, saying, "I gave myself entirely up to getting deep down into . . . [the] rhythm of Harlem life which still remains one of the most pleasurable sensations of my blood" (qtd. in Cooper 72).

Not all of these early experiences, however, were so pleasant. McKay was unprepared for the racism he encountered in America, which contributed to his involvement in radical political movements, particularly after meeting Hubert Harrison. McKay published extensively in Max Eastman's Marxist magazine the *Liberator* between 1919 and 1923.[2] Despite his frequent use of stilted language and his reliance on traditional form, he was innovative in his use of the sonnet to treat political issues. It was in the *Liberator* that he published "If We Must Die." The poem, with its message of defiance, became a paean to many oppressed groups and established McKay as a well-known figure in radical circles. Though the sonnet does not state directly that it deals with White/Black relationships, as Nathan Huggins maintains, "no one could doubt that the author was a black man and the 'we' of the poem black people too" (72). Because of such writings, McKay was cast in the role of "race poet," one with which he was not entirely comfortable, preferring that his work be valued for its literary merit rather than its political content. This would be one of the central tensions in McKay's life and work.

At the end of 1919, McKay journeyed to England, working on Sylvia Pankhurst's socialist weekly the *Workers' Dreadnought*. He was likely the first Black Marxist to write for a British periodical. While in England, McKay also learned a painful lesson in race relations. He had been brought up to believe Jamaicans were black Britons, but by the time he left England, McKay was convinced prejudice against Blacks was "almost congenital" with the British (*Long Way from Home* 76).[3]

After his return to the United States in 1921, McKay wrote for a number of periodicals, including briefly for Garvey's the *Negro World*. McKay had been an early supporter of Garvey, but in the essay "Garvey as a Negro Moses," while admiring Garvey's ability to inspire the masses and his "very energetic and quick-witted mind," McKay pre-

sents him as someone completely out of touch with reality, an almost comic figure possessed of little knowledge of Africa or business. The piece on Garvey was published in the *Liberator* while McKay was a co-editor of the magazine. McKay's quarrels with the other editors (particularly the more orthodox communist Michael Gold) over the amount of Black material to be included in the periodical may have contributed to his resignation as an executive officer in June 1922.[4]

That year also saw the publication of *Harlem Shadows*, generally considered McKay's most significant poetic contribution and often thought of as the first major work of the Harlem Renaissance. The volume was an expanded version of *Springtime in New Hampshire* (published while McKay was in England in 1920) but included several pieces, such as "If We Must Die," dealing with racial issues excluded from the earlier volume. McKay had been advised to omit these politically charged poems, but he regretted his initial temerity. The volume's combination of highly charged political poems and romantic ones such as "The Tropics in New York" and "Flame-Heart," dreamily nostalgic remembrances of Jamaica, demonstrate the two conflicting strains in McKay's writing: one political and urban and the other romantic and pastoral. These two sides often co-exist in an uneasy tension in McKay's work.

The political aspects of McKay's philosophy are demonstrated in his interest in the Russian Revolution. Although he denied ever having been a member of the Communist Party, McKay clearly had connections with it, even helping to move the African Blood Brotherhood, a group to which he briefly belonged, into its affiliation with the Communist Party. McKay visited the Soviet Union in 1922–23. As he said in his autobiography, *A Long Way from Home:* "Russia signaled. A vast upheaval and a grand experiment. What could I understand there? What could I learn for my life, for my work? Go and see, was the command" (150). He was one of two Blacks, with Otto Huiswoud, at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in 1922. McKay angered the majority members of the American Communist Party, who favored remaining underground; instead, he sided with the open Workers' Party of America. Despite attempts by the American Communist Party to expel him, McKay generally was feted throughout his visit, meeting Leon Trotsky, giving readings of his work, and having a May Day poem published in *Pravda*. The articles he wrote for the Soviet press were collected in *Negry v Amerika* [*The Negroes in America*]

and he published several essays, including "Soviet Russia and the Negro," in the *Crisis*. Although he was impressed by the effects of communism in the Soviet Union, McKay was appalled by racism within the Communist Party in America. As with other issues, McKay's outspokenness on this issue caused him to make enemies, and in later years he became vehemently anti-communist although often loosely advocating Marxist beliefs.[5]

