THE TREATMENT OF THE NEGRO
IN THE NOVELS OF LOUISIANA
1920-1940

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PREFACE

The South, composed of whatever regions in the United States happen to fall below an arbitrary marking known as the Mason and Dixon line, has a widespread reputation for provinciality. Clinging in legend and actuality to the remembered glories of a departed order, it has come to be accepted as the region wherein new trends penetrate most slowly, encountered as they are by a resistance embracing the entire region. Balanced as it is against the portentous growth of Southern culture in the twentieth century, the popular conception of Southern provinciality offers interesting possibilities when applied to the development in the social and literary stature of the Negro character. It is, then, the possible contradiction in attitudes toward the Negro offered by two prevailing trends in the Southland, which motivates the present thesis, which is in reality a portion of a larger research study, to be carried on during ensuing years at Atlanta University, on the treatment of the Negro in the fictional literature of the entire South, for the purpose of determining whether the South's comparatively new intellectualism has produced any change in the attitudes and characterization accorded the Negro.

This is not the first study of the treatment of the Negro in American fiction. It has been preceded by such studies as Willie Lou Talbot's "The Development of the Negro character in the Southern Novel, 1924-1900"; ¹ John Herbert Nelson's The Negro Character in American Literature; Sterling Brown's The Negro in American Fiction; Nick Aaron Ford's The Contemporary Negro Novel: A Study in Race Relations; a goodly portion of Francis Pendleton Gaines' The Southern Plantation; as well as numerous magazine articles,

the most valuable to this study being, Tremaine McDowell's "The Negro Character in the Southern Novel Prior to 1850"; and H. P. Marley's "The Negro in Recent Southern Fiction." None of these studies, however, has selected quite the province of the present thesis, which has limited itself to a rather short period of time and a comparatively small area. The period of the last twenty years was chosen, first, because it reveals the most rapid cultural advancement for the South, and second, because it is generally conceded by writers on the subject that this period has brought forth a new delineation of the Negro throughout the United States. The state was selected as a division of the total study of the Negro in Southern fiction, because of possibly distinct offerings in the cultural background of each. This limited range of material permits an intensity of treatment hardly possible in studies of wider scope.

The treatment herein presented includes an analysis of thirty representative Louisiana novels, selected on the basis of as wide a scope of picturization of the state as the writer could procure. The chief basis for selection of works was the identification of the author, first by birth, and then by residence with the state of Louisiana. Works by Negro authors were excluded, because it was assumed that Negro authors would necessarily treat Negro characters with a certain amount of liberality. The cross-section of literature, thus chosen, reveals something of the variety of racial strains present in the Louisiana population: the Caucasian, the Creole, the Acadian, the Mulatto, and the full-blooded Negro. It also gives a running survey of the history of the economic, sociological, and political development of the state from before the Civil War to the present.

The novels included in this study divide themselves naturally into two classes: those prolonging the traditional conception of the Negro, and those applying critical realism to the entire region, including the Negro
and his specific problems, in a unified sweep of investigation accorded the whole South. It is this natural division which, with the addition of a chapter on backgrounds, has determined the plan of the thesis, which will be divided thus into three chapters:

1. "The Cultural Heritages of the Louisiana Author," which will attempt to clarify possible approaches of the Louisiana author to the material he attacks, and which will place emphasis upon the growth and development of Southern literature within the province of the widely accepted aristocratic tradition.

2. "The Negro in the Novels Prolonging the Traditional Racial Picture," which will attempt to present the Negro as he is portrayed in those novels which, written between 1920 and 1940, adhere to the stock attitudes promulgated by the aristocratic tradition.

3. "The Negro in the Novels Criticising and Limiting the Traditional Racial Picture," which will attempt to define the attitudes toward the race, and to describe the characterization of the Negro in the novels applying the recent intellectual critical realism to the Southern regions.

It has been the immediate purpose of the investigator to weigh reference and characterization in the selected novels from the time of the sovereignty of the aristocratic tradition to the present period of critical realism, in order to determine first, in what measure the treatment is typical of latter-day attitudes, and secondly, whether or not there is recognition on the part of the composite group of writers of the increasing degree to which the Negro has integrated himself into the cultural and intellectual advancement of the nation. The measure of the last premise will determine the degree in which the treatment of the Negro will be considered liberal.

Acknowledgement is herewith made to the Atlanta University Library and to co-operating institutions who have made available the comparatively large body of fiction necessary for this study.
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CULTURAL HERITAGES OF THE CONTEMPORARY LOUISIANA AUTHOR

If the morning sun greets you within fifty miles of New Orleans, you will find the banks of the river above the flood-tide, and evidences of permanent cultivation and happy homesteads attract the eye. Along the "coast," as the river banks are denominated, are the "gardens" upon which the city depends for vegetable food. Then come large sugar-plantations, the dwelling houses made imposing by their verandahs, and picturesque by being half hidden in an untold variety of magnificent trees.¹

This description of the flow of existence in the lower Mississippi Valley, elicited, in the late nineteenth century, for no other reason than the dispensation of picturesque facts concerning one portion of this nation, the United States, is in many respects an index into the geographical and sociological character and personality of the section it penetrates. Such "evidences of permanent cultivation and happy homesteads," and of "large sugar-plantations, the dwelling houses . . . imposing . . . and picturesque" as did not escape the eye of the traveller along the banks of the Mississippi in the year of grace 1872, would doubtless have greeted him had he made a similar sojourn a century previous. And indeed, should he return one hundred years hence, these evidences should likely present the same tireless, changeless prospect.

It is an inevitable fact that the geographic climes in which man finds himself play a large part in his own shaping of economic, sociological, and intellectual environment. Rupert Vance says that "the uses that man, in the effort to clothe, feed, house, and defend himself, makes of the map furnished by nature . . . become permanently recorded on the soil and comprise the cultural landscape."²


²Rupert B. Vance, Human Geography of the South (Chapel Hill, 1932), p. 11.
Comprising in its Ouachita, Red, and Atchafalaya Basins, and alluvial lands of the Mississippi River, an important section of the geographic region commonly known as the Delta, Louisiana, like other component sections, presents an area predominantly agricultural. Its essentially primeval appearance has often been remarked upon by those who take into account its bayous and swamplands, its sloughs and canebrakes, its flats and low ridges, and its continual covering of hardwood forests. Accumulations of silt at each new overflow of its lord, the Mississippi, have given to the Delta a depth and richness of land, decreed by nature for the production of a super-abundance of crops such as those ordinarily found on the plantations of this section and of its only rivals, the lowlands of South Carolina, and tidewater regions of Virginia.

Offering its majority to the cultivation of cotton, the Delta, nevertheless, turns over a generous proportion of its lands to the production of sugar cane, for which "the soil of the Mississippi delta in southern Louisiana, ranking among the richest in the world, is almost ideal." This crop, first introduced into Louisiana in 1725, and most distinctly associated with the economy of the state than the more widely cultivated cotton, runs like a thread, appearing brightest when cotton was least successful, throughout the agricultural history of the Delta regions. It is characterized by heavy and intensive manual labor, which was supplied in the years before the Civil War, for the most part by Negro slaves.

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1 Rupert B. Vance, op. cit., p. 266.
2 Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South (Chapel Hill, 1932), p. 76.
3 Rupert B. Vance, op. cit., p. 220.
5 Rupert B. Vance, op. cit., p. 221.
introduced into the section by the Creoles, and equalling in number, at the close of the colonial period, the population of the whites.\textsuperscript{1}

In 1830, Louisiana was supplying half the whole country's consumption of sugar.\textsuperscript{2} In 1848, the rich Louisianians were generally sugar-planters.\textsuperscript{3} Gross yearly proceeds of Louisiana planters in the Old South, as far back as 1817, from cotton or sugar, did not commonly net less than twenty or thirty thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{4} Harriet Martineau, who made an extensive tour throughout the South during the prosperous thirties, published her observations in \textit{Society in America} in 1837, wherein she stated that "Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana present the extreme cases of the fertility of soil, the prosperity of proprietors, and the woes of slaves."\textsuperscript{5} Truly, Louisiana, with its preponderance of rich alluvial Delta soil, its overwhelming inclination to vast estates, was, along with the other regions which enjoy alike the goods and ills associated with the Mississippi's fertile lower southern basin, then as now, "Negro obsessed, and flood ridden, ... the deepest South, the heart of Dixie, America's super-plantation belt."\textsuperscript{6}

Despite distinct differences in cultural and racial background, Louisiana, after 1803, the year of its purchase by the United States from France, shared in the matter of agricultural economy and its peculiar corollary the system of slavery, the fortunes of the entire South. As a

\textsuperscript{1}Ulrich B. Phillips, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 164.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 241.

\textsuperscript{3}Nathaniel W. Stephenson, \textit{A History of the American People} (New York, [1934]), p. 581.

\textsuperscript{4}Ulrich B. Phillips, \textit{loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{5}Harriet Martineau, "Views of Slavery and Emancipation," \textit{Society in America} (New York, 1837), p. 45.

\textsuperscript{6}Rupert B. Vance, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 266.
participant in the Southern scheme, it fell heir to the literary counter-
part of the South’s agricultural oligarchy, the aristocratic tradition,
which for veracity in portrayal, especially in the matter of economic
grandeur, it deserved as much as any state in the Southern regions.

The chief merit of a study of the agricultural economy of the South
in relation to a literary investigation is revealed through the acknowl-
edgement of its sociological parenthood to the literary aristocratic
tradition which overspread the entire system of thought in the region.
This tradition, covering the art and literature of this section, and
carrying its stock ideas even to other sections, like the goddess Minerva,
sprung full grown from its father’s head. And even today after more than
a century of guarded rulership, it has not completely dissolved itself.

The nature of the aristocratic tradition, popularized through so
many channels, is perhaps more widely known than the actual facts con-
cerning the South’s Old Dominion. Its creation consisted of the fixing
of patterns surrounding the various constituent elements of Southern
society, namely, the wealthy planter and his family, the Negro slave,
the poor white, and others.¹ The tradition’s main province was the
plantation, and with the plantation it was introduced to literature.

Gaines’ description is all inclusive:

The pattern is constant. The setting reveals the con-
ventional mansion, a large white house with commodious grounds,
the latter lovely with prodigal growth of flowers and shrub-
bery considered Southern. The background is usually the cotton
field; if a moon-light scene can be introduced, so much the
better. The characters fall into stock types: the old planter,
or if the time is post-bellum, the former general; his daughter
or ward, heroine of the drama, owner of an elaborate wardrobe,
marked particularly by hoop-skirts and delicate bodices; the
butler, who may also be the body-guard, clothed in grotesque
finery; the old mammy, who may also be the cook, with her in-
evitable bandanna. . . . Always present and never too subtle

¹Benjamin Burks Kendrick and Alex Mathews Arnett, The South Looks
is the interracial psychology: blustering kindness on the part of the master, tender consideration on the part of the heroine, matched by a hollow sham of frightened obedience and a real affection and self-immolation on the part of the slaves.¹

In many respects, especially in Louisiana, the legends surrounding the South compare with the actual. But the magnificent scale of life set by the lower Mississippi Valley could not be equalled throughout the whole South. The aristocratic tradition did not limit the scope of gentility, extending it to all corners of the Southern regions. Virginius Dabney says:

As for the feudal magnificence in which the planters of the old régime are widely supposed to have lived, it was largely mythical, except in a relatively small area. In the lower Mississippi Valley and the lowlands of South Carolina, in Tidewater Virginia and a few scattered upland regions there was, it is true, a mode of life not wholly unlike that traditionally ascribed to the entire South. But in the remainder of the vast territory below the Mason and Dixon line evidences of baronial manor houses are almost non-existent. In each of the Southern states the overwhelming majority of the whites owned no slaves, and of those who did own them, only a small percentage had as many as twenty. It is a lamentable fact, too, that the abode of the average planter was architecturally undistinguished, while the grounds, as a consequence of the slave system, which everywhere made for indolence and inefficiency, were ordinarily in a sad state of disarray.²

But the plantation tradition without limitations did arise and become so prominent in the latter half of the nineteenth century as to form "the predominant pattern in Southern ideology."³ There were various reasons for its origination. Gaines bases a portion of the responsibility on what he calls the "innate American love of feudalism,"⁴ which contradictory as it may seem to the prevailing system of democracy in this country,

²Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 76.
³Benjamin Burks Kendrick and Alex Mathew Arnott, op. cit., p. 5.
⁴Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., p. 2.
apparently finds evidence in the widespread effects of this cis-Atlantic creation of feudal splendor. In the same vein the tradition presents in the plantation Negro a lower class, deferential in its attitude to the ruling class, willingly accepting its unpretentious position and all the accompaniments: ignorance, credulity, superstition, lack of ambition, and ridicule on the one hand; and rewards of endless though condescending benevolence and mercy from its rulers, on the other. Gaines says that "the plantation black, more than any other type, combines the qualities which have exercised immemorial charm."\(^1\) This fact is not a surprising one, because the Negro is intimately bound to the political, economic, and sociological aspects of the plantation tradition in its organization and execution; and the story of the South's development in attitude toward him and his place in their particular economy is the story of the Negro's development as a character in Southern literature. It begins with the American struggle for independence.

Prominent in leadership of this country out of its obeisance to Great Britain was Thomas Jefferson, native of the South, and original draftsman of the Declaration of Independence, a document proclaiming as one of its basic tenets the inherent freedom and equality of every individual. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."\(^2\) This statement, so familiar to every American, was only one among many of similar import, which, by reason of their explicit reference to the trespass of human liberty offered by the system of chattel slavery, failed to attain success in passing the censorship of certain of

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\(^{1}\)Ibid., p. 3.

Jefferson's contemporaries who could not fail to grasp the inevitable implications. But despite the fact that the Negro was excluded from the general level of equality signified in the Declaration of Independence, the question of his status was made "by reason of the general stress upon the inherent liberty of men . . . an inevitable corollary to that of American independence." ¹

Indeed, individual Negroes had a chance to lift themselves out of the position of slaves during the immediate strife of the Revolution. Enlistment in the armies of either side was encouraged by promises of freedom. Phillips believes that "had the negroes in general possessed any means of concerted action, they might have played off the British and American belligerents to their own advantage." ² Without this unity, however, their position was of necessity a passive one.

Despite the continued efforts of Thomas Jefferson, and others of the South and North who desired abolition, the cause gained little impetus after the close of the Revolution. Jefferson, himself, in 1785, wrote that "anti-slavery men were as scarce to the southward of Chesapeake Bay as they were common to the north of it . . . ." ³ Isolated men, throughout the South, however, distinguished themselves in the service of abolition. William Wannam, president of the Manumission Society of North Carolina, established at Greensboro the Patriot, an abolition paper, and agitated fearlessly for a general manumission of slaves, suffering, all the while, floods of abuse from all sides. ⁴ Similar newspapers were the Manumission Intelligencer and the Emancipator of Jonesboro, Tennessee; the Abolition

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., p. 117.
³Ibid., p. 122.
⁴Virginia Dabney, op. cit., p. 91.
Intelligencer of Shelbyville, Kentucky; and the Liberalist of New Orleans.\textsuperscript{1} It seemed that a half-century of Jeffersonian egalitarianism was beginning to do its work.

Nevertheless, through all its wavering, the South was faced with concrete facts which ever stood as an impenetrable wall 'twixt them and the altruistic theories which were forcing themselves into their midst. Property outweighed conscience, even as it had back in 1785 to the disappointment of Thomas Jefferson.\textsuperscript{2}

There was an enormous investment in slaves by Southern planters, and the half-century of egalitarian flood had failed to provide a means of offsetting the prevailing belief that slave labor was indispensable for the production of certain crops. Furthermore, in 1793 Eli Whitney had invented the cotton-gin, and in the course of years immediately following, the South's cotton output jumped from two million pounds in 1790 to one hundred and sixty million in 1820; prime field hands, quoted at $300 per head when crops were bad, doubled and trebled themselves in value during this period of financial increase.\textsuperscript{3}

Furthermore, the North, by increased intervention in the Abolitionist Movement was putting the South more and more on the defensive. It was believed throughout the latter section that the militancy of certain abolitionists was instrumental in germinating the insurrections of Nat Turner and Denmark Vessey.\textsuperscript{4} By the thirties, when South Carolina with her rabid adherence to strict aristocratic organization, born of an excess of noble ancestry, supplanted Virginia in the hegemony of Southern thought, when

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{2}Ulrich B. Phillips, op. cit., p. 122.

\textsuperscript{3}Virginius Dabney, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 97.
the reaction to the Revolutionary sentiment definitely set in, when the "Solid South" came into being, free discussion had been thoroughly choked off. Any opposition within the South's own walls to its "peculiar institution" ¹ was looked upon as an evidence of treachery to the all-pervading cause of preserving regional integrity. ² Furthermore, attacks from the outside were met with an indomitable resistance, and in many cases, convincing treatises were drawn up. In 1832, Thomas R. Dew of the faculty of William and Mary College drew up in behalf of slavery a philosophical defense wherein he repudiated the doctrines of brotherhood and equality promulgated by the Declaration of Independence and created in their stead a system of paternalism and benevolence copied from Auguste Comte's Positivistic social order. ³

Thus the thirties brought forth a sectional provinciality, an impenetrable defense, which was to last in many phases until after the turn of the twentieth century. No manifestation of its insularity is more concrete than the use by its writers of fiction of the aristocratic tradition. Born and bred on the plantation, it was with the plantation that aristocracy in all its glory came to literature, bringing with it all the outgrowing pervasive attitudes and corollaries. Reflecting, throughout, the underlying defenses of the South's economic system, Southern fiction between 1832 and 1900 created this legend in which it is so difficult to separate the factual from the fictional. Particularly is this true of the Negro.

