

*Voices of Protest:*  
*Harlem Renaissance Poetry*

**Claude McKay**  
*To the White Fiends*

THINK you I am not fiend and savage too?  
Think you I could not arm me with a gun  
And shoot down ten of you for every one  
Of my black brothers murdered, burnt by you?  
Be not deceived, for every deed you do                   5  
I could match—out-match: am I not Africa's son,  
Black of that black land where black deeds are done?

But the Almighty from the darkness drew  
My soul and said: Even thou shalt be a light                   10  
Awhile to burn on the benighted earth,  
Thy dusky face I set among the white  
For thee to prove thyself of highest worth;  
Before the world is swallowed up in night,  
To show thy little lamp: go forth, go forth!

**Langston Hughes**  
*The Weary Blues*

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,  
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,  
    I heard a Negro play.  
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night  
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light  
    He did a lazy sway. . . .  
    He did a lazy sway. . . .  
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.  
With his ebony hands on each ivory key  
He made that poor piano moan with melody.  
    O Blues!

Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool  
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.  
    Sweet Blues!  
Coming from a black man's soul.  
    O Blues!

In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone  
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—  
    "Ain't got nobody in all this world,  
    Ain't got nobody but ma self.  
    I's gwine to quit ma frownin'  
    And put ma troubles on the shelf."

Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.  
He played a few chords then he sang some more—  
    "I got the Weary Blues  
    And I can't be satisfied.  
    Got the Weary Blues  
    And can't be satisfied—  
    I ain't happy no mo'  
    And I wish that I had died."  
And far into the night he crooned that tune.  
The stars went out and so did the moon.  
The singer stopped playing and went to bed  
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.  
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

## ***The South***

The lazy, laughing South  
With blood on its mouth.  
The sunny-faced South,  
    Beast-strong,  
    Idiot-brained.  
The child-minded South  
Scratching in the dead fire's ashes  
For a Negro's bones.  
    Cotton and the moon,  
    Warmth, earth, warmth,  
    The sky, the sun, the stars,  
    The magnolia-scented South.  
Beautiful, like a woman,  
Seductive as a dark-eyed whore,  
    Passionate, cruel,  
    Honey-lipped, syphilitic--  
    That is the South.

## ***Poet to Bigot***

I have done so little  
For you,  
And you have done so little  
For me,  
That we have good reason  
Never to agree.

I, however,  
Have such meagre  
Power,  
Clutching at a  
Moment,  
While you control  
An hour.

But your hour is  
A stone.

My moment is  
A flower.

## ***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.

And I, who am black, would love her  
But she spits in my face.  
And I, who am black,  
Would give her many rare gifts  
But she turns her back upon me.  
    So now I seek the North--  
    The cold-faced North,  
    For she, they say,  
    Is a kinder mistress,  
And in her house my children  
May escape the spell of the South.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be 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—