After leaving Russia, McKay began a series of travels throughout Europe and North Africa marked by illness (including lung infection and syphilis) and persistent financial problems but also periods of literary productivity. During this time, McKay worked on a proposed novel of Harlem Life, "Color Scheme." Unable to find a publisher for the work because of its graphic nature, McKay destroyed the manuscript in frustration. Some of the material for this novel, however, undoubtedly went into the making of his bestselling novel *Home to Harlem* (1928). The story of Jake, an earthy young AWOL soldier, and Ray, a Haitian intellectual, reflects the two sides of McKay's psyche. The novel brought on a firestorm of conflicting views. Many Blacks, particularly those in the middle class, still smarting from White author Carl Van Vechten's novel of the sordid side of Harlem life, *Nigger Heaven* (1926), felt that McKay was contributing to the negative stereotyping of Blacks with his gritty portrayal of Harlem life. *Home to Harlem* is rife with abusive relationships, drugs and alcohol, violence, loose sex (both heterosexual and homosexual), and color complexes. Many of the incidents, no doubt, were taken from McKay's own experiences. There is little sense of family, and Ray is the sole representative of Black middle-class life in the novel. In short, the novel horrified much of the Black bourgeoisie. What the critics failed to see was that McKay used his imaginative skills "to evoke a sense of Harlem's authentic inner life, frame black selfhood in positive terms, and elevate personal, cultural, and ethnic self-esteem" (De Jongh 32). It is a celebration of the common Black, a novel that is, in Langston Hughes's words, "the flower of the Negro Renaissance, even if it is no lovely lily" (qtd. in Tillery 88) An early chapter, "Arrival," details Ray's excitement at returning to the vitality of Harlem and his first encounter with and separation from "the little brown." Ray's quest to find his mysterious love would be at the center of the novel.[6]

McKay tried to capitalize on the financial success of *Home to Harlem*. His next novel, *Banjo* (1929), is set on the docks of Marseilles.

Ray reappears in this novel and the title character, Lincoln Agrippa Daily (Banjo), is similar to Jake. *Gingertown*, a collection of short stories set largely in Jamaica (such as "Crazy Mary") or New York ("Mattie and Her Sweetman"), followed in 1932. *Banana Bottom* (1933), the story of a young girl, Bita Plant, returns to the Jamaica of McKay's youth. It is a celebration of folklife despite the hardships Bita must endure. Despite the high literary quality of his fiction, particularly *Banana Bottom*, McKay's work sold poorly, in part as a result of the Great Depression.

By the time McKay returned to America in 1934, he was largely forgotten, as is reflected by the poor sales of *A Long Way from Home* (1937) and a collection of essays, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (1940). In an early essay, McKay had written that "each soul must save itself." Yet despite his fierce individualism and skepticism of organizations, McKay seemed compelled to join groups. After his return to America, McKay joined one final organization, the Catholic Church, in 1944. Perhaps his decision to become an American citizen in his later years was also an attempt to belong, at last, instead of continuing a life of ceaseless wandering. He died in Chicago on May 22, 1948, and is buried in New York.[7]

NOTES

The largest collection of McKay materials is located in the James Weldon Johnson Collection at Yale University.

1. Although McKay's Jamaican dialect poetry goes outside the chronological and geographic scope of this anthology, its importance must be recognized. Unfortunately, because of its difficulty for non-Jamaicans, it has not been given its proper due. For further discussion, see Cooper and especially James. For more on McKay's years in Jamaica see his *A Long Way from Home* and *My Green Hills of Jamaica and Five Jamaican Short Stories*, ed. Mervyn Morris (Kingston: Heinemann Education Books, 1979). See also Cooper 1–62; Tillery 3–37; and Rupert Lewis and Maureen Lewis, "Claude McKay's Jamaica," *Caribbean Quarterly* 13 (1977): 38–53.

2. This was not the same periodical that was edited by Cyril Briggs.

3. For more on McKay and England see Cooper 103–33; Cooper and Robert C. Reinders, "A Black Briton Comes Home: Claude McKay in England," *Race* 9 (1967): 67–83; and Tillery 42–48.