Before the presentation of John P. Kennedy's Swallow Barn in 1832, year of the dramatic entry of the aristocratic tradition, the treatment of the Negro in Southern fiction had been soant. This was true, partially,

¹Ibid., p. 70.
²Ibid., p. 92.
³Ibid., pp. 99-100.
because of the general scarcity of Southern fiction before this period, letters having confined themselves chiefly to the political writings of the pre- and post-Revolutionary eras. The heart's desire, the craven ambition of every young Southerner of rank being that of shining in the field of statesmanship, the pursuit of belles lettres in that region was held in condescending hostility.\(^1\) All the supposed fruitfulness of material resulting, according to literary historians from a variety of types and races represented in the section,\(^2\) failed to swerve them from their end. That persons outside the realm recognized the fountain-head of material discoverable in the South, is attested by the works of early eighteenth century anti-slavery writers such as William Hill Brown, Mrs. Susannah Rawson, Hugh Brackenridge, and Roy Tyler; of Washington Irving, one of the first American writers to portray the curious and picturesque qualities of the Negro, both in *Salmagundi* (1807) and the *Knickerbocker History of New York* (1809); and of James Fenimore Cooper, who evinced more than passing interest in the Negro in *The Spy* (1821), *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Red Rover* (1827), and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). These works, if not all set on Southern soil, bore indications, especially through their use of the Negro, of influences largely characterized as Southern.

But a reason more significant and equally fundamental for the

\(^1\)Ibid., pp. 80-81.

\(^2\)Carl Holliday in his *History of Southern Literature* (New York, 1906), is especially enthusiastic of the field of exploitation presented by the South. On page 154, he states:

While New England was largely settled by a people of one class and of one general way of thinking, the Southern states had the aristocratic planter, often a descendant of the English nobility, the shiftless folk known as the "poor whites," the negroes, born either in America or among greatly differing African tribes, the Spanish blood in Florida and South Carolina, the French and Creole in Louisiana, -- all these and others. Of these the planter, the poor white, and the negroes were, of course, the most important in literature, for every community had all three, and their respective characteristics were known and easily recognized by all.
apparent neglect of the Negro character was an adherence to a literary
decorum, probably not far removed from the English Neo-classical concept
which divided materials into fit and unfit subjects for treatment. This
literary practice relegated the Negro to the latter class.¹

The Negro and his uses, however, were fast becoming a national issue.
Continuous subject for political discussion, he was by 1832 reckoned
important enough for fictional treatment, insofar as he could be cast
into a conventional role not unlike, in status, that which he occupied
in real life.²

Swallow Barn was not the first novel to employ the plantation setting.
Its chief importance may be found in its play upon the glamorous qualities
of the plantation,³ and in what is more important to this study, the em-
phasis of the place of the Negro in such a setting. The medium for the
description was a formation of a traditional mould for his character, at
once defending philosophically the system which held him by laying stress
upon its innate benevolent guardianship, and building up a persistent
literary stereotype portraying particularly in his elemental nature, a
parasitic dependence, "intellectual feebleness," essential barbarity,
but extreme comfort and satisfaction in his present status.⁴ Ludicrous
physiognomy was also emphasized.⁵

The good-natured body-servant was one of the chief embodiments of all
the general inherent racial characteristics propounded. In the novels to

¹Willie Lou Talbot, "Development of the Negro Character in the Southern
Novel, 1824-1900." Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of English,
Louisiana State University, 1938, p. 9.

²Tbid., pp. 9-10.

³Hamilton Basso, "Letters in the South," New Republic, LXXXIII (June


⁵Tbid., p. 21.
fellow Swallow Barn this specific type afforded abundant opportunities for explication. And various combinations of the general characteristics, particularly his happy loyalty to his master, his colossal ignorance, and his ridiculous physical appearance gave rise to actions affording comic relief. Examples of these were his aping of his master's manners and his misuse of poly-syllabic words. Grandiose names were often given the slave character, doubtless for the purpose of stressing by contrast his proverbial lack of mental capability. Such Negro characters merely furnished a part of the atmosphere. The devoted companion by tradition to the master, the ever-willing entertainer of visitors — emphasizing his unending contentment — the Negro in Swallow Barn as in the majority of the other earlier Southern novels, largely because of the authors' inability to behold one individual Negro apart from the general conception of the entire group, was given no dynamic part in the main action or plot.¹

Other novels important to the development of the aristocratic tradition before 1850 were W. A. Carruthers' The Cavaliers of Virginia (1834), J. K. Paulding's Westward Ho! (1832), William Gilmore Simms' The Yemassee (1835), Beverly Tucker's The Partisan Leader and George Balcombe (1836), and Mrs. Caroline Gilman's Recollections of a Southern Matron (1837).² Each of these novels stands out for its portraiture of some significant aspect of the tradition. In Carruthers' work, the addition is an expansion of the romantic panegyrics of the present plantation to include eulogies of the founders of the Southern agrarian economy, giving consequently the glory of former days (apparently a constantly necessary device for the romanticist) a place in the picture.³ Simms, employing the

²Hamilton Basso, op. cit., p. 162.
³Francis F. Gaines, op. cit., p. 23.
plantation only in minor aspects, but, nevertheless, making use of its stereotypes, made a significant contribution in his elevation of the Negro in literary status. Hector, the devoted Negro servant, while possessing the same general traits assigned to similar characters in other treatments, is given a semblance of individuality.⁰ Yet, the author remains well within the limitations of the tradition by his visualizations of Hector as the intensely faithful slave, disclaiming vehemently and cordially a proffer of freedom by his master, who considered it, alas, a reward for service: "Ha!" said the slave, "you make Hector free, he turn wuss more nor poor buckrah --"² Paulding in Westward Hol gave an interpretation prophesying the detail and color of much later treatments. Like Simms' Hector, his creation, Pompey, cordially refuses freedom offered him by his master Colonel Dangerfield in a moment of generosity.³ Into the novels of Beverly Tucker went the same Virginia pattern of aristocracy, which in The Partisan Leader resolved itself into characters representing, according to the author, "a class peculiar to a society whose institutions are based on domestic slavery."⁴ Mrs. Caroline Gilman in Recollections of a Southern Matron, her sentimental "chronicle of reality thinly concealed under the guise of fiction,"⁵ was the author of the most important single interpretation of the Carolina plantation. The ovation received for this work was in many ways symbolic of the passage of the hegemony within the Southern province of the agrarian economy based on slavery from Virginia to South Carolina. This movement had been gradually taking

⁰Willie Lou Talbot, op. cit., p. 21.


³Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

⁵Ibid., p. 26.
place since 1820.  

The only important departure in fiction from the romantic tradition of the plantation was Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* (1840), received in its day as "brutally exaggerated bits of realism" in much the same manner as, by the conjecture of one writer, the works of Erskine Caldwell are received today. Departing from the ordinary scheme of patrician gentlemen and ladies, Longstreet presented much of his material with the aim of eliciting mirth. He found the Negro well adapted to his end, and thus, capitalizing on what has been called the Negro's "suitability to caricature," he established the farcical, "slap-stick" comedic role of the Negro character.

With the fifties, there came to the development of the Southern novel an added fiery and rapier-keen penetration, drawn forth by a pro- and anti-slavery "battle of the books" lasting until the end of the Civil War. Elicited by anti-slavery pamphlets and books, particularly the inordinately successful *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851-52), the newer novels of the South thrived on definite affront, as is attested by the very titles of many of them: *Life at the South, or Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is* (1852) by W. G. L. Smith, or *Uncle Robin in His Cabin in Virginia and Tom without One in Boston* (1855) by J. W. Page. Fourteen such novels appeared within three years after the appearance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Besides the two already mentioned, there were Caroline C. Rush's *North and South, or Slavery and Its Contrasts*, Mrs. Eastman's *Aunt Phyllis's Cabin*, Caroline Lee Hentz's

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1Virginius Dabney, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
2Francis P. Gaines, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
5Ibid.
The Planter's Northern Bride; Marion J. McIntosh's The Lofty and the Lowly; and finally (appearing in 1860) Mrs. Henry R. Schoolcraft's The Black Gauntlet. These novels defended staunchly the cause of slavery in the South. Such arguments as those proposed in the Pro-Slavery Argument and Reverend Priest's The Bible Defense of Slavery,\(^1\) as well as those afforded by a contrast of the so-called goods of slavery with the directly proportionate ills of wage labor in the North, were not neglected. Said Mrs. Schoolcraft in The Black Gauntlet, in denial of the accusations of cruelty in the system of slavery:

> It is not believed by the author that such a monstrosity [babies sold from mothers] has ever occurred in South Carolina, as a mistress there usually takes more care of her little Negro property than a black mother ever does of her children.\(^2\)

She is in hearty accord with Professor Dew in her statement:

> I am so satisfied that slavery is the school God has established for the conversion of barbarous nations, that were I an absolute Queen of these United States, my first missionary enterprise would be to send to Africa to bring the heathen as slaves to this Christian land, and keep them in bondage until compulsory labor had tamed their beastliness . . .

The Negro's natural suitability for labor is stressed by theories applying various physical aspects to the various duties imposed upon him:

> . . . his skull has a hardness and thickness greater than our own, which defy the arrowy sunbeams . . . and his skin secretes a far greater moisture and throws back the heat absorbed by us.\(^3\)

His absolute contentment and happiness with his lot (as contrasted with the Abolitionist's concern for him) is proven by his scorn of freedom, outside as well as inside the familiar plantation environment. Says Daddy Cato, unhappy with the liberty which has been generously "forced" upon him,

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 28
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 26, quoting Mrs. Schoolcraft's The Black Gauntlet.
\(^3\)Ibid.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 24, quoting Mrs. Hertz's The Planter's Northern Bride.
in The Lofty and the Lowly:

Make me free; how can I free any more? Dem da nonsense people, and what dem want take me from Miss Alice for? . . . I wonder if I been sick and couldn't do any ting, if dem would muss me and take care o' me liken Miss Alice . . . I tink dem crazy 'bout free. Free bery good ting, but free ent all; when you sick, free won't make you well, free won't gib you clo's, no hom'ny, let 'lone meat. 1

But important as these books were to the origin and development of the aristocratic tradition, they must like the proverbial eleven sheaves of Joseph's dream, bend in obeisance to others of their number. These later works of similar import, romantic idealizations of the plantation, appearing after the close of the Civil War, and separated forever from the glories of the Old South by that strife's irrevocable decrees, imbued the past with a seductive coloring of the imagination, which added to the realism touching the surface of Negro life, 2 and a mastery of technical literary devices recently embellished by the successful employment of "local color" by Bret Harte, gave to the tradition a fineness of detail of which its originators could never boast. Hamilton Basso, writing of the Southerner's tendency to romanticize after the Civil War, declared:

They made . . . a really valiant effort to become oriented, but they could not. A social and economic system had gone to pieces and the former ruling class had no function, no real significance in what had come to take its place. They had no present, and, as far as they could see, no future. All that was left inviolate was the past. And so like an army fiercely retreating, they went back into the past. . . . The past became a beautiful, wonderful thing. 3

This generation of Southern writers clothed the Old South in its most ideal raiment. 4 Such Southern masters of fiction, calling impartially upon pathos, melodrama, sentiment, and idealism, as Thomas Nelson Page, Joel

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1Ibid., p. 25, quoting Mrs. McIntosh's The Lofty and the Lowly.

2Ibid., p. 50

3Hamilton Basso, op. cit., p. 162.

4Ibid.
Chandler Harris, F. Hopkinson Smith, and James Lane Allen, created, along with other vivid examples of the glories of the Old Dominion, Negro characters, who, themselves obviously standing least to gain by a return, proved to be the best symbols of the rightness of the Southern cause, by their constant upholding of it. Like so many "ventriloquist's dummies," Sam, Uncle Edinburg, and Uncle Billy of Page's In Ole Virginia; Uncle Remus of Harris's most popular series, by no means ignorant, but nevertheless defending the stock attitudes of the South, especially in the matter of Negro education and migration to the North; Chad of Smith's Colonel Carter of Cartersville; and Peter Cotton of Allen's Two Gentlemen from Kentucky, all speak out, in actions, sometimes, in words more often, their creators' staunch beliefs in the essential excellences of the economy of the Old South, for black and for white.

The first writer of importance to qualify the presentation of the glorious South, to hint at a seething, sordid current beneath its flow of grandiloquence, was George Washington Cable. By virtue of his birth and up-bringing in New Orleans, Cable bears a double significance to this study, both for his position in the literary history of the South, and for his priority in the Louisiana world of fiction. In the latter case, he was the first writer of any note. In the former, he was the turning point from the nineteenth century Southern retrospective rationalization to the twentieth century self-analysis and realistic criticism.

Familiar with the delights as well as the distresses of his native Louisiana, its customs and its people, especially the Creole in whom he placed the major portion of his interest, George Washington Cable chose the former French territory as his province, exhibiting not only the

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1Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 51.
2Ibid., pp. 54-55.
3Hamilton Basso, loc. cit.
beauties of her old exotic pattern, but also the inevitable evil-portending outgrowths of the ingrained system of chattel slavery.

Louisiana, itself, in whose state affairs he constantly assumed a debt of "sympathetic interest," may have borne a large share of the responsibility for Mr. Cable's stand. Like the remainder of the South it could reveal a past traditionally and -- with less limitations, economically speaking -- realistically elegant. But add to this picture the inherently gay and volatile disposition of the Latin populace, the distinct character of the history of the free Negro within its environs, and the intensity with which it suffered the South's universal burden, the Reconstruction, and behold a province irresistible to artist and sociologist alike. Mr. Cable himself, in writing of the political nature of his novel The Grandissimes, declared:

But that [the political character] was well-nigh inevitable. It was impossible that a novel written by me then should escape being a study of the fierce struggle going on around me, regarded in the light of that past history -- those beginnings -- which had so differentiated Louisiana civilization from the American scheme of public society. I meant to make 'The Grandissimes' as truly a political work as it has ever been called.²

Indeed, Mr. Cable did not fail in his intention. One critic has said of him: "He was not in the least a dealer in lavender and old lace, but a political and sociological novelist of the type of which the extreme example is a writer like Upton Sinclair."³

Especially for the study of the Negro in fiction are Cable's political and sociological doctrines important, for through his sympathetic treatment of two of the most portentous outgrowths of that race's connection with the history of Louisiana, the Mulatto group and the superstitious

²Ibid., p. 55.
³Edmund Wilson, "Citizen of the Union," New Republic, LVII (February 13, 1929), 352.
Voodoo cult, one gleaned an insight into problems touched upon in varying degrees by writers of recent fiction, especially those who would exploit the exotic and picturesque.

The Mulatto from the beginning of his existence in Louisiana had been viewed with a little less of the asperity assigned to him in other states of the Southern regions. His history is intimately tied up with that of the free Negro, who, apparently, was approximately as old as the colony itself. In the first days of the settlement when white women had been virtually non-existent, many of the colonists co-habited with Negro slave women; and many, lest their children, who by newly rising laws would be forced to maintain the status of the mother, should be compelled to bear the stigma of slavery, set the mothers free.\(^1\) With the immigration of other "free people of color" from the West Indies, and the numerical increase of native Mulattoes, who despite laws prohibiting the cohabitation of whites and Negroes took on increasingly lighter complexion cast, there grew up a society described by Lyle Saxon as "neither white nor black, but between the two."\(^2\)

Of this group it was the women who chiefly drew the interest of the spectator. "The free men of color," says Lyle Saxon, "are always in the background; to use the Southern phrase, 'they knew their place.'"\(^3\) But the women, fabulous for their beauty, exquisite bodies, enchanting visages, graceful carriage, were renowned not only for praise, sung them by innumerable travellers in New Orleans during the ante-bellum period -- one man of noble rank called these women the "most beautiful in the world."\(^4\)

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but by virtue of their position in a sociological family pattern not possessing precise counterpart in any other portion of the United States.¹ For every quadroon girl was raised by her mother to be what she had been, a white man's mistress.² For every young Creole gentleman, in his youth, selected some young free quadroon woman -- probably from the ensemble gathered at one of the fabulous quadroon balls, called by Lyle Saxon "the most extra-vagrant outcropping of an exotic city --"³ and established her in "one of those pretty and peculiar houses, whole rows of which may be seen in the Ramparts."⁴ These women were not looked upon as prostitutes. They were reared in chastity and given all the advantages, including education, which their mothers could afford. Illegitimate themselves, they did not hesitate to carry on the tradition of illegitimacy, living their lives in what George Washington Cable called a "semi-outlawry" to which they "were condemned by society and the laws of Louisiana."⁵

A connection with a quadroon woman did not prevent a Creole man from consummating the marriage vows with a young white woman later on. If he chose he might break off the connection with his quadroon mistress; often he gave her the title to the house and property where she was established and a competency with which to care for herself and any children she might have. It was always reckoned that to the quadroon the departure of her white lover would be tragedy. The existence of his quadroon mistress was a secret taboo in the white circle to which a young man belonged. Harriet Martineau, from her observations of this situation, said:

¹Ibid.
²Harriet Martineau, op. cit., p. 9.
³Lyle Saxon, op. cit., p. 178.
⁴Harriet Martineau, loc. cit.
⁵Lucy Bkle, op. cit., p. 158.
Every quadroon woman believes that her partner will prove an exception to the rule of desertion. Every white lady believes that her husband has been an exception to the rule of seduction.¹

Many a young Louisianian in this time became father of two distinct free families, one white, the other Negro. In each there were children bearing, in the latter case by tacit if not explicit consent, not only his surname but often his and his ancestors' given names. Of these children, the Negro girls would grow up to be what their mothers had been, and the boys would some be sent to France, some placed on land on the back of the state, and some sold into slavery. These boys would marry women of a somewhat darker color than their own, the woman of their own color objecting to them with an "'ils sont si dégoûtants!'"²

The Mulatto was always represented as tragic. Possessed of a large majority of white blood, he was considered a long departure from the enslaved Negro. But law separated him from the pure white and the requital of his love which by fictional representation apparently goes by necessity to the Caucasian.

George Washington Cable made use of all the sociological material presented by this situation in his novels. In The Grandissimes he gives conspicuous treatment to the two brothers Honoré Grandissime, the one a Negro, cultured and educated, yet unable to surmount the limitations set upon him by restrictions of caste; the other, a white man, unsympathetic with the barriers imposed by the prevalent social system, but equally as helpless as his brother because of the addictions to tradition imposed by family and community. As he himself put it, he was "afraid to go deeply into anything, lest it should make ruin in . . . name, . . . family, . . . property."³ Furthermore, the colored Honoré Grandissime represents a

¹Harriet Martineau, loc. cit.
²Ibid.
literary parallel of the participant in the peculiar quadruple-linked sociological pattern surrounding, by literary practice, the affections of the characters of his racial group; for, his love for the mulatto girl Palmyre la Philosophie cannot be requited, because she loves a Creole gentleman who in turn has set his affections upon a woman of his own race.

Another situation, also, close to Louisiana history, is presented in the character of Palmyre la Philosophie, worker of charms, and in many respects literary counterpart of that very real person Marie Laveau, in her time (1827- c. 1884) queen of the Voodoo cult, inspiration of terror to a city, and avowed the first person to popularize the cult in New Orleans.¹

The first known reference to the practice of Voodooism in Louisiana was made in 1782 by the governor of the state, who in a record of imports and exports, included a terse sentence prohibiting further importation of Negroes from Martinique because of their peculiar inclination to Voodooism which he calculated would make the lives of the citizens unsafe. Yet, despite this and other prohibitions, mute testimony to the cult’s persistence was borne by numerous gris-gris and similar charms sent thither and yon throughout the nineteenth century, and even cropping out in numerous instances today.² Descriptions of the meetings of the cult include locale, which is generally a remote spot near the swamps; the costume, usually containing a predominance of red; and the procedure, comprising the adoration of the serpent god Voodoo, the imploring of gifts, which may or may not take the form of evil charms to be worked against others, the sensual, writhing, contortious dance of the Voodoo queen, and the final

¹Lyle Saxon, op. cit., p. 243.
²Ibid., pp. 240-46.
completely abandoned orgy of dancing by the congregation. Secrecy
shrouded the meetings, and the members of the cult were administered an
oath binding them to help carry on the Voodoo god's work. The Voodoo
cult was alike tied up with Negroes and Mulattoes. Although in history
and fiction, it is often the name of a Mulatto mentioned in some important
connection -- such as Marie Laveau -- it must not be supposed that in this
practice, the two groups were as separate as in others.

In Palmyre la Philosophe Cable created a character who brought out
vividly the influence wielded by workers in black magic. With her evil
charms in the form of effigies of the legendary Bras Coupé, she was able
to incite fear into the majority of the other characters, especially
Agricola Fusilier whom she cordially hated, and against whom she turned
the full intensity of her desire for revenge. Agricola, with his arro-
gnant provinciality, his colossal egotism, extreme feeling of racial supe-
riority, is represented as the epitome of social bigotry, in a society
wherein men, ashamed of their superstitions and fears, nevertheless, insist
upon wreaking revenge upon lesser personages, even going so far as to make
accusations for which there is no basis. Clemence, caught in the act of
planting a Voodoo gris-gris was ostensibly suspected of helping in plans
for an insurrection, a suspicion bringing to all tongues the topic of the
"abysmal treachery and ingratitude of negro slaves," and moving the lo-
quacious Agricola to prepare a learned treatise entitled, Phillipique
Générale contre la Conduite du Gouvernement de la Louisiane, including a
"short but vigorous chapter in English on the 'Insanity of Educating
the Masses.'"

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1Ibid., pp. 240-41.
2George W. Cable, op. cit., p. 417.
3Ibid.
George Washington Cable, then, criticised his native state in its sociological relationships with the Negro. Intensive study might reveal him as a prophet of various aspects of twentieth century treatment.

Despite Cable's sojourn, however, into the realm of political injustice in his section of the South, there was a wide margin of liberalism that even he could not reach. For despite his comparatively great open-mindedness, it must be remembered that at the beginning of the South's struggle he had believed wholeheartedly in her cause, fighting for her in the Civil War. Despite his proclamation of the grave wrongs tendered the Negro in his political writings such as The Silent South and The Freedman's Case in Equity, he had no leanings toward the Southern bugbear "social equality," which he denounced as a "fool's dream" of which he wanted "quite as little as the most fervent traditionist of the most fervent South." He did not believe that the extension of civil rights would entail a like proffer of social equality, the latter being dependent upon personal choice. His belief that the Negro would need a great deal of development to stand shoulder to shoulder with the white man is attested explicitly in his statement:

He [the Negro] was brought to our shores a naked, brutish, unclean, captive, pagan savage, to be and to remain a kind of connecting link between man and the beasts of burden. The great change to result from his contact with a superb race of masters was not taken into account.

The same idea is expressed implicitly in this answer — although here he places a share of the guilt upon the sociological environment — of Père Jerome to Madame Delphine (in the short story of the same name) who had declared herself guilty of the sin of love:

2Ibid., pp. 57-63.
Well, Madame Delphine, to love is the right of every soul. I believe in love. If your love was pure and lawful I am sure your angel guardian smiled upon you; and if it was not, I cannot say you have nothing to answer for, and yet I think God may have said: "She is a quadroon; all the rights of her womanhood trampled in the mire, sin made easy for her -- almost compulsory, -- charge it to the account of whom it may concern."

Yet despite these qualifying tendencies, George Washington Cable, in liberalism stood head and shoulders over other Southern writers of his time, bridging the nineteenth to the twentieth century. To the treatment of the Negro in fiction he was more important than any of his contemporary Louisiana writers: Kate Chopin, whose primary emphasis lay on the Acadians and bayou people; Grace King, whose references to the Negro, although apparently sympathetic, held nevertheless the vein of romantic reminiscence; or even of the exotic Lafcadio Hearn, who, while agreeing wholly with Cable concerning the civil rights of the Negro, exploited Negro characters mainly for their picturesque qualities.

Without regard to the pattern which had been set by Cable, the earlier twentieth century fiction creators penned off pieces described by Virginius Dabney as "mellow and moon-drenched." Besides the romantic works of Thomas Nelson Page, there were the rabidly anti-Negro sentiments dispensed by Thomas Dixon, who in The Leopard's Spots and The Clansman represented the Negro as an innately inferior being, a scourge to the United States, to be put into his place immediately before complications too great for correction arise. Dixon's books stand out as a singular type of pro-slavery propaganda. By showing the Negro in freedom as an insulting brute, lacking moral sense, trespassing the virtue of white womanhood, as contrasted to the gentle, unassuming, loyally devoted creature of the ante-bellum period, he has achieved a subtle weapon, insinuating its cause upon


2Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 380.
the public with superb skill. And adaptations of such stories for the movies -- for instance, D.W. Griffith's presentation of Dixon's *The Birth of a Nation* -- did their part to fix this stereotype in the "mass-mind."¹

Some of the same ideology was employed by Oscar Dowling speaking on the subject of the Negro and Public Health at the first Southern Sociological Conference held in Nashville, Tennessee in 1912. Concerning the problem in hand he said:

> For a few years habits gained under the old régime persisted, but deprived of guidance and support, the negro was unable to adjust himself to a high civilization. He sank into a state of irresponsibility. . . .

> The average negro is content with squalid surroundings. He does just enough work to keep him from actual hunger. He yields to every sensual impulse and passing emotion. He is fatalistic in tendency.

> Perhaps in the category of his limitations the most elemental is his lack of a sense of responsibility. Appeals are futile; compulsory [sic] equally ineffectual. With such a basis it is difficult to determine what may be remedial. . . .²

But outweighing these attitudes was a new emphasis upon the individual brought into play about the beginning of the twentieth century³ which set up countering forces to destructively critical dogmatism. The most important of these as a source of minor tendencies was the rise of intellectualism, manifested by the spread of education, in the South.

In 1900 there were less than one hundred four-year high schools in the whole of the Southern regions. In 1901 the Southern Education Board was founded; in 1902 John D. Rockefeller relegated the dispensation of his philanthropist's millions to a body known as the General Education Board. Accelerated by these organizations a general campaign for better schooling

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¹Sterling Brown, *op. cit.*., p. 380.


opportunities sprang up and spread to the entire South. By 1908 gratifying results were noticed. At the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, the revenues for schooling in the South had doubled themselves, and similar increases showed in enrollment, attendance, and equipment.\footnote{Virginius Dabney, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 333-34.}

Simultaneously there was manifest an interest in higher education. The allocation of increased public funds for colleges and universities, plus the diffusion of grants by numerous philanthropists brought to the South institutions of higher learning ranking favorably with the topmost universities of the United States. Three of them, the University of Virginia, the University of Texas, and the University of North Carolina, have developed graduate departments of a sufficiency to meet the strict demands of the Association of American Universities.\footnote{Ibid., p. 345.} Another, Duke University, receiver of $4,000,000 from the J. B. Duke tobacco fortune in 1924, had already, before its advent into the class of richly endowed institutions, been brought into the light of public display by its refusal to dismiss from its faculty one Professor John S. Bassett, who had so far trespassed against the Southern sense of decorum and justice as to declare Booker T. Washington the greatest man save Robert E. Lee that the South had produced in a hundred years.\footnote{Ibid., p. 340.} Other members of the staff, declaring despite public protest that the dismissal of any man for expression of an honest opinion would be a gross affront to intellectual freedom and integrity, proclaimed unitedly their unwillingness to remain on the faculty of an institution that would surrender its dignity on such an issue to public opinion.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 339-40.}
Similar incidents took place throughout the collegiate world, in some cases public opinion taking the upper hand, in many cases intellectual honor standing firm. The leave of absence for a year without subsequent invitation to return became a common thing.\textsuperscript{1} Louisiana did not escape her share of the compromises. The State University conceded to public opinion on an issue of religion, and Tulane University on one of freedom of discussion, when bearing these incidents out to their natural conclusions might have proclaimed both these institutions eternal adjuncts to liberalism.\textsuperscript{2}

Add to the general growth of public education and the increased liberalism of higher and better known institutions, such schools of unique educational philosophy as the Berry Schools for mountain children of Georgia, where only poor children are allowed to matriculate;\textsuperscript{3} and Commonwealth College at Mena, Arkansas, which operates primarily for workers, drawing its enrollment from industrial centers, and whose faculty serves entirely without salary; and appreciate consequently the numerous forces working toward a break-down of the aristocratic oligarchy in the South.\textsuperscript{4}

One of the larger outgrowths of the spread of education was a manifest interest in the sociological aspects of the South, that portion of the

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 342.

\textsuperscript{2}Dr. Louis Wirth of the Tulane University Department of Sociology, having incurred the indigation of the Catholics of the state by his remarks on companionate marriage and birth control to such an extent that they demanded his resignation, was notified the following year while he was in Europe studying on fellowship that he would not be re-employed upon his return.

Dr. John Uhler, for his book Cane Juice, which according to Catholic dignitaries reflected upon the unsullied reputation of the Creole ladies, was dismissed from the faculty of Louisiana State University without a hearing. His reinstatement six months later did not completely efface the damage already done to academic liberty.

For detailed information concerning the struggle in Southern universities for intellectual freedom, cf. Virginius Dabney, op. cit., pp. 339-446.

\textsuperscript{3}Virginius Dabney, op. cit., pp. 335-36.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., pp. 254-55.
nation which had met with criticism from all sides for its economic, sociological, and intellectual apathy. But for the first time, the South retreated not into the past for rationalization, but into its present for self-analysis. Introspection revealed that the "South still lives in the shadow of the old plantation."\(^1\) Adherence to the economic order for which it is best suited cannot be accounted to the South an ill. But laxity in attacking concurrent problems indicates rank insularity in any region, and by the evidences of recent Southern scholars and workers, such an accusation has been with them too long. Such caustic -- as well as informative -- bits of criticism as the following are by no means uncommon:

Tenant farmers, sharecroppers, mill workers -- white and black -- are more oppressed by that shadow (of the plantation) than inspired by such flickerings as remain of the genteel virtues. If the paternalism of the Southern mill village, like that of the present plantation, inherits something of the old spirit of noblesse oblige, it also perpetuates the implicit dominion of master of slaves. Certain types of mill superintendents, and chain gang bosses of today are the spiritual if not the biological descendants of the slavery-time overseers.\(^2\)

It was one of the South's own sons who discovered that

\(^1\)The southern regions . . . have distinctive problems in a type of dual socio-economic load -- farm owner and tenant; white man and Negro; white man and Mexican; reputation and reality; and other class-mass aspects of uneven cultural development.\(^3\)

The Negro was avowed his full share of this study of the South to which he was so intimately bound both by tradition and reality. Squalid circumstances forced by financial necessity, outgrowing problems of health and morality affecting communities as a whole, a "new tension due to new demands for higher and professional education of Negroes and to culture conflicts arising from the impatience and enthusiasm of the younger

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\(^1\)Benjamin Burks Kendrick and Alex Mathews Arnett, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

\(^2\)*Ibid.*

\(^3\)Howard Odum, *Southern Regions* (Chapel Hill, 1936), p. 221.
The supreme race question... is not one of efficiency or inefficiency alone, it is not one of advancement of lack of advancement, it is one of attitude. The supreme race question is whether we, the white South, will so value humanity as humanity, that we will have a kindly sympathetic attitude toward the Negro as humanity. This Sociological Congress does well to put in its initial program such a question as this, for an Old South cannot become a New South until every man, woman and child in that South has a value as a person, and not simply as a thing, as an economic tool or a piece of animal machinery.

Truly, the earlier decades of the twentieth century were transitional.

A passing of literary fertility from New England, to the Middle West, and then to the South, was none the less a manifestation of the New Southern intellectualism. The successful works of Ellen Glasgow, who placed her stamp of disapproval upon useless idealism; the growing popu-
larity of the Agrarian Movement; the proletarian literature of North Carolina and Georgia, like similar pieces of the whole of America, identifying its future with the "struggles of the working class for a new society";¹ and the increasing interest in the Southern atmosphere both past and present, especially as the Negro is concerned, by such writers as Julia Peterkin, Dubose Heyward, Paul Green, and Roark Bradford, served to bring to the South a consciousness of the literary heritage it had at its disposal. Numerous literary periodicals including the South Atlantic Quarterly, the Southwest Review, the Sewanee Review, the Virginia Quarterly Review, all founded during the first quarter of the twentieth century, and the North Georgia Review, founded in 1936, as well as non-fictional introspections, such as Jonathan Daniel's A Southerner Looks at the South, John Louis Hill's Negro: National Asset or Liability, Edwin R. Embree's Brown America, Lyle Saxon's Father Mississippi and Fabulous New Orleans, and books of greater historical or sociological import, such as the works of Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, Virgilinius Dabney, Howard Odum, and others, all reveal the trend toward newer realism. Quotations chosen at random from these works and others illustrate the fact, however, that perhaps the transitional period of the first two decades yet abides.