4. McKay would provide differing views on Garveyism throughout his life. "If We Must Die" was a favorite at Garvey rallies, and in 1919, at the invitation of Hubert Harrison, then editor, McKay published several articles

Kent, George E. Chicago: Third World P, 1972.
Lowney, John. "Haiti and Black Transnationalism: Remapping the Migrant Geography of *Home to Harlem*." *African American Review* 34 (2000): 413–19.
McKay, Claude. *Complete Poems*. Ed. and intro. by William J. Maxwell. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004.
———. *A Long Way from Home*. 1937. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1970.
McLeod, A. L., ed. *Claude McKay: Centennial Studies*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1992.
Ramchand, Kenneth. *The West Indian Novel and Its Background*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970.
Singh, Amritjit, ed. *The Novels of the Harlem Renaissance: Twelve Black Writers, 1923–1933*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1976.
Tillery, Tyrone. *Claude McKay: A Black Poet's Struggle for Identity*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1992.
Wagner, Jean. *Black Poets of the United States: From Paul Laurence Dunbar to Langston Hughes*. Trans. Kenneth Douglas. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1973.

The Harlem Dancer

Applauding youths laughed with young prostitutes
And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.

She sang and danced on gracefully and calm;
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;
To me she seemed a proudly-swaying palm
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.
Upon her swarthy neck black shiny curls
Luxuriant fell; and tossing coins in praise,
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,
Devoured her shape with eager, passionate gaze;
But looking at her falsely-smiling face,
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

The Tired Worker

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 steals 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 harsh, the ugly city.

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

My Mother

I

Reg* wished me to go with him to the field,
I paused because I did not want to go;
But in her quiet way she made me yield
Reluctantly, for she was breathing low.
Her hand she slowly lifted from her lap

And, smiling sadly in the old sweet way,
She pointed to the nail where hung my cap.
Her eyes said: I shall last another day.
But scarcely had we reached the distant place,
When o'er the hills we heard a faint bell ringing;
A boy came running up with frightened face;
We knew the fatal news that he was bringing.
I heard him listlessly, without a moan,
Although the only one I loved was gone.

II

The dawn departs, the morning is begun,
The trades* come whispering from off the seas,
The fields of corn are golden in the sun,
The dark-brown tassels fluttering in the breeze;
The bell is sounding and the children pass,
Frog-leaping, skipping, shouting, laughing shrill,
Down the red road, over the pasture-grass,
Up to the school-house crumbling on the hill.
The older folk are at their peaceful toil,
Some pulling up the weeds, some plucking corn,
And others breaking up the sun-baked soil.
Float, faintly-scented breeze, at early morn
Over the earth where mortals sow and reap—
Beneath its breast my mother lies asleep.

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

Flame-Heart

So much have I forgotten in ten years,
So much in ten brief years! I have forgot
What time the purple apples* come to juice,
And what month brings the shy forget-me-not.
I have forgot the special, startling season
Of the pimento's flowering* and fruiting;
What time of year the ground doves brown the fields
And fill the noonday with their curious fluting.
I have forgotten much, but still remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

I still recall the honey-fever grass,*
But cannot recollect the high days when
We rooted them out of the ping-wing* path
To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.
I often try to think in what sweet month
The languid painted ladies* used to dapple
The yellow by-road mazing from the main,
Sweet with the golden threads of the rose-apple.*
I have forgotten—strange—but quite remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

What weeks, what months, what time of the mild year
We cheated school to have our fling at tops?
What days our wine-thrilled bodies pulsed with joy
Feasting upon blackberries in the copse?
Oh some I know! I have embalmed the days,
Even the sacred moments when we played,
All innocent of passion, uncorrupt,
At noon and evening in the flame-heart's shade.
We were so happy, happy, I remember,
Beneath the poinsettia's red in warm December.

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

The Tropics in New York

Bananas ripe and green, and ginger-root,
  Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,*
And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit,
  Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,
Set in the window, bringing memories
  Of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,
And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies
  In benediction over nun-like hills.

My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;
  A wave of longing through my body swept,
And hungry for the old, familiar ways,

I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

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 accursèd lot.
If we must die, O 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!
O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
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!

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

America

Although she feeds 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.