A comparison of these two statements of Gerald W. Johnson writing in the Virginia Quarterly Review reveals an outlook which, while retaining something of the old belief in Negro stereotypes, yet suggests the new belief in unqualified justice:

Perhaps she [the Southern woman] had never heard of the Freudian libido, but in dealing with the newly liberated blacks she learned plenty about rape, incest, and sadism.²

This sentiment, obviously traditional, almost contradicts another of the


same article:

There are men who have walked through some of the scenes described in "Sanctuary" without turning a hair, but William Faulkner screamed until he curdled the blood of half a country. Who is more civilized, Faulkner or the men who were never horrified by a real lynching half as much as they were by his description of one? When is the South more civilized -- when its young men view its horrors impassively, or when they are so revolted that they howl until the continent rings again?¹

Throughout this wavering, however, there is a tendency to use the Old South as an instrument for the understanding of the New South. Kendrick and Arnett introduce their study __ The South Looks at Its Past __ with the statement:

This is not a history of the South. It is an interpretative study of those phases of the South's past that seem most pertinent to a fresh orientation in this age of dilemmas.²

Nobody has more adequately expressed the value of this tendency than Hamilton Basso:

The Southern past bears the same relation to the Southern culture as does the United States Constitution to national affairs. It can be a dead weight or a living instrument. And it is a living instrument when, instead of retreating into it as if into some half-lit acropolis away from all sight and sound of the outside world, we use it to understand the South today -- which is, I believe, the most important part of our inheritance.³

Thus, the Louisiana writer of fiction from 1920-1940 has an aggregate of attitudes from which to choose his own position in the treatment of the Negro, in reference and in characterization. He may, without regard to the newer trends toward liberalism, select for himself the "ivory tower" of the Old Dominion, with all its kindly relationship between benevolent and compassionate whites and loyal, devoted, ignorant, ridiculous, emotional, self-abasing, completely happy and contented Negroes, as did a host of writers from John P. Kennedy to Thomas Nelson Page. Or, if the mood presents itself, he may review with bitterness the passage of the old plantation —

¹Ibid., p. 204.
²Benjamin Burks Kendrick and Alex Mathews Arnett, __ op. cit. __, p. 3.
³Hamilton Basso, __ op. cit. __, p. 163.
system, rationalizing its cause by presenting the Negro away from it as a
callow, immoral, cruel and insulting brute to be hurriedly put into a
particular and inescapable place, as did Thomas Dixon. He may forget
about the South as a whole and shut himself into his own state, as fertile
in literary materials, with its volatile Creoles, its Mulattoes, and its
Voodoo, as it is in rich soils and vast estates, viewing it, as he chooses,
with sociological or artistic interest, as did his more immediate ances-
tors, George Washington Cable, Kate Chopin, Grace King, and Lafcadio Hearn.
Or, he may look into the whole of his native Southland, selecting his
setting from any component region, with the critical objectivity that
characterizes the newer realism with its inclusive study of agrarianism,
industrialism, proletarianism, intellectualism, and other forces working
toward a new social regime, with its tendency toward liberalism, which is
democracy's greatest leveling agent, and shutting out bigotry, present her
rights which must be prolonged, and her wrongs which must be stamped out,
knowing with his elder brother in introspective realism, Howard Odum, that
"there must surely be room enough in the regional cultures of America for
experimentation, for exploration, for the genuine liberalism that strives
to maintain a quality civilization in a quantity world."¹

¹Howard Odum, op. cit., p. 237.
CHAPTER II

THE NEGRO IN THE NOVELS PROLONGING THE TRADITIONAL RACIAL PICTURE

I find these people (along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers) not much different from the gentler families in Philadelphia. Their manners are coarser and their labors lie in totally different fields, yet their efforts always lead toward the same purpose. It is as though they had found a strange god, a vague three-headed angel who draws them unceasingly onward. First, a man is required to gather an excess of worldly goods. Next, he must devote the leisure that comes with his riches to acquiring a polish of gentility. And finally, he must bring his riches and his gentility to some urban center where they can be displayed.  

The Negro during the period of his presence in the Southern regions of the United States, has certainly had his share in the Southerner's desired three-fold aim. He was the "brute" Negro, broken in at the slave swamp near New Orleans, and in his trained and broken state the man who fought shoulder to shoulder with his master to carve "an excess of worldly goods" out of the natural resources of the wilderness. In the quest for polish and gentility, he was the faithful servant, by his self-abasement and abjection supplying the white man the leisure accompanying his riches. And finally, in his position as chattel, he was a part of that wealth brought by the Southerner to the urban center to be displayed. He was an inescapable element of the Southern aristocratic scene; and in his humble position, with all its traditional accompaniments, he passed into literature. Gaines says that the "Negro as conceived under the plantation system has become one of the most commonly utilized resources of fiction."

The captivating comedy of his disposition and his procedure has been made the theme of innumerable scattered fragments of writing and has been consistently employed by a school of rather successful writers best represented by such names as Irvin S. Cobb,

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Harris Dickson, O. R. Cohen, E. K. Means, Hugh Wiley and Dorothy Dix. ¹

Indeed, with this general group, in which from Gaines' representation two Louisiana names -- E. K. Means and Dorothy Dix -- figure prominently, a large body of the fiction of that particular state stands consistent. Whether through incidental portrayal in a variety of settings, including the immediate plantation scene (represented by Stella George Perry's Come Home; a Romance of the Louisiana Rice-lands and Roark Bradford's The Three-Headed Angel), the gentle urban scene (represented by Stella George Perry's The Defenders, Frances and Edward Larocque Tinker's tetralogy Old New Orleans, Barry Benefield's Valiant Is the Word for Carrie and Bugles in the Night, Jeanne de Lavigne and Jacques Rutherford's Fox Fire, Donald Barr Chidsey's Pistols in the Morning, and Mary Barrow Linfield's Day of Victory), the crossing of rural and urban boundaries (represented by Edwina Levin MacDonald's Blind Windows), the setting of historical significance such as the early pioneer settlement of Louisiana (represented by Grace King's La Dame de Sainte Hermine), and the specified scene outside the usual realm of Negro existence (represented by the Acadian novels, Nevil Henshaw's Tiger Bayou and Thaddeus St. Martin's Madame Toussaint's Wedding Day); or through a more concentrated treatment skirting the realistic surface of Negro life for the purpose of eliciting the quaint, the picturesque, the exotic, or the peculiarly interesting (represented by such novels as Roark Bradford's This Side of Jordan and Kingdom Coming, Helen McGloin Wood and Roger Wiley's Us Three Women, Robert Emmet Kennedy's Red Bean Row, and E. K. Means' Black Fortune), a large group of Louisiana novels cling together in a presentation of the Negro prolonging a particular type whose origin and derivation are deeply rooted in the plantation tradition. His patient slave loyalty, his kindly African temperament with now and then a

¹Ibid.
darker variation of it, his religious intensity, his burlesqued ridiculousness, are in these novels as much a part of him as ever they were in the span of literary development covering the nineteenth century.

As the life which fosters him, the novel which portrays him makes the Negro an inseparable part of the Southern scene. Whether as the mammy fuming over the "white chillum" . . . dressed in starched frilly clothes,¹ the colored man at the "whistling peanut stands" . . . tempting children with large, thick sticks of Switzer candy,² or the driver or torch-bearer in the "soul-satisfying kaleidoscope" of "mules, negroes, floats, maskers, bands, [and] costumed men on horseback" forming the spectacle of Mardi Gras; whether as the origin of the "vast, immense, childlike joy of the negro" characterizing "Christmas eve in Crebillon," ⁴ the "nigger"⁵ who dishes up the viennois for unexpected arrivals,⁶ a part of the crowd gathering in "suppressed excitement" for a duel, George Washington Hobson, the "pum'net" driver of the hotel freight elevator, or as the brown or black loafer "watching with half-closed eyes"⁷ on the steamboat wharf, joining in intermittently and lais daisically with the "soft ingratiating voices" of stevedores -- "If mah sister asks you whar Ah be,"¹⁰ the Negro is as


²Frances and Edward Larocque Tinker, "Mardi Gras Masks," op. cit., p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 53.


⁶Ibid.

⁷Donald Barr Chidsey, Pistols in the Morning (New York, [1930]), p. 51.


⁹Donald Barr Chidsey, Pistols in the Morning, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰Ibid.
certainly attached to the Southern landscape as the cotton-field. His stay is more constant than that of the white man, who, called away to the Civil War, left his women, children, mansions, fields, and often Negroes behind:

White women and children were plentiful about the streets of the little town, and so were negroes. But white men were scarce.¹

His place is slightly to the rear; his manner, obsequious. He is the Negro "waiting there, holding the reins of saddled horses."² He is the conscientious attendant of the self-conscious newly-rich, who, like Donald Chidsey's self-made Felix, "conscious of his fine clothes . . . could not forget that he was followed by a slave who carried his bags."³ He follows in wagon the newly-wed to the new plantation settlement.⁴ He is, like the proverbial glove on the beloved one's hand, an object of jealousy to the lover, who is pet permitted so close a position to the flower of Southern womanhood, and who is held from the lavishing of flatteries upon her by a pride which by tradition the Negro does not possess:

Felix had never spoken to her. The darkies could do that: they were slaves, and they were known and accepted as slaves, so they might be as humble as they pleased.⁵

He is the groom whom, along with the thoroughbred horses, half a dozen people from various parts of the poor-white Hoop-Pole Ridge settlement, in Bradford's The Three-Headed Angel, "converged" to study.⁶ For without effort on his part, the Negro became one of the main bases for judgement of the white man's economic and social status. Old Bas, head of the poor-

²Donald Barr Chidsey, Pistols in the Morning, p. 13.
³Ibid., p. 24.
⁴Roark Bradford, The Three-Headed Angel, p. 16.
⁵Donald Barr Chidsey, Pistols in the Morning, p. 4.
white community, after studying the stranger Richard Whiting for a while, "could not picture this young man, with his fine horses and his nigger as a part of the Hoop-Pole Ridge community." The Negro is portrayed as the creator of that leisure which brings white persons together in converse:

... the room was filling rapidly in the daily "get-together" of friends. Everybody in town was there, excepting the women who had no "nigger" and were busy with supper. He is intimately bound up with the "sordid possessions, like dirty pennies knotted into a silk handkerchief," property on the edge of town — negro cabins and perhaps a honky-tonk or so," belonging to "even the most imposing people," who, like the politically powerful Bassin of Henshaw's Tiger Bayou, "naturally... do not speak of them."

Judged on all sides by the pecuniary evaluation placed upon him, the Negro himself is accorded sympathetic and careful treatment in proportion to his worth to the profit-making schemes of the white persons. In the slavery setting, he is ever subject to some such appraisal as that of Joseph, the poor-white slave driver in Bradford's The Three-Headed Angel: "Eight hundred dollars... Too heavy for horses and too light for the fields." He, like the mules, is kept "out of the lowlands at night, when the malaria, a scourge of the swamplands, is reputed to be "especially virulent."

For, "in health, ... you have twenty-five thousand dollars worth

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1 Ibid., p. 8.
2 Edwina Levin MacDonald, Blind Windows (New York, [1927]), p. 91.
3 Nevil Henshaw, Tiger Bayou (New York, [1931]), p. 18.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
8 Roark Bradford, Kingdom Coming (New York, 1933), p. 27.
9 Ibid.
of slaves and stock. Sick, they aren't worth a picayune.\(^1\) Out of slavery his lot is similarly based. Negroes, subjected to a spread of syphilis on the Whitehall Plantation in Roark Bradford's This Side of Jordan are given immediate medical attention:

"I didn't want to take any chances," Mister Jeams (the plantation owner) explained. "These niggers have been with us for generations. Good workers and no trouble to manage. Stickers, too. Don't run around when work gets tight.\(^2\)

But unable to meet the demands of such profit-making schemes they are, like the occupants of Michael Dupré's "many negro cabins," turned "into the street for all their prayers and promises.\(^3\)

To own Negroes, to tend them as property, to dread the coming of emancipation for fear of losing property almost completely in the form of slaves,\(^4\) was the lot of the rich and gentle, but to stoop to the ungentle position of over-seer or slave-driver was to lose forever the potential caste of the gentleman. Said Joseph, slave-driver of The Three-Headed Angel:

"To add further to my complete degradation in the minds of those people to whom I refer [the gentility of the region] I drove slaves for a gentleman.\(^5\)

The Negro, bound thus irrevocably to the white Southern economy and fixed as he is to the inferior level has become in fiction a measuring-stick to the white character in the evaluation of his own status, in conversation and in thought. Burden, the loud-mouthed, loudly dressed man confidence of Stella George Perry's Come Home is referred to by people of gentility as "that 'white-faced negro minstrel.'\(^6\) Marie Aimée, young

\(^1\)Ibid.
\(^2\)Roark Bradford, This Side of Jordan (New York, 1929), p. 146.
\(^3\)Nevil Henshaw, Tiger Bayou, p. 23.
\(^4\)Roark Bradford, The Three-Headed Angel, p. 68.
\(^5\)Ibid., p. 96.
Creole girl of standing in Stella George Perry’s *The Defenders*, smarting under the indignation and disappointment inspired by the recent transfer of Louisiana from France to America, declares in disdain: “We are all Americans, now, my dear, remember! ... Since Napoleon sold us to them, as my father might sell his negroes.”

Carrie, title character of Barry Benefield’s popular *Valiant Is the Word for Carrie*, suddenly made aware of the fact that she has been duped by a clever ruse into buying a non-paying business, and humiliated by her own gullibility compares her lot to that of a “cotton-picking nigger.”

Nor is this contempt for the position of the Negro limited to characters of the wealthy Creole class, or to persons like Carrie, thrown into every day contact with the sociological interracial pattern. In *Madame Toussaint’s Wedding Day*, the author, Thaddeus St. Martin, carries it to his chief character Madame Toussaint, an Acadian fisherwoman, who, apparently incensed by the pride affected by the little Sabine half-breed Caroline Rouque, thought:

> Everyday these Sabines become bolder. To hear them talk, they were of pure Indian blood, and not the descendants of Jean and Pierre Lafitte’s men, vagabonds from all the seven seas, who had sown their seed among the Indians and gens de couleur of the coast. Well, maybe some of the Cajuns, too, had a tincturing of pirates’ blood in their veins. But they were the white descendants.

Roark Bradford, once, even carries the implication to the description of natural scenery:

> No, Rouge [the bayou] did not put on any high and mighty ways, once it got out of sight of the white folks. None of the negroes were fooled by its fancy doings in front of the big house, either. It knew its manners; but it was a bayou. When there was reason for it to act mannerly, it acted mannerly. But

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when it escaped to the wildness of the canebrake where no one but the negroes watched it, it settled down to be natural.  

In the quest of the three-fold aim of wealth, gentle polish, and urbanity, the Negro's glory is a reflected one, his experience vicarious. Messenger, a typically traditional slave integrates his own glory into the grandeur of his owners. Sent to the backwoods, he "tried to imagine the big ugly trees were big fine houses on a fine street in New Orleans and that he was seated on a fine coach holding a team of prancing, lily-white horses in front of every one of the fine houses."  

But robbed of the fulfillment of grandeur for himself in a life, to which although his position is one of mere vassalship he inevitably returns, he is afforded a particular type of existence, portrayed as peculiar to the race it represents, even as the physical and personality traits of that race are strictly its own. It is the explanation of this mode of life as well as the unravelling of the personalities found therein which motivates the novels concerned chiefly with Negroes, and, of course, the more explicit portrayal in the novels of incidental treatment. The treatment varies less in kind than in degree, dependent in the latter case upon the amount of emphasis which is put upon the Negro as a part of the atmosphere or as a character.  

Perhaps, the greatest variety of treatment by types is presented in the matter of personal appearance or physical characteristics of the Negro. Besides the vaguer outlines of imagery, which are presented by such a description as "Aunt Mary . . . a mountain of black flesh," or a "pleasant faced negro mammy," both of which leave to the reader the task of filling

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1 Roark Bradford, *This Side of Jordan*, p. 2.  
2 Roark Bradford, *Kingdom Coming*, p. 5.  
in the features according to his own traditional idea, there are the more explicit references, giving the Negro character a greater amount of individuality, yet keeping within the prescribed limits of the tradition of the Old South. The latter descriptions range in length from such terse pictures as a "strong, tall, yellow freedman,"\(^1\) or a girl "brown like a frosted cotton leaf,"\(^2\) to the more detailed, such as Edwina Levin MacDonald's description of Liza: "a voluptuous Creole girl with black sparkling eyes, a smooth olive skin and black hair that curled loosely.")\(^3\) Frequently the artistic potentialities of such a person are brought into play as they are with the repeated descriptions of Liza, one of which reveals her sitting on a truck of picnic supplies, "precariously on top of the load, her white teeth flashing in anticipation, her oily curls flying."\(^4\) She stands out in bold relief against Aunt Mary's "mountain of black flesh" and "poor old Uncle Ben, the tiniest of men."\(^5\)

Besides the vague or detailed descriptions of the general appearance, there are thrown-in references to specific parts of the anatomy. The servant who "... swung his immense feet at such devastating angles that... a place had to be found for him where his 'clod-hoppers' were not a deterring factor...",\(^6\) the young slave girl, the "acid characteristic odor" of whose cloak helped to perfect the disguise of the young white mistress in it, "though it was offensive to her";\(^7\) the "petite and slender" city

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\(^1\)Stella George Perry, *The Defenders*, p. 11.


\(^3\)Edwina Levin MacDonald, *op. cit.*., p. 37.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 104.

\(^5\)Ibid.

\(^6\)Frances and Edward Larooque Tinker, "Widows Only," *op. cit.*., p. 32.

\(^7\)Stella George Perry, *The Defenders*, p. 335.
girl, whose "fresh coat of dead white powder" and "thick lips . . . car-
mined to a perfect cupid's bow,"1 "gave her a startling appearance,"2 mere-
ly possessed characteristics apt to be considered as peculiar as dialect.

Not infrequently there is reference to graceful body carriage, especi-
ally when swift motion is brought into play, and characteristics of sav-
agery and abandon are brought into the description. Two Negro women are
described in the act of running:

Her stride became longer and freer and her body swayed from side
to side in savage grace. She seemed to have sensed a wild ela-
tion, a tossing off of the trammels of civilization, as the hard-
paved life fell away from her and the damp-earthed, deep-shadowed
world of her ancestors came nearer and enveloped her.3

He liked the ease with which she ran — wild, strong-muscled legs
and long rhythmic arms, moving with perfect grace. "She make a fine
breedin' mare," he observed under his breath . . . . 4

Occasionally, individualised description will dwell upon a magnifi-
cense of physical features for apparently unadulterated purpose:

She was well worth seeing. She was as black as the bottom of a
depth well in the night time. She was as agile and feline as a
panther. She was as straight as a stalk of sugar-cane and as
graceful. Her eyes glowed with the phosphorescence of a jungle
beast, knowing no fear. Her lips curled back from teeth as white
as tombstones and absolutely perfect.5

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1Roger Wiley and Helen MoGloin Wood, Us Three Women (Philadelphia,
[1937]), p. 43.
2Ibid.
3Frances and Edward Laroque Tinker, "Widows Only," op. cit.,
p. 119.
4Roark Bradford, Kingdom Coming, pp. 197-98.
attributing beauty to purely Negroid features is rare. Whenever given,
it is more likely to present proportions of awe and majesty than personable
individual attractiveness. Op. this description with that of Adora
by Carl Van Vechten:
She was beautiful, of that there could be no question, beautiful
and regal. Her skin was almost black; her nose broad, her lips
thick. Her ears were set well on her head; her head was set well
on her shoulders. She was a type of pure African majesty.
The matter of color and clothing often enters into the description of Negro appearance. Sometimes the effect accomplished suggests a romantic artistry or exoticism, as in the two following descriptions of Negro woman:

Satishe appeared, her white apron almost entirely hidden by a huge basket, full of roses which she carried on her arm. Her dress of brown-figured indienne toned in pleasantly with her thin, dusky face and her jauntily tied tignon of brilliant reds and yellows made her look like some barbaric flower of the tropics.  

. . . he gradually drifted into sleep which was invaded by the vision of a tall, yellow girl in a clinging gown of white satin, and large purple iris that seemed to expand until he was floating in a scented purple twilight.

This technique is likewise employed frequently for the purpose of giving a slightly humorous or ridiculous picture, as in Perry's description of a "small black girl in gay Turkey-red calico, perched upon it [a vine-entangled gate], swinging . . . like a cardinal on a twig," or in the following descriptions of more length by the Tinkers and E. K. Means respectively:

The small black driver climbed over the wheel and jumped nimbly to the ground . . . . Aristide was so diminutive he could scarcely reach up to the rusty bit, and although he wore his blue, cottonade breeches to his heels, and a battered coachman's hat posed sedately on his little bullet head, one realized at once that he was a very young, small driver for such a large, old turnout.

"When I shows up wid a pair of yeller shoes an' a stovepipe hat, an' a glory-to-Gawd long-tail prancin'-Albert coat, an' a pink-striped shirt like peppermint candy, an' some proper socks -- gosh! Bunkie will think de lightnin' is done struck de rainbow an' splashed de color all over me. I bet I gits stoop-shouldered lookin' down at dem red socks."

The love of color in dress, and the intimate part it plays in the personal appearance of the Negro is a common reference, attributed alike to the

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1 Frances and Edward Larocque Tinker, "Strife," op. cit., p. 4.
3 Stella George Perry, Come Home, p. 30.
4 Frances and Edward Larocque Tinker, "Widows Only," op. cit., p. 31.
plantation character such as Didge of Roark Bradford's *This Side of Jordan* with her addiction to red party dresses, and to the urban character such as Boll Weevil in Wiley and Wood's *Us Three Women* with her street costume built completely from a combination of yellow and green.

This love of color, cropping out often, vaguely in the incidental treatment of the Negro, more vividly in the direct treatment, like a profusion of other details concerning the personality of the Negro, is presented with not so much variation between characters as the matter of personal appearance, which because of physiological differences necessarily shows some unavoidable dissimilarities. These characteristics are revealed so inevitably in action and reference that one is given to suppose that there may be a widespread belief in their racial innateness. References are sometimes explicit of such a belief: "Emma's keen eyes, full of the natural kindness of her race...";¹ "It was easy to be confidential with colored people, who are grown up, yet children too";² "... the man who sat at the steering-wheel belonged to a patient race."

These expressions bespeak their authors' beliefs in a Negro who is patient, easy-going, kindly, and childlike. Embellishments of these basic characteristics are frequently revealed. One of these is the idea that the Negro, kind as he is, possesses intuitive powers especially strong in the discernment of the misfortunes of white persons:

The old colored woman's intuition told her more than the little girl had, and she patched together the usual story of illness and poverty...⁴

The Negro in the novels prolonging the traditional picture is seldom given

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credit for purely perceptive reasoning. Often he is accused of low potentialities for mental development:

His mental development ceased. A steel hoop seemed to form around his mind to keep it from expanding. They could soak his head in a pail full of ideas and he would absorb nothing but cuss-words... "I cain't stan' dem gal-chillun no more," he said to himself. "Dey tried to learn me mo' books dan a nigger ought-er be allowed to know."

Occasionally, the mental failing is given a humorous twist, interesting for the supplement of imagination for reason:

When Eddie's memory failed him, his hymns broke down alarmingly in textual accuracy but his interpolations were picturesque and graphic. From a more enlightened mentality they would have seemed blasphemous, but Eddie's fervor proved his sincerity, and Emma's reprimands were often his first realization that the hymn was not "as wrote down in de scripture."

It is not made explicit what faculty supplies the artless philosophy which so often comes to the lips of the Negro character, who applies his sage wisdom and consolation to numerous situations. Uncle Hope of Stella George Perry's Come Home, although disappointed because a cloud apparently prophesying a heavy rain had in reality foretold a very light shower, ex-postulated, "Say thanky fo' a blackberry, if you can't get a watermillion. 'Dat's what de old folks say. Yas, Lawd." Liye, of Mary Linfield's Day of Victory, advises thus the little child, who, having slipped away from home without his parents' consent, voices yet his fears of punishment upon return:

"Now, Cap'n, des you keep dish yere in yo' min'. You hatter buy a ticket ef you wants to see de show; 'tain't so often a feller gits a chance ter look tho' de crack. Ef you done seed de show, 'tain't no use ter holler when dey passes 'roun' de hat... You got ter pay des' de same. Lak when you does whut yo' pa done say you ain' ter do. 'Tain't no use a-wishin' you hadn't a-done hit. He gwone whup de same. Yit, on de yuther han', ef you done seed a good show en yo' pa whups you, Cap'n, why you done

2 Frances and Edward Larocque Tinker, "Closed Shutters," pp. 43-44.
3 Stella George Perry, Come Home, p. 334.
seen hit, ain't you? En hit don' hurt no longer'n de switch
is a lickin' 'round yo' laigs, do hit?"1

This expressiveness by the Negro character on matters of life and
human philosophy sets the motivation of Elizabeth Gilmer's (Dorothy Dix)
Mirandy Exhorts. Not in the strictest sense a novel, this study, a series
of exhortations upon life, love, politics, and economics, presents in Mi-
randy a character of the traditionally garrulous type who offers her world-
ly wise adages, sure and penetrating, at some times bound up in her own
limited experience, in others, reflecting the ideas of her creator:

"De lan' of Goshen," I 'soleims, "but you suttentry must
have lost yo' mind! You know we can't afford one [an automobile]
"Of cou'se we can't," 'spons Ike, "but bein' able to afford
a ortsmobile ain't got nuthin' to do wid havin' one, or odderwise
de output of de ortsmobile factories in the United States wouldn't
be seven million, four hundred thousand machines a yeah."

Obviously, this use of the Negro stereotype is a modification of the usual
version, where the Negro servant's mind could not conceive of so complex
a number as "seven million, four hundred thousand."

Another characteristic, presented as the basis of many activities on
the part of the Negro character is an apparently inherent love of fun and
show. The Negroes, bearing torches in the Mardi Gras parade, "in spite of
their burdens, aconjined, cake-walked and strutted, their African exuber-
ance bubbling at the sound of the music."3 One Negro character, having
gone from his native environment in order to receive an education, which
he doffed immediately upon his return, "grinned proudly," exclaiming:

"Everybody loves a parade . . . . Especially my folks. Major
Moten used to say that we negroes didn't mind work as long as we
could put a little gravy on it as we went along."4

1Mary Barrow Linfield, Day of Victory, pp. 18-19.
2Elizabeth Gilmer, Mirandy Exhorts (Philadelphia, 1922), p. 11.
4Roark Bradford, This Side of Jordan, p. 180.
The tendency toward fun may lie behind the custom of having Negroes address each other by burlesque names:

"Dey calls me Little Sister," the woman with "grand-piano" legs and the "ponderous tread of an elephant" chucked. "Because of my size." 

If the "African exuberance" is often brought out in the pleasant side of the Negro's fictional life, it is also revealed in a darker side. For there is such a thing as "savage character" which especially fitted the Negroes sent by Governor Périer of Louisiana to massacre the Indians, to carry out their work successfully. It is this characteristic which elicits on the part of the Negro character such affirmations as this:

"A mean white man is plenty bad enough, ... but a mean white man ain't so mean as a good nigger man, do de nigger man git mad. Hit's de African in 'em made 'em do like dat."

It is the characteristic which motivates on the part of the white character such suggestions as:

"But, my dear girl! You can't go into the woods alone. Maybe swamp niggers -- it isn't safe. You know that."

These characteristics, accepted as general, form in the novels of Louisiana, a part of the motivation for trends of thought and modes of life in the Negro community.

The Negro neighborhood, whether city section or plantation quarters, has an organization all its own, based, to a large extent, upon the similarity with which the externalities of life are met by each person; and a variety of specialized types whose influence upon the entire community

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1E. K. Means, Black Fortune, p. 126.
2Ibid., p. 128.
3Grace King, La Dame de Sainte Hormine (New York, 1924), p. 32.
4Ibid., pp. 202-03.
5Roark Bradford, Kingdom Coming, p. 203.
6Stella George Perry, Home, p. 60.
tends to set it apart as peculiar and interesting.

Although, because of differences in external environment, there is in-
evitably some variation between the city and country Negro, in the novels
prolonging the tradition, there is presented a synthesis of manners and
motives which in the long run shapes the destinies of both to the same
general end. This Side of Jordan offers a plantation setting; Red Bean
Row and Us Three Women both present sections of a city; yet, the difference
in the neighborhood organization is scarcely appreciable. Simplicity is
the keynote, from the tacit acceptance of external surroundings to the most
complex of the social relationships. If the life on the Whitehall Plan-
tation in the "double row of pine-log cabins that ran from the barn to the
head of the bayou" with its wide street "beaten bare of vegetation by the
continuous tread of the feet of men going to and from work" and of "women,
traveling from cabin to cabin with the latest bit of gossip" was "sweet and
quiet and peaceful,"\textsuperscript{1} it was equally unperturbed within the confines of
Red Bean Row where "unmistakable signs of spring" being "visible everywhere,"
the women of all ages, "came hurrying out of their houses to bask in the
heartening morning sunshine and take pleasure in the cool grass-scented
breeze blowing over the near-by pasture,"\textsuperscript{2} If life was confined on the
Whitehall Plantation within its own boundaries, it being seldom necessary
for the Negroes "to go farther than the plantation commissary for their
supplies,"\textsuperscript{3} it was equally in-grown in the city's Zee-Zee Gardens, where
it was difficult for Fansy, a Negro woman, to understand the necessity for
her daughter Bell Weevil to go "traipsin'" over to "dem Southtown parties"\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Roark Bradford, \textit{This Side of Jordan}, p. 16.


\textsuperscript{3}Roark Bradford, \textit{This Side of Jordan}, p., 17.

\textsuperscript{4}Roger Wiley and Helen McGloin Wood, \textit{Us Three Women}, p. 112.
when her own neighborhood was ever full of "rent parties," church picnics, birthday parties, and similar social frolics. If the Negroes on the Whitehall Plantation daily "journeyed into the fields and plowed, or hoed, or picked,"\(^1\) retiring "when night came ... to their village for rest and amusement,"\(^2\) the Negroes of the Zee-Zee Gardens beat a similar path to the kichens or gardens of Miss Annie, Miss Mary, or Miss Li'l Sis,\(^3\) to the jobs "liverin' fish,"\(^4\) or to the office of "de lawyer man" who needed an office boy,\(^5\) returning at night in the same fashion for recapitulation.

The life of the Negro in the family is less emphasized than are the outside relationships with white persons or Negroes less closely connected. To be sure, it is treated more vividly in the novels directly concerned with Negro life; in the other books, appearing merely in slight reference or not at all. In these novels touching the realistic surface of Negro life, there is usually some reference to an abiding affection between parents and children, such as the bond between Messenger and his son Grammy in Roark Bradford's *Kingdom Coming*, between Gram-ma Veenia and her adopted son Nebo in Kennedy's *Red Bean Row*, or between Toodie, Pansy, and the young Boll Weevil in Wiley and Wood's *Us Three Women*. But, in general treatment, the Negro family as an institution lacks some of the sturdiness which idealists like to attribute to it. It is subject to the attacks of external forces: perhaps, a transcending loyalty on the part of some important member to a white master or employer, a factor which is best discussed -- in its prevalent existence -- along with the characteristics of the faithful

\(^1\)Roark Bradford, *This Side of Jordan*, p. 17.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 149.
\(^5\)Ibid., p. 194.
servant; perhaps, a resentment between members of the same family when one has been subjected to better advantages than another,\(^1\) a trait which characteristically accompanies the Negro's resistance to education; perhaps, the forces of economic struggle, which caused Snookie Tuck to abandon her small son Blunder Black in Means' *Black Fortune*; or, as in the greatest number of cases except, say, the faithful servant's neglect for his own family for another, the pervading amorality or lack of family responsibility on the part of the Negro character. Frequently this characteristic is not confined to individual cases, but is spread over an entire neighborhood, as in Roark Bradford's *This Side of Jordan*:

Other men found their wives had been playing them false, and other women found their husbands had been philandering. Forty-seven people in all -- sinners and Christians.\(^2\)

The same situation is found in Kennedy's *Red Bean Row* where the philandering Elder Dennis made the umbrellas he was wont to pass out to his female conquests a common neighborhood phenomenon. The young girls are so often and so easily led from the straight and narrow path, and so lacking in repentance for their deeds -- save for a possible penitence imposed by economic situation -- that one is led to suspect the lack of a general code to which they are expected to conform. Boll Weevil, expectant unmarried mother, is tortured only by the uncertainty of financial provision for herself and her child:

*She could no longer deny to herself that she was going to have a baby, but she wasn't sorry, for she would sort of like to have one to play with and dress up on Sundays.*\(^3\)

\(^1\)No example of this trait is more vividly worked out than Roark Bradford's portrayal of Daddy Jack's resentment against his son's intention to ride on horseback over the plantation to tend his duties in introducing the new machinery to the place:

"*I wawk," Daddy Jack announced, ominously. "My daddy he wawked, to0. Mister Jeeva is de onliest white man, and no niggers a-tall kin ride on de Whitehall niggers."


\(^2\)Roark Bradford, *This Side of Jordan*, p. 151.

\(^3\)Roger Wiley and Helen McGloin Wood, *Us Three Women*, p. 141.
But unlawful sexual traffic is not confined within the limits of the Negro race; it often crosses over to include members of the white race. The Negro women and the white men are the persons who suffer by these references. The practice is not conceded to be so general as that confined within the boundaries of the Negro race, and the woman who are suspected of taking part bear the hostility of the other women of the community:

Once a woman had been "shamed" out of the settlement, and she went to New Orleans -- "went down de river" -- leaving her too-bright baby behind.\(^1\)

The idea that the slave girl was not to be held at all responsible for cross-color sexual practices is generally exploded when referred to. Solidad who sold her love for the price of freedom and "a little house for Solidad free, and for Master sometimes,"\(^2\) and Orimp who naturally possessed a vent toward license, are given by implication an equal share of the responsibility for their acts. It was not expected that a Negro would have any judgment to pass upon the acts of another. Messenger who unsuccessfully attempted to run away to freedom because of the knowledge that his wife had played him false was considered an unusual case:

"The runaway was a smart nigger, all right, and a good'n', too, in his line of work. It ain't past the possible that he's lived so close to white folks long enough to git fool ideas about his woman keepin' straight."\(^3\)

To a great extent the Negro in fiction makes up in neighborhood relationships what he lacks in the family. There are always the respected "daddies," "paps," "grammas," and "uncles" for the whole neighborhood. To a large extent these people owe their popularity to the tendency on the part of authors to cast the character most respected by white persons into the role of leader of the community. It is easy to manage this

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\(^1\)Roark Bradford, *This Side of Jordan*, p. 18.


\(^3\)Roark Bradford, *Kingdom Coming*, p. 60.
 technique, for it has a parallel in real life growing out of the ante-
bellum custom of awarding respect to the Negro in proportion to his ability
to please his owners. Should he be thought well enough of to be chosen for
the house or some specialized task such as managing the stock or horses,
he could consider himself higher in station than his less fortunate brother
of the fields. Messenger, in Kingdom Coming could speak with disdain to
the field Negro who dared to question his superiority with a scornful:

"My moster . . . sent me up hyar to look after de stock. 'Cause
he knows hit ain't many white folks and no niggers a-tall which
kin look after de stock good as me."¹

Daddy Jack, overseer of the Negro's work on the Whitehall Plantation in
This Side of Jordan, is likewise head-man in the neighborhood activities
of the quarters. In the Zee-Zee Gardens characters who could look to their
white employers for the anchorage of security were looked upon as respect-
able; and it was most often the character, deprived of the respect of the
white person, and careless of the opinion of his own people, who dwindled
into the category of the "no-count" Negro. Charlie, the irresponsible
husband of Boll Weevil, instead of anchoring his hopes in a trustworthy
white employer, took upon himself the business of making his way by the
attraction he could summon to himself from such women as Lucinda, who with
her "white man" to keep her, took care of her "black man" she was "needin'
. . . to love" her.² As such a character, refusing to suffer the indignity
of wearing overalls, he is thrown forever -- when not in the good graces
of Lucinda -- upon the laurels of his own smooth speech and action to get
by. He is a mixture of the regular confidence man and the clownish "Jim
Crow" Negro, who is according to Gaines "the negro who has most completely
captivated the public."³ Of the latter's characteristics which include

¹Roark Bradford, Kingdom Coming, p. 22.
²Roger Wiley and Helen Mc Gloin Wood, Us Three Women, p. 119.
³Frances P. Gaines, op. cit., p. 17.
laziness, shiftlessness, happy-go-luckiness, water-melon loving, razor-carrying, crap-shooting, flashy dressing, and drink-loving, only the most elemental does he lack. The razor, the "craps," the watermelon are never shown in connection with him; but the intensity with which he bears the other marks -- especially the love of flashy clothes -- makes up for his lacks. His linen suit, or "white pants" as his clothes are referred to by Toodie, the eldest of the three women, stands as a symbol of the Negro who will not work.

But such Negroes often find themselves listed as a part of the fictional community -- if not the whole of it, in the person of those "smooth black folk" who, faced by the rent collector and not having his fee, "bow and scrape, and call you Little Boss" and "only laugh at you afterward for being so easily deceived." They are, however, in the majority of cases, outnumbered by the hardworking Negroes from whose labor they feast.

Another type of Negro, almost sure of representation in the Negro community is the witch doctor, sometimes a man, sometimes a woman. "The negro herb doctor of the South is an institution which has existed from the beginning." Aunt Crip of the Whitehall Plantation, with her peculiar type of medical treatment, consisting of making the correct obeisance to the right thing, now a jaybird, now the bayou, in order to avoid the "plat-eyes", wielded in her way an influence which was equal to that of the head-man Daddy Jack. The "sto' medicine [which] ain't good for:

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1Ibid.
2Roger Wiley and Helen McGloin Wood, Us Three Women, p. 240
4E. K. Means, Black Fortune, p. 5.
5Roark Bradford, This Side of Jordan, pp. 21-22.
6Ibid., pp. 94-95.
7Ibid., p. 27.
niggers,"¹ she steadily avoided for the more specialized treatments of bacon fat and kerosene for a cough, copper pennies under the tongue for dizzy spells, herb broths for skin ailments, "mullen-leaf poultices" for back aches, and feathers around the ankles to reduce swelling in the legs.²

But Aunt Crip's medicine was of a less organized variety of witchcraft than the more imaginative and ceremonial order of superstition known as Voodoo. So often in deserted locations near settlements not already provided with the witching Aunt Crips, from the Yankee camps at New Orleans during the Civil War³ to the edge of the city in later times⁴ this form of superstitious worship is found, represented mainly for the intense emotionality it throws upon the character of the Negroes partaking. From the descriptions of the ceremonials it is difficult to ascertain whether authors wish to portray the frenzied orgy of dancing instigated by the charm-pot of "frogs, toads, snakes, lizards and shrimp," "nails, keys, bones, feathers, wood, hair, herbs and innumerable other things put into his [the Voodoo royalty's ] hands by the dancing Voudous [sic] who wished to work certain charms or curses,"⁵ as a means to the end of obtaining their requests and desires, or as an end, in throwing off super-emotionalized sexual energy, in itself. Frances and Edward Larocque Tinker describe some such dance, thus:

The dancers, awaiting his signals, leaped and twirled like mad things, sweating, shrieking and foaming at the mouth. . . . Madder and madder, and faster and faster they went until the whole place seemed filled with a moving, convulsing mass of lurid, wriggling devils.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 12.
²Ibid., p. 135.
³Roark Bradford, Kingdom Coming, pp. 270-76.
⁵Ibid., pp. 127-28.
⁶Ibid., pp. 128-29.
In its most exotic coloring the Voodoo addiction is represented by a strange mixture of materials including blood (perhaps a chicken's, \(^1\) once a human baby's\(^2\)), tattoo or horribly suggestive tribal markings, and an odd suggestion of religious crossing, dominated by the presence of the emblem of the Crucifixion. For instance, the dwelling of Dr. John with its hanging bunches of dried herbs, "boxes of lizards, toads and small alligators," "bottles of queer mixtures, some dark, some light, and some vivid red," was dominated, nevertheless, by a "large black crucifix, and innumerable rosaries, like wavering stalactites, hung from every projection that could hold their weight."\(^3\)

Paradoxically related, yet strangely opposed -- though not diametrically so -- to the frenzied orgy of Voodoo worship is the religious worship carried on by the Negro in the traditional novel. Full of conversions and baptizings from which the victims often come up, like Didge in Roark Bradford's *This Side of Jordan*, "... gasping and sputtering ... fighting water and beating off efforts ... to help ..." them,\(^4\) the religion of the Negro character sends its effects into his everyday life, forming the atmosphere for emotionally tense situations with such activities as the singing of the mournful, wailing "Dying Bedmaker Song" by Crimp at moments of disaster in Bradford's *Kingdom Coming*, or the fervent praying of Preacher Wes' on occasions of high festivity or importance like the day of the introduction of farm machinery to the Whitehall Plantation. Of the inevitably ignorant representation, the preacher prayed:

"Laud ... hyar us go again. Diffunt dis time, but goin' jest de same. Take keer er Mister Jeems and Miss Pauline and de

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 128.  
\(^4\)Roark Bradford, *This Side of Jordan*, p. 117.
baby, dis year, Lawd, and de niggers and de mules, and de craps, an ef'n you knows anything about dis yuther stuff, well, take keer er hit, too. Amen."

Connected by position with the religious life, but more strictly in portrayal to the communal atmosphere of fun and irresponsibility, is the figure of the philandering elder. His scope of misdeeds ranges from the mere flattery which he hands to the women of his congregation for the purpose of gleaning in exchange for his fine words choice culinary morsels, like Elder Severain of Us Three Women, to a more definitely vicious type, turning the men within the flocks into cuckold, and preying on the ignorance and gullibility of the younger girls, like Elder Dennis in Red Bean Row and Videll in This Side of Jordan. These men are usually met by the community with a curious mixture of welcome and resentment. Forming the basis of immoral relationships with almost every woman in a neighborhood, the elder is a subject for gossip on the tongue of every woman against every other woman. Elder Dennis, propagator of the unique and engaging habit of passing out an umbrella in exchange for illicit love, at last faced by ensuing debt and disgrace in the eyes of his churchmen, beseeches financial aid of one of his female favorites, Pio'yume, and is greeted with the terse answer:

"So you think I'm goin' cover up yo' looseness an' git you free from all dese good husban'-mens you bin foolin' so cute, wid de Bible in one hand an' a umbrella in de yuther?"

Nevertheless, Miss Pie'yume was with proper flattery prevailed upon to assume the responsibility for the elder's debt.

Perhaps, even more devastating was the sojourn of Elder Videll to the Whitehall Plantation, for instead of confining his gifts to comparatively harmless umbrellas, he left in his wake the more irreparable

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1Ibid., p. 179.
2Robert Emmet Kennedy, Red Bean Row, p. 81.
donation of a wave of syphilis. Accorded the same mixture of hostility and hospitality that had greeted Elder Dennis on Red Bean Row, Videll had by smooth words wended his way into the confidence of the people, especially the younger girls like Cooter and Sugar. Only one person maintained a reserve which he could not penetrate; that person was the elemental Didge who had from the beginning resented him for his "manner" and his "color of the river."¹

But there was another side of the character of Videll which helped to stir up against him the resisting forces of the community. The pervading knowledge that he -- "tall, yellow, with fancy clothes and fancy words"² -- was different from the general run of the people, had to a certain extent pronounced his doom from the very beginning. It was his difference which made it possible and probable for Daddy Jack, the leader of the Negroes, to proclaim his murder by the razor of the avenging Scrap a "hush mouf killin'".³ He could never have had a full sense of protection among this veritable clan of ebon-hued Negroes, easy-going, satisfied with their self-sufficient life on the plantation, little needing or desiring outside forces which inevitably made for stratifications in their midst.

It is this resistance to the person who is different which discourages the entry of the character with education. Ignorant themselves, the Negroes in the novels continuing the traditional racial character, present something of a native distrust of education. Young Jack of the Whitehall Plantation, just returned from college, not yet seen by the older, more permanent members of the colony, stirred up rumor by his mere arrival:

Word had been passed that he would be "uppity," like some of the new niggers who moved on the place and off right away.

¹Roark Bradford, This Side of Jordan, p. 93.
²Ibid., p. 91.
³Ibid., p. 132.
and that he would strut and brag like a man who had been chain-ganged. The word was, even, that he talked like white folks and "chicagoid" his r's until they grated your ears like a rosin string on a tin can.  

Roark Bradford, moreover, adds to the general resistance to education by the group, an attitude of distaste on the part of the young Negro, who having been subjected to it, apparently would, if he could, throw off its unsavory effects. Of Young Jack, he declared:

... the word was wrong. His talk had changed some; but he had to hunt around for words, now and then. But it still had that soft elastic quality that enabled him to hang on to a word until he had finished saying it. His laughter ran along the road like a fresh breeze from the bayou. Tuskegee and Cornell were behind him. "Watch me shed these clothes and get into some over-halls," he said. "Over-halls" -- not "overalls." "I want to do some hand shakin' with my people."  

It would seem that the street clothes of everyday citizenry would make such hand-shaking impossible.

In no character is native inadequacy for educational leadership more vividly revealed than in the presentation of Violetta, who, brown -- a characteristic which in itself was enough to disqualify her -- and educated, engaged to Young Jack, is made to appear at absolute disadvantage in the nakedly elemental environment of the Whitehall Plantation. Clothed in her "neatly tailored suit," and presenting a countenance "rather pretty after a fashion," she failed from the beginning in the very thing she wanted most to do, in gaining the confidence of the people, so that she could help Jack educate and refine them -- 'civilize them,' she thought.

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1 Ibid., p. 169.
2 Ibid., pp. 168-70.
3 Ibid., p. 176.
4 Ibid., p. 199.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 200.
Put to the task later of entering into the wild exuberance of a plantation dance, she was, despite effort, unable to summon the necessary courage to go through with it. In her, the author has at once struck at a supposed inadequacy in the Negro and the distasteful picture of a needless interferer in a natural and accepted scheme. She is made to appear at equal disadvantage with Demetra, a young white woman of Bradford's The Three-Headed Angel, who faced by circumstances equally strange and disappointing, was able nevertheless to swallow "the lump that rose in her throat, and thrust her little chin forward in determination,"¹ and with the elemental "babbling, friendly, open-hearted" Didge, with whom she is compared in her own novel This Side of Jordan. It is this Didge who goes about ". . . everything . . . living, everything . . . just like she dances; wholeheartedly, without restraint, without inhibitions; natural,"² whom Jack holds up as example, when he finally delivers to the totally dispossessed Violetta his unvarnished opinion of the process to which he has been subjected: "That idea of progress that's been pounded into me has eaten out my heart, robbed me of my friends, robbed me of my happiness-"³ And to the Negro character, in whose representation happiness is something more fundamental than desire for success, this theft is too distasteful to bear. The unwarranted resentment of parents he meets with patience; the petty jealousies of acquaintances he merely ignores; but whatever robs him of the "African exuberance" which he carries to the gay plantation frolics, to the Voodoo circles, to the baptizings and gatherings at the mourners' bench, to the rent parties and church picnics is by the traditional Negro character cut off from his entire existence.

²Roark Bradford, This Side of Jordan, p. 206.
³Ibid., p. 207.
It is not so with the care and trouble accompanying his employment with the beloved master, whose burdens, often appallingly heavy in comparison with the troubles presented as his own, the Negro servant bears with decidedly easy grace and willingness. This tendency will be found to be likewise present in the portrayals of the Negro in slavery and out. But, nowhere is it more evident than in the setting just succeeding the Civil War, where the Negro, although freed, stays on with the impoverished family helping to make the pretenses imposed by the glorious past. Aristide and Sophronie in the Tinkers' "Widows Only", are two vivid examples of the faithful servant type of Negro. They were the only two slaves to stay after the war, which, "just over, had freed . . . hundreds of slaves."^1 Their purpose was "to help . . . stem the havoc that was relentlessly coming nearer and nearer, bringing its ever increasing poverty."^2 Aristide tirelessly took on his share by serving both as chauffeur and butler -- even when lack of time made hurry very necessary:

In a few moments Aristide came running in from the quarters, where he had changed his blue breeches for white ones, thereby emerging as a butler from his chrysalis of coachman. He had stabled Yankee, pushed the ambulance under the shed, and now was ready to "march de vittals to de plates" with a deferential bow of his nappy head and an almost noiseless shuffle of his bare feet. Sophronie, loyal to her mistress throughout the trying period, casting nothing but maledictions upon her husband who had, it seems, been deluded by the "fantastic tales of the Yankee soldiers, about 'Freedom' and 'Equality'"; into trudging off after them, ^4 is represented as the faithful servant type, though given to trust in "asseydity"^5 and witchcraft for the

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^2 Ibid.
^3 Ibid., p. 45.
^4 Ibid., p. 32.
^5 Ibid., p. 79.
solving her own problems, nevertheless shrewd enough to save the portraits of Miss Damarin's ancestors from the hands of the marauding Yankees, by a simple yet clever expedient. Miss Damarin, herself, tells the story:

"Quick like a flash [upon hearing the Yankees coming] Sophronie run to the kitchen and come back with a bowl full of lard, then she mix in it all the fallen soot in the grate. I held a chair for her while she climb up on the back of it, and smear all the pictures and frames until I could not tell my lady ancestors from my gentlemens. When Butler's soldiers came we kept the shutters close' and use this for a store-room; so when they left, they drove all our carriages and wagons away full of our silver and china and the best of our furniture, but they did not get my ancestors."

Abject in her execution of the most self-abasing tasks, including such jobs as going "to each bedroom with her tub and buckets of warm-water," and washing everyone's feet, she is, nevertheless, the quarrelsome, licensed mammy, fuming over her young mistress whom she protects with unsurpassed fierceness. Distrusting Misida, her mistress 'Toinette's cousin, she watches for every possible opportunity to disqualify her, declaring on one occasion to 'Toinette:

"Abum Lincoln done sent me a free tongue, an ef ever dat saffron-headed Jesibel tries to git anythin' away from you, I'm goin' to lay it roun' her like a loose garmen'."

This unexpected liberty allowed the old and faithful servant is a common phenomenon in many settings. Emma of the Tinkers' "Closed Shutters," declares to her hero-idol the Judge, whom she does not believe to be taking an adequate amount of rest:

"Sleepy! You worst den dat. You talkin' like Pompey dremp . . . dat buckeyes was biscuits and Muscovy ducks was stage horses: but you can't fluzzle me."

Having been in the family so long, Aunt Mary, servant of the Garnett family

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1Ibid., p. 49.
2Ibid., p. 71.
3Ibid., p. 71.
in MacDonald's Blind Windows, "exercised her prerogative to speak when and as she chose," and "Mrs. Garnett's injunction to Liza [a younger and less permanent servant] never to address the family while serving . . . [she] did not take to herself."  

1 Faced often with the task of helping to rear the white children, and standing in many cases responsible for their well-being, the Negro servant took the rights accompanying his responsibility, scolding the children, insisting upon obedience to the orders given by the parents. Mam' Babette, colored attendant to Mademoiselle Elaine in Perry's The Defenders, "though a slave," presented a manner "by no means subservient to Elaine, whom she had nursed."  

2 The Negro character, having been subjected to this responsibility of rearing the children and living intimately with families of gentility, often displays the ability to discern at a glance the social status of a white person. Beetee, a little plantation servant.girl, exclaimed of one man:  

"Couldn't git lost in de dark with such look-at-me clothes on! Lawssse! . . . Dat white gentleman certainly do do hissef up like he loves to shine! But he ain't exac'ly quality lookin'!"  

3 Gramma Veenia also had the knack:  

"I knowed right away, soon as you shook han's wid me, dat you was'n none des plain tramps goin' 'roun hyuh. You don' never see dese trashy w'ite folks treat cullud people nice an' frien'-ly like dat, no. Dey always try to look down on us. But wen you see w'ite folks talk nice like you does; an' tell how dey preshate som'hn was did for um; an' ain' shame to shake han's wid cullud folks nice an' natchal; you sho kin make up yo' mind dat you done met wid people wat bin used to som'hn; people wat got mo'n one cheap generation behind um. Yas suh."  

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1Edwina Levin MacDonald, Blind Windows, p. 38.  
2Stella George Perry, Come Home, p. 47.  
3Stella George Perry, The Defenders, p. 23.  
4Stella George Perry, Come Home, pp. 183-84.  
Embarrassing situations arising from the lack of family finance by no means swerve the faithful Negro servant out of slavery from his never-failing loyalty. If anything, hard times often spur him on to even greater effort. The Paul of Bradford's The Three-Headed Angel -- who declared about the matter of freedom, "'But I'm too busy fightin' in de war, jest now, to put much stock in that kind of talk . . . And besides . . . nobody axed me how I felt about hit!"¹ -- is the good-natured cook of Perry's Some Home, who reproached her mistress with a

"Now, looky hyere, Missy! Is you gwine pester me, again, talkin' about wages? 'Cause if'n you is, I isn't gwine listen at it; deed I ain't. You just go on keepin' dem wages fo' me, 'cause I hasn't got no manner of use fo' money."²

The same love of the old traditional atmosphere which invoked self-abasement on the part of the Negro character for its continuation, often motivates in the same character a taciturnity on the affairs of white persons, which causes him to be placed in positions of enviable trust. This trait stands equal in weight to the garrulous manner in which the Negro character usually handles his own affairs, a factor giving rise to the "nigger grape-vine" idea.³ Margit of Kingdom Coming "still considered it ill-mannered to repeat gossip that came from the white people."⁴

Messenger, in the same slave setting, declared:

"I been a grown man a long time and I ain't never had a liik er trouble wid my white fo'ks, and dat's all 'cause I minds my own maybe and lets them mind deys."⁵

Lon Olds, "an old-fashioned nigger"⁶ in a post-slavery setting, was of a

¹Roark Bradford, The Three-Headed Angel, p. 69.
³Barry Benefield, Valiant Is the Word for Carrie, p. 29.
⁴Roark Bradford, Kingdom Coming, p. 194.
⁵Ibid., p. 22.
⁶Barry Benefield, Valiant Is the Word for Carrie, p. 15.
similar tendency to minding his own business, and could be depended upon
to hold his tongue on any subject:

He never told anything on anybody. That's why he was so aloof
and proud, he was so full of unshared secrets and suspended
judgments.1

The trust accorded the faithful Negro, the loyalty with which he performed
those tasks thrust upon him, the unquestioning manner in which he accepted
his unquestionable position often led to mutual friendships between whites
and Negroes, creating that cordial atmosphere which is in popular concep-
tion inevitable for the plantation tradition.2 Roark Bradford vividly
illustrates this basis of friendship in his This Side of Jordan:

They were friends, these two men. But they were different.
One was white, he ruled over five thousand acres of rich river-
bottom land. The other, black, ruled over three hundred people.
Dangerous ground lay between them. The land, the crops, money
matters -- they were the affairs of the white chief. Domestic
affairs of the workers -- that was the business of the black
chief.

It is the Negro servant, secure in his place with the white employer,
who philosophizes against a break between whites and Negroes in the socio-
economic pattern. Uncle Douglas of Perry's Come Home declared:

"Yassah; I is old. I is a old man. I was hyere when de stars
fell. Dat's a long time back. Niggers ought to stay in de
country. You see no city niggers old and spry like we-uns
is. Ma age is old, but ma actin' is young."3

Daddy Jack, accepting the friendship of the white owner of Whitehall Plan-
tation and enjoying the security of his position as head man, declared:

"Runnin' round ain't good for niggers, .... Uster, when
Sadday evenin' come, ev'body hung around and sort of made free.
But now dey ain't got no time. Dey got to git to town to wawk up
and down and eat cheese and crackers and sardine fishes out'n cans."4

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1Ibid., p. 27.
2Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., p. 17.
3Roark Bradford, This Side of Jordan, p. 142.
4Stella George Perry, Come Home, p. 55.
5Roark Bradford, This Side of Jordan, p. 80.
Perhaps, the most composite mixture of all the elements of the faithful servant type is Emma, servant of Judge Markham's family, in Frances and Edward Laroeque Tinker's "Closed Shutters." Innately kind, known throughout the neighborhood as the Judge's "toter" of consolation, ¹ she is characterized by her ability to penetrate the pretenses and scent the misfortunes of once wealthy white persons. Addicted to lotteries,² superstitious of "gris-gris,"³ afraid of the "mule-size rabitt dat cross . . . swif,"⁴ intensely critical of other Negroes, including Eddie whom she dubbed a "no-'count nigger,"⁵ and her own children whom she had obtained through her union with a "bohebious' nigger,"⁶ she reveals the general characteristics attributed to her race. Hero-worshipper of the Judge, and fierce guardian of his family, she served with a selfless devotion, and "within her prescribed limits, she protected those she cared for with the fierce intensity of her Indian-African forebears."⁷ Master of the art of rearing the children, she fed them with "a sandrich of soolds and smiles,"⁸ teaching them a "frank cordiality" and admonishing them to "bow to people, don't butt at em."⁹

A familiar romantic figure in the neighborhood, she went about the streets "nodding her gay dignified head as people spoke to her in passing."¹⁰

²Ibid., pp. 57-61.
³Ibid., p. 16.
⁴Ibid., p. 95.
⁵Ibid., p. 37.
⁶Ibid., p. 42.
⁷Ibid., p. 61.
⁸Ibid., p. 42.
⁹Ibid., p. 23.
¹⁰Ibid.
handing out artless philosophy whenever the occasion called for it: "Black no good fo' chillum; dey pores gits full a' sadness soon enough."\(^1\)

Faithful in times of prosperity, Emma lost not a bit of her loyalty in times of trouble. After the death of the Judge, she devoted herself untiringly and with self-sacrificial determination to the cause of making it easier for his bereft family, who faced by the necessity of augmenting revenues by taking in paying guests, looked to her for aid. During the last days before the advent of the unwelcome boarder she spent most of her time trying to make things pleasant, by making the best of every distasteful situation:

"Yas man," Emma answered gaily, "an I'm mighty glad we got a single genelman [whom she had once compared to 'mint-juleps with the brandy left out']."\(^2\)

Completely satisfied with her lot, she even told a fable of the founding of the races to support the prevalent ideas of the Negro's innate happiness, and of his unquestionable status. Yes, Emma would ever be anchored to the white persons whom she loved.

Often it is the bafflement presented by the intricacies and complexities of the white economic and political system, and an ultimate feeling of dependence upon the white man for security, which motivates the Negro faith in the accepted pattern of white employer-colored servant. In the slavery setting, Aunt Free, having bought her way to freedom, met with trouble on all sides; she finally hired herself to a plantation owner, taking the same status as the slave women. She resolved that

"Up Nawth ain't so free, f'm what I hyared tell. Hit ain't but one sho'nuff free, and dat's in heab'im. And dat's de gospel word er God. I hyared de preachers read hit outn de Book."\(^3\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 19.
\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 82-83.
\(^3\)Noark Bradford, Kingdom Coming, p. 84.
Despite the under flowing current of desire among the slaves on Wilkins Bend Plantation for freedom, there was a tendency to view with distrust the news of the enterprising Henry, who, having run away from the plantation during the course of the war, returned to announce: "De niggers all runnin' off ev'ry whichaway, and makin' free, quick as dey hits de Yankee sojers." There was a pervading questioning of the wisdom of leaving the comparative security of the plantation for the unknown quantity of freedom, whose existence had not yet been really proved, whose consistency was known only in vague outline, and whose worst, but best known, manifestations included fates similar to those of the murdered Messenger, and Lost John who "crawled into a hollow cypress log and froze to death." Yes, the plantation had been a secure place; the outside world is by the Negro character often difficult to understand. Grammy, once within the pales of the Yankee camp, was unable to understand the intricacies of the law. Subjected to a trial for murder, whose import escaped him, he was sentenced to die at the hands of a firing squad; he could not understand the firing signals, however, suspecting some ritual setting him free. At last, without his ever gaining an understanding of what was happening to him, "the soldier with the pistols said the last word of the charm that set Grammy free."

But Grammy did not hear it. He heard a rumble and roar, like a thousand peals of thunder, and he landed squarely in the middle of Free Heaven, right in the lap of the Sweet God A'mighty King Jesus.

Such a fate had not been awarded Gyp, right hand man of Grammy on the

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1Ibid., p. 229.
2Ibid., p. 195.
3Ibid., p. 128.
4Ibid., p. 319.
5Ibid.
Wilkins Bend Plantation. He, too, had committed a murder, but because the plantation master had considered the victim (a ship's mate who led Negroes to a false underground route to freedom) as unworthy of social vengeance, he had helped Gyp to escape the tentacles of the county law into the free camp of the Yankees.

Indeed, seldom did the white man appealed to, fail in his protective duty. Judge Markham of Frances and Edward Larooque Tinker's "Closed Shutters" is a shining example of the white man's benevolent guardianship. "The negroes in the neighborhood turned to him in every emergency. Deaths, births, and going to law, they made his especial concern, and they brought their trivial disagreements to him and accepted his decisions without question or murmur."1

It is the longing for this protection which motivated Toodie's gaze at her granddaughter Boll Weevil, whose husband had run afeul of the law with pitying eyes while she thought:

The white folks made the laws. They were the law. Therefore a darky must have a white person to back him at anytime that he might run contrary to those laws.2

There had been a time, however, when such problems had not arisen:

Things had been so much simpler when she was young, and lived on Santa Maria plantation. The white folks were always there to help the black people when they were in trouble ... She longed for those olden days that were half way between slavery and the present freedom. It had been the happiest period of the Louisiana darky's development; when he still had a master responsible for his well-being, while enjoying for the first time the opportunity to earn and handle his own money.3

Once, however, in a manner approaching more nearly the self-critical realism, there is presented a white character in whom a Negro's faith is anchored vainly. Gram-ma Veemia, in Kennedy's Red Bean Row, desiring to

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1 Frances and Edward Larooque Tinker, "Closed Shutters," p. 49.
3 Ibid., p. 203.
gain vengeance by law for the murder of her adopted son Nebo, puts her faith in Mr. Alonso, once her master, whom she expects 'to give her the right advice and keep her from havin' a whole lot of useless upsetment.'

It sho was consolin' to know that they had some white folks that wasn't afraid to stand up before their own color to try to help a poor pigger to get the justice that belonged to him 'sawdin' to law.'

But Mr. Alonso, given to procrastination and addicted to drink, failed her utterly, putting off action until forces of the city -- by implication forces of bigotry and race hatred -- converged to deprive his faithful servant of all her possessions and himself of his life.

The insistence upon the need of the guidance and support of the friendly, benevolent white suggests, however, the presence of other relationships, not in their essence as cordial as the master-servant relationship. And indeed, these hostilities are to a certain extent treated in some of the novels prolonging the traditional picture of the Negro, especially those presenting the Negro in relation to the white who has for some reason been dispossessed. Despite the recognition of their existence, the authors do not in treating them, shed any new light upon the Negro partaker, who in most cases is given a passive role -- the unfighting acceptor of fate, in so far as he cannot obtain aid of a white sponsor. The "mob of black macaques"; the "over-dressed negroes . . . [who] swaggered through the streets . . . [and] posed on the corners in gaudy uniforms"; the "dapper little black Lieutenant-Governor . . . [and] his fat beplumed griffe wife, whose children he had legitimizied by an act of legislature"; "Yankee soum

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2 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 76.
5 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
and dirty niggers and carpet-baggers and Northern bayonets”¹ all of which comprise the Louisiana Reconstruction Government; the Negroes out of slavery, who, shamelessly were allowed "to work and make wages, same as a white man,"² and to "walk right in the store and spend cash money";³ the Negroes who incur the favor of the "nigger-lover,"⁴ who "niggers hit's all right to take a white man's job away from him and give hit to a nigger,"⁵ are all represented as phenomena arousing the resentment of the unsuspecting white who has seemingly brought down fortune’s disfavor. These Negroes represent by their very existence a departure from the usual tradition. But their treatment remains within the pale of its sociological example; for by refusing to accept as infallible the accepted scheme of stratification, they have motivated sore trouble in the Southland—the workings of the race-rioters and the White Leaguers in "Strife", an account of the Reconstruction period in New Orleans, and the ominous intentions of the "White Caps" on Hoop Pole Ridge "now that the crops air about laid by, and June 'teenth is approachin'. . . [to] warm some nigger's hide for him,"⁶ in The Three-Headed Angel.

It is to be expected that the Negro once caught in the tentacles of white vengeance will characteristically dwindle into an object of pity or ridicule, the latter taking priority. The Mulatto Major-general Zoso Barber, caught alone in the midst of a race riot, took refuge in an undertaking-parlor, where he pretended to be dead. A group of white

¹Ibid., p. 21.
³Ibid., p. 188.
⁴Ibid., p. 117.
⁵Ibid., p. 115.
⁶Ibid., p. 189.
rioters, going in to ascertain the number of dead Metropolitans (Negro policemen), caught him thus helpless. And then began a round of morbid hilarity for them:

"One of the boys suspected something, so he went out into the back yard and got a chicken feather. Walking up to the coffin and looking down at that big, black buck with all his gold lace on, he said: ‘Well, it's damned lucky for Zozo that he's dead, for if he was alive, we'd feel it our duty to chain him to a post, soak that fine uniform in kerosene and touch a match to it. That would be the right kind of bonfire to celebrate our victory!'"

"Suddenly he tickled the corpse's nose with a feather. There was a sneeze louder than Badger's cannon and Zozo jumped out of the coffin and ran for his life. We all took a crack at him as he passed. I caught him full in the seat of his pants, and I've felt better ever since. It isn't often you get a chance to kick a general in full dress uniform."[1]

Despite, however, the suggestion of unsympathetic relationships in _Red Bean_ Row, _Us Three Women_ , _The Three-Headed Angel_ , and a fuller treatment in one portion, "Strife," of the Tinker tetralogy _Old New Orleans_ , the representation is not general, the usual description being one of bland, unquestioned, cordial acceptance in both races of the regular scheme of white superiority with its benevolent guardianship of the gentle, inferior Negro, who possessing a lack of ambition and ability, best maintains his happiness by adhering to the traditional pattern. His kindness and loyalty, his ignorance and native dependence, marking his adherence to the white master, his human spontaneity and abandon -- his "African exuberance" -- marking his activities in religion, superstitious Voodoo worship, his parties and frolics, and occasionally his dislike for remunerative work, proclaim him a true creature of the aristocratic tradition. Although the presentation of his life in novels prolonging this tradition, reveals a certain sociological, political and economic realism, there is the tendency to accept at surface value situations as they appear, offering to

explain away differences by the assignment of supposedly natively racial traits. There is no critical investigation into causes. Thus, there is revealed an acceptance as generally true of characteristics which may in reality be confined to one particular racial type. There is no mention of various economic and intellectual levels within the Negro race in the novels of this group; and the picture which is spread casts no light of improvement or development upon the national character of the portrayed race since the Civil War.
CHAPTER III

THE NEGRO IN THE NOVELS CRITICISING AND LIMITING THE TRADITIONAL RACIAL PICTURE

The alien reader, after a long bout with modern Southern novels, rises not only confused but depressed. He suspects that Dixie is in a bad way... Possibly the true flavor lies between the old sickening sweetness and the new sickening sourness. At moments, recalling the earlier fiction in which all Southern whites were aristocrats, the perplexed Yankee wonders whether the aristocrats are all dead, or only debunked.\footnote{Katherine Fullerton Gerould, "A Yankee Looks at Dixie," American Mercury, XXXII (February, 1938), p. 218.}

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If the fictional reports from Dixie agree in making callousness, bigotry, and stupidity outstanding traits of the Southern white, we need not believe in their dominance, but we must suspect their presence... The result, at all events, is that the white citizen emerges... cloudyly from fiction, a pathetic yet curiously unappealing figure. Pathetic because no one can refuse to admit that, what with the War, and Reconstruction, and the climate, and the Negro, he has a terrible set of conditions to deal with; unappealing because he shows an almost willful inaptitude for dealing with them.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 219-20.}

When one holds the novels of Louisiana up to the critical concern of Katherine Fullerton Gerould, he cannot fail to realize that, indeed, here as throughout the South, although there is an ever present continuation of the Old Dominion tradition, there is likewise an ever increasing departure from its tenets. For there is a critical introspection in the South, with native critics of the errors and injustices plunging with zeal into the task of awakening the countryside from the lethargy of bland acceptance and romantic retrospection, which has characterized a goodly portion of Southern thought since the close of the Civil War. That all is not well with Dixie is apparently the main theme of these critics,
and using it as a point of departure, they assail the prevailing idea of a romantic, glorious South:

I was talking to the doctor here a few days ago and he told me there are a hundred and ninety-eight cases of pellagra in the village. That adds to the color of the place immensely. I know just what people mean now when they talk about the picturesque, romantic South.1

Selecting a variety of targets toward which to aim their arrows of disillusionment, the novels of these authors include settings of the plantation of today (Hamilton Basso's Cinnamon Seed, Elma Godchaux's Stubborn Roots, Clelie Benton Huggins' Point Noir, and Lyle Saxon's Children of Strangers), the countryside of smaller farmers (E. P. O'Donnell's Green Margins), the Old Dominion countryside (Evelyn Scott's Migrations), the swampland Voodoo regions (Henry Nunez's Chièn Negre), and the city or small town (Hamilton Basso's Courthouse Square, Days Before Lent, and Relics and Angels.

The Negro, as in the sociological investigations accompanying the spread of collegiate intellectualism, is given his full share of treatment in this group of novels, and as in the novels prolonging the traditional picture of him, receives attention in varied degrees ranging from the almost entirely incidental, to the more concentrated, and therefore, more detailed. It is as the focal point of a harassing social situation that he is brought to light. To be sure, he is represented in many instances as the same ambitionless, ignorant, happy-go-lucky faithful servant and friend of the novels which tend to glorify the traditional atmosphere. But the significant feature concerning the critical, realistic novel of Louisiana is a presentation of three trends, decidedly new in fiction throughout the South, and offering a distinct departure from the aristocratic tradition. First, there is the conveyance of a new

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1Hamilton Basso, Cinnamon Seed (New York, 1934), p. 325.
questioning and liberal attitude toward Negroes on the part of white characters, or without the device of character presentation, on the part of the authors themselves. Secondly, there is a tendency to analyze basically troublesome situations including Negroes in the light of political, economic, and sociological oppression rather than in that of a general characteristically racial inheritance, and to give the bigoted white his full share of the responsibility. And finally, there is a presentation of many types of Negro characters varying in intelligence and social status, giving each the prominence of a thorough individuality. This variety of delineations, vacillating between the old and the new, reveals a transitional stage in the growth of the liberalism of Southern authors, or perhaps, to an even greater degree, in that of the whole South. In recognition of the tendency to look at once forward and backward, it will be necessary to describe the novels to be treated in this chapter for their traditional features as well as for their new tendencies.

As in the novels of traditional treatment the Negro, in the critical, realistic novel, abides in every house -- able to afford him -- and on every street corner. He is veritably a part of the atmosphere, from main street to high road; from the "stench of niggers at work";\(^1\) the Negro boys who "scavenged about among packing cases and discolored excelsior";\(^2\) the cook Mary who "scattered . . . the rotund odor of coffee and burned butter or toast";\(^3\) "blind Nigger Joe the beggar, his toes protruding horny from his shoes . . . strumming his broken guitar";\(^4\) the Negroes who "lounged on street corners, murmurous, breaking into laughter";\(^5\) the "grizzled Negro

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\(^1\)Charles Martin, *Unequal to Song* (New York, 1936), p. 333.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 23.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 94.
\(^5\)Ibid.
methodically sloshing the floor," with "heavy fumes of creosote" rising from his pail;\textsuperscript{1} to the "heavy laughter from the quarters";\textsuperscript{2} the Negroes moving about among the "flambeaux on their spikes . . . stuck into the levee";\textsuperscript{3} the "blacks" who "laughed in the morning, and wore their brightly hued clothing like proud gay plumage";\textsuperscript{4} the "vividly clad negroes courting on the levee";\textsuperscript{5} and the "brightly dressed women" who "loitered on the commissary steps" with "their heads with yellow and blue bandanna tignons . . . close together and their attentions . . . centered upon a small black girl who approached from the opposite direction, lackadaisically, her rags fluttering about her skinny legs, a coal-oil can swinging in one hand."\textsuperscript{6} He is represented as inevitable:

A negro woman passed, dragging her feet and trailing her hot thick smell, and David realized, watching old Cincinnatus recede into the dusk that these were the deep unremembered things he had never really forgotten.\textsuperscript{7}

He is taken even farther -- into the night club, where the "negro singer," his face gleaming "like a chocolate cake," opens his mouth and shouts, but through whose song pierces the haunting, fleeting melody of "another negro song" which is "past jazz and words and dripping points," a "song of despair, song of chains, song of a race without hope."\textsuperscript{8} Sometimes, he is represented merely by "voices over the bayou, indistinct at first, past

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 218.
\textsuperscript{2}Elma Godchaux, Stubborn Roots (New York, 1936), p. 9.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 49.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 95.
\textsuperscript{7}Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{8}Hamilton Basso, Relics and Angels (New York, 1929), p. 158.
sun and sky,\textsuperscript{1} and the author forgets the bother of identifying him:

\begin{quote}
First Voice: Lawdy be en I be, How's it?
Second Voice: Fairly. Not more'n fairly. En wit' you?
First Voice: Tolable. Not to fret one way ter other.
Why fo all de mud?
Second Voice: Ax and I'm tellin'. Ax and lissen.
First Voice: A humm ears floppin'. A humm how cud er do no mo'.
Why fo?
Second Voice: I oum fun er swamp. De bair air poll.
First Voice: Lordy Jedus! Back where I belong!\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

Moreover, there are references to certain stock attitudes and opinions concerning the Negro. If anything, characters of a certain physical appearance suffer more at the hands of the realistic novelist than of the traditional one, for the former are given to more minuteness of details, depending for their exact nature upon the romantic or realistic peculiarities of the author. A "middle-aged Negro with big buck teeth and skin as black as coal,"\textsuperscript{3} a "lone Negro boy with a small black cannon-ball head . . . sharing his place with an undersized nondescript oor, . . . . his sooty face rapid with stupidity and distrust,"\textsuperscript{4} a woman with a "big flat wild face, sulky and angry,"\textsuperscript{5} a Negro "troll-like in appearance," whose "brow receded excessively," whose "flat snout rested on the top of a protruding mouth, the tusk-shaped teeth of which were revealed between two thick gaping lips," and whose "massive shoulders were bunched" while his "huge dangling arms reached nearly to the floor"\textsuperscript{6} -- all these are figures presented with no attempt at giving them, as a part of the traditional South, a romantic coloring.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., pp. 73-74.
\textsuperscript{3}Hamilton Basso, \textit{Courthouse Square}, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 245.
Similarly, attitudes concerning personality traits are revealed: the addictions to drink, gossip, gambling and lotteries, garrulity, elegant and ostentatious dress, sex frankness and amorality, savage cruelty, reverence, respect, humility, as well as emotional display in religion, superstition and frenzied orgiastic Voodoo worship range in treatment from mere reference to partial motivation of an entire work.

References to the Old South, and its traditions, as experienced by both white persons and Negroes, are made freely:

"He like riding the river this way; it was an assertion that men could conquer the river and bend it to their uses. He himself had conquered it; in 'seventy-one he and his negroes had held it to its appointed place between the levees. He breathed quickly as if remembrance of that struggle took his breath."

"How well do I remember her in the years before the War, when she was my mother's favorite maid and cared for me as a boy. Indeed, Jonas, I grew up to love her with the lasting love of a master for a devoted slave — and a slave in truth, she was, for even when she was free to go her way, she chose to remain with me and mine until death took my mother away and our plantation of Chenes Noirs was sold to Monsieur Renard."

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1 Charles Martin, Unequal to Song, p. 112.
2 Hamilton Basso, Relics and Angels, p. 217.
3 Elma Godeaux, Stubborn Roots, p. 76.
4 Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, pp. 189-93.
5 Ibid., pp. 170-71.
6 Ibid., p. 64.
9 Nemours Henry Nunez, Chián Negre, pp. 155-56.
10 Ibid.; This novel is built almost entirely around the system of Voodoo worship.
11 Elma Godeaux, Stubborn Roots, p. 41.
12 Nemours Henry Nunez, Chián Negre, p. 73.
She never told him that Squire Rose had run off in 'sixty-three as soon as Butler refused to allow the military to return runaway negroes to their masters. She never told him because he had always trusted Squire Rose as their most intelligent and honest negro and she wanted to save Pierre from the pain of his mistakes. Squire Rose had been her negro from childhood and named for her and the plantation. She had been proud of his appearance of an African king, tall and black and flat-nosed. But the defection of the negroes no longer hurt her.  

The attitude of the white, also, frequently takes the form of professional or economic judgment, which often outweighs aesthetics:

It was true that Mr. Barks admired Fanny. He admired her female appearance, but he saw, also, professionally, the value of her broad bent shoulders, and her plump muscular arms; while the fine calm carriage of her upright head told him that she could balance heavy weights on it.

Sometimes the matter of economics weighed heavily in the question of whether or not to continue the plantation scheme:

If Father has not mortgaged the niggers as well as the land, Tom and I will have a fine struggle with our superb estate.
If I have anything to say about it, I have half a mind, as my part, to give freedom to these worthless darkies. I would like to see how Thomas would take my bad example. He would like to keep everything just as it is, though as things stand, with no profit on the tobacco, we can scarcely feed ourselves, much less a parcel of slaves.

From the Negro's point of view, these expressions generally take the form of a love for the grandeur of the social scheme, and a distrust of the unknown quantity, freedom:

Instinctively, Fanny disapproved of !freedom. Silas, led askew, if yet alive, would be punished.

"Dem's free whut de Lawd deolahs free," Mammy Mary muttered sententiously, ill-naturedly . . .

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1Elma Godchaux, Stubborn Roots, p. 131.
2Evelyn Scott, Migrations, p. 31.
3Ibid., p. 2.
4Ibid., p. 47.
5Ibid., p. 275.
Mammy Mary stands out vividly for her ideas concerning the correct course of society. Her pride in the riches of her owner, her sensitivity "equally, to the public opinion of blacks and whites," placed her in a position of total unpreparedness for the social retrogression brought upon her young master's family by his marriage to, from all she could hear, a Mulatto woman, who was "no bettah than us black folks herself." The style of living adopted by the young couple met with her strongest disapproval:

She had been reared in a household in which there had been quantities of servants, and the work easy. She was pious, firm, and phlegmatic. She did not like show, nor had she ever considered very deeply the significance of her status as a slave. So her pride in the behavior of her 'white folks' was genuine, but not extravagant. She accepted her identity with them as 'right' and permanent -- right because it was permanent, and permanent, because her own life, up to the present moment, had been satisfying.

With similar addictions to tradition is Horace, servant at Blackheath Plantation in Hamilton Basso's Cinnamon Seed. Completely satisfied with his lot as the faithful servant of "de Cunnel," he has two equally distasteful resentments, the first against the "uppity" Negro for whom Sam, another servant on the place, stands as an ever present symbol, and, the second against a fast approaching new regime which seems to ban all the things he holds dear as outmoded:

"Hit ain't right, Emma. De Lawd knows hit ain't right. Ah kin dribe de ca' aige ten mo' y'ars. Dey don't have ter git no ottermobile. Dey ain't no cause to do me disaway. Effen de Cunnel was hyar . . . ."

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1Ibid., p. 275.
2Ibid., p. 271.
3Ibid., p. 269.
4Hamilton Basso, Cinnamon Seed, p. 52.
5Ibid., p. 219.
Taking the prerogatives allowed the servant of long standing, he lived a complacent life on the plantation, devoting himself almost wholly to it and its owners, at last being awarded at death with a tombstone on which was cut "FAITHFUL SERVANT -- FAITHFUL FRIEND."¹

As before, there is on the part of the Negro an acceptance of his fate, bound as it is to the economic system, especially as presented by the system of slavery, wherein inordinate notice from the whites, could above anything else give the spark of excitement his otherwise changeless existence lacked:

*Whenever Fanny glanced downward on the baby's features, she detected, with apology -- or so imagined -- the Captain's face. Observation of the resemblance exalted her.*²

This Fanny asked nothing more of life than mere acceptance of things as they were. Ordinary female jealousy of the other women in the life of the man with whom she was intimate escaped her:

She realized, with a trained instinct, the necessity which made him avoid her publicily. He had approached her only a few times in the year past, and always covertly. His embarrassment in 'takin' up' with her had been, rightly, as she knew, his gentleman's respect for Ol' Miss'.³

There is the same reference to degrees of humility affected by the Negro in proportion to his particular status as a workman, with special regard for the superiority, in the slave setting, of the house servant over the field hand:

Her manner toward Edwin was respectful but not humble. This, no doubt, was because she had once been a house-servant.⁴

There is an attitude of accepted dissimilarity penetrating more deeply than mere physical appearance. Sometimes there is explicit inferiority

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²*Evelyn Scott, Migrations*, p. 18.
as in the words of Tantie in Nunez's *Chién Negre*:

"... it ain't often dat one o' us niggers am notice dat away, and ah's mos' sho dat maybe after Madame hab see yuh, she gwan ter take yuh from de fiel' to de 'Big House' wid de white folks -- ... ."¹

At others, the question of rank is not brought into play:

Mr. Paul had fever right that minute, and when white folks are sick they always seem sicker than niggers ... they look sicker.²

But throughout all, the Negro is accorded the same measure of contempt which in the traditional novel placed his highest point of development at the lowest stage of the white man:

He was a Jew and to Antoine Jews were lower in the order of life than the niggers who carried boxes in his factory.³

"There won't be anybody who won't know how low and dirty you are. Either you do something to get me out of this or you won't be able to look a nigger in the face."⁴

The negroes never had palms nor the poorer whites, so Marie Elizabeth took a certain pleasure in them.⁵

They were terrible looking handkerchiefs, regular nigger handkerchiefs.⁶

The novel which analyzes the traditional conception of the Southland, however, does not stop with the mere portrayal of the Old Dominion Negro and his progeny. Although, in the vein of realism, he takes up a definite portion of the treatment, for the realism of his inclusion cannot be denied, he is flanked on all sides by the presence of various other types of Negroes; and those of his white masters or employers who accepted him,

²Lyle Saxon, *Children of Strangers*, p. 159.
⁴Ibid., p. 244.
⁶Ibid., p. 161.
along with all the other inglorious glories of the South, in his special and circumscribed limits find their majority decreasing for the ranks of the white character who portrays a puzzled interest in the question of race. The latter character is made even more vivid by the contrasting delineation of two other types of white characters -- the benevolent and condescending liberal, and the arrogant, insular bigot. It is through the presentation of these three distinct types, as well as a varied and individualistic picturization of the Negro character, that the Louisiana critical novelist conveys his attitude toward and his opinions regarding the Negro -- explicit references without the technique of character presentation seldom appearing.

The first two types of whites are really follow-ups of the Old Dominion tradition, but more characteristic of its general treatment are the condescending, benevolent liberals. These characters shed their kindness in a galaxy of ways. There may be the Melinda who confronted for the first time by a group of South American Negroes -- first a female lace-seller who spoke with a lisping and a dialect and with a "broad a," which from the lips of a Negro, "Melinda rejected as an incongruity;"¹ and then by a group of "strange, half-naked"² men carrying "long wicked knives," whom she considered to be staring "at her menacingly," and with a boldness and curiosity which was (sic) not polite³-- comes to the final conclusion:

"Oh, what decent people our own negroes are compared to these cutthroats."⁴

¹Evelyn Scott, Migrations, p. 89.
²Ibid., p. 89.
³Ibid., p. 112.
⁴Ibid.
There may be the Miss Sara, wife of the philandering Captain, bearing in silence his escapades, living testimony of which in the form of a newly born Mulatto baby stares her in the face. Like the ostrich, she covered her head to distasteful situations, perhaps suspecting, never questioning:

Fanny had a baby, Miss Sara knew. For the father of the baby, she had prayed. She did not feel it quite delicate to inquire about him. After all negroes were children before God as before herself, and could not be judged as others. They had their own morality.¹

She, like the slave, accepted life without question. Devoutly religious, she saw, "she said, no discrepancy between slave-holding and a Christian's moral beliefs."²

There may be Fredonia, pious and kind, benevolent enough in her happiness to look upon all creatures with an all-pervading generosity:

Are not even they [Negro slaves] God's creatures — even the humblest ... I love you Edwin. I think our own happiness makes it possible for us to be kind and understanding to all creatures, both blacks and whites.³

Faced on all sides by the institution of slavery, she held no particular objection to it, save in the matter of exchange of ownership, and the appallingly cruel conditions by which some of these exchanges were effected. She reflected that she would not sell "her slaves" to such a person as the Mississippi cotton planter who "approached her" as she gazed over the deck railing at a cargo of Negroes being taken to New Orleans for auction, "halted, and stated that there were 'some likely looking niggers down yonder.'"⁴ She was dejected by the cruel lot imposed upon the slaves stowed below her on a deck "not dirty -- soiled, for she had often been instructed

²Ibid., p. 4.
³Ibid., p. 199.
⁴Ibid., pp. 199-200.
not to say 'dirty'. But her dejection increased to stark misery when she realized that she herself was responsible for the presence of one of those Negroes on that very journey.

Fredonia was so overcome, so sickened, by the recklessness of Edwin’s generosity, that she fell back from the rail, hoping that she had escaped notice from those handsome rolling eyes that she knew so well. It was not so much that Edwin