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

Baptism*

Into the furnace let me go alone;
Stay you without in terror of the heat.
I will go naked in—for thus 'tis sweet—
Into the weird depths of the hottest zone.
I will not quiver in the frailest bone,
You will not note a flicker of defeat;
My heart shall tremble not its fate to meet,
My mouth give utterance to any moan.
The yawning oven spits forth fiery spears;
Red aspish tongues shout wordlessly my name,
Desire destroys, consumes my mortal fears,
Transforming me into a shape of flame.
I will come out, back to your world of tears,
A stronger soul within a finer frame.

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

Exhortation: Summer, 1919*

Through the pregnant universe rumbles life's terrific thunder,
And Earth's bowels quake with terror; strange and terrible storms
break,
Lightning-torches flame the heavens, kindling souls of men, there-
under:
Africa! long ages sleeping, O my motherland, awake!

In the East the clouds glow crimson with the new dawn that is
breaking,
And its golden glory fills the western skies.
O my brothers and my sisters, wake! arise!
For the new birth rends the old earth and the very dead are waking.
Ghosts are turned flesh, throwing off the grave's disguise,
And the foolish, even children, are made wise;
For the big earth groans in travail for the strong, new world in
making—
O my brothers, dreaming for dim centuries,
Wake from sleeping: to the East turn, turn your eyes!

Oh the night is sweet for sleeping, but the shining day's work for
working;
Sons of the seductive night, for your children's children's sake,
From the deep primeval forests where the crouching leopard's
lurking,
Lift up your heavy-lidded eyes, Ethiopia! awake!

In the East the clouds glow crimson with the new dawn that is
breaking,
And its golden glory fills the western skies.
O my brothers and my sisters, wake! arise!
For the new birth rends the old earth and the very dead are waking,
Ghosts are turned flesh, throwing off the grave's disguise,
And the foolish, even children, are made wise;
For the big earth groans in travail for the strong, new world in
making—
O my brothers, dreaming for long centuries,
Wake from sleeping; to the East turn, turn your eyes!

From *Harlem Shadows* 1922

The White House*

Your door is shut against my tightened face,
And I am sharp as steel with discontent;
But I possess the courage and the grace
To bear my anger proudly and unbent.
The pavement slabs burn loose beneath my feet,
And passion rends my vitals as I pass,
A chafing savage, down the decent street;
Where boldly shines your shuttered door of glass.
Oh I must search for wisdom every hour,
Deep in my wrathful bosom sore and raw,
And find in it the superhuman power
To hold me to the letter of your law!
Oh I must keep my heart inviolate,
Against the poison of your deadly hate.

From the *Liberator* May 1921

A Negro Poet

I am a black man, born in Jamaica, B. W. I., and have been living in America for the last six years. During my first year's residence in America I wrote the following group of poems. It was the first time I had ever come face to face with such manifest, implacable hate of my race, and my feelings were indescribable. I sent them so that you may see what my state of mind was at the time. I have written nothing similar to them since and don't think I ever shall again.

The whites at home constitute about 14 percent of the population only and they generally conform to the standard of English respectability. The few poor ones accept their fate resignedly and live at peace with the natives. The government is tolerant, somewhat benevolent, based on the principle of equal justice to all. I had heard of prejudice in America but never dreamed of it being so intensely bitter; for at home there is also prejudice of the English sort, subtle and dignified, rooted in class distinction—color and race being hardly taken into account.

It was such an atmosphere I left for America to find here strong white men, splendid types, of better physique than any I had ever seen, exhibiting the most primitive animal hatred towards their weaker black brothers. In the South daily murders of a nature most hideous and revolting, in the North silent acquiescence, deep hate half-hidden under a puritan respectability, oft flaming up into an occasional lynching—this ugly raw sore in the body of a great nation. At first I was horrified, my spirit revolted against the ignoble cruelty and blindness of it all. Then I soon found myself hating in return but this feeling couldn't last long for to hate is to be miserable.

Looking about me with bigger and clearer eyes I saw that this cruelty in different ways was going on all over the world. Whites were exploiting and oppressing whites even as they exploited and oppressed the yellows and blacks. And the oppressed, groaning under the lash, evinced the same despicable hate and harshness towards their weaker fellows. I ceased to think of people and things in the mass—why should I fight with mad dogs only to be bitten and probably transformed into a mad dog myself? I turned to the individual soul, the spiritual leaders, for comfort and consolation. I felt and still feel that one must seek for the noblest and best in the individual life only: each soul must save itself.

And now this great catastrophe [World War I] has come upon the world proving the real hollowness of nationhood, patriotism, racial pride and most of the things which one was taught to respect and reverence.

"There is very little to tell of my uneventful career. I was born in the heart of the little island of Jamaica on the 15th of September, 1889. My grandparents were slaves, my parents free-born. My mother was very sweet-natured, fond of books; my father, honest, stern even to harshness, hard working, beginning empty-handed he coaxed a good living from the soil, bought land, and grew to be a comparatively prosperous small settler. A firm believer in education, he tried to give all his eight children the best he could afford.

I was the last child and when I was nine years old my mother sent me to my eldest brother who was a schoolmaster in the northwestern part of the island.

From that time on I became interested in books. The school building, to which was attached the teacher's cottage, was an old slave house, plain, substantial and comfortable. My brother, an amateur journalist, country correspondent for the city papers, was fond of good books and possessed a nice library—all the great English masters and a few translations from the ancients. Not caring very much for play and having plenty of leisure I spent nearly all my time out of school reading. I read whatever pleased my fancy, secretly scribbling in prose and verse at the same time, novels, history, Bible literature, tales in verse like Scott's I read, and nearly all Shakespeare's plays for the absorbing story interest. As yet I couldn't perceive the truths. Now, looking back, I can see that that was a great formative period of my life—a time of perfect freedom to play, read and think as I liked.

I finished elementary school with my brother and helped him to teach while studying further under him. In 1906 I passed an examination for the Government Trade Scholarship and was apprenticed to a wheelwright and cabinet maker. But I couldn't learn a trade.

At this time I began writing verses of Jamaican peasant life in Negro dialect. I met an Englishman who loved good books and their makers more than anything else. He opened up a new world to my view, introduced me to a greater, deeper literature—to Buddha, Schopenhauer and Goethe, Carlyle and Browning, Wilde, Carpenter,* Whitman, Hugo, Verlaine, Baudelaire, Shaw and the different writers of the Rationalist Press—more than I had time to read, but

nearly all my spare time I spent listening to his reading choice bits from them, discussing the greatness of their minds, and telling of their lives, which I must confess I sometimes found even more interesting than their works.

Trade proved a failure. I gave it up, joined the Jamaican Constabulary 1910–11, despised it and left. With Mr. [Walter] Jekyll's help, the Englishman mentioned before, my *Songs of Jamaica* was published at this time. I went home and farmed rather half-heartedly. The government was then encouraging the younger men to acquire a scientific agricultural education so that it could employ them to teach the peasantry modern ways of farming. I came to America in 1912 to study agriculture, went to Tuskegee, but not liking the semi-military, machinelike existence there, I left for the Kansas State College where I stayed two years.

In the summer of 1914 I came to New York with a friend. We opened a little restaurant* among our people which also proved a failure because I didn't put all my time and energy into it.

After a while I got married,* but my wife wearied of the life in six months and went back to Jamaica. I hated to go back after having failed at nearly everything so I just stayed here and worked desultorily—porter, houseman, janitor, butler, waiter—anything that came handy. The life was different and fascinating and one can do menial work here and feel like a man sometimes, so I didn't mind it.

I am a waiter on the railroad now. Here are a few of my poems.*

From *Pearson's Magazine* September 1918

Garvey as a Negro Moses

Garveyism is a well-worn word in Negro New York.

And it is known among all the Negroes of America, and throughout the world, wherever there are race-conscious Negro groups. But while Garvey is a sort of magic name among the ignorant black masses, the Negro intelligentsia thinks by his spectacular antics—words big with bombast, colorful robes, Anglo-Saxon titles of nobility (Sir William Ferris, K. C. O. N., for instance, his editor, and Lady Henrietta Vinton Davis, his international organizer), his stream-roller-like mass meetings and parades and lamentable business ventures—Garvey has muddied the waters of the Negro movement for freedom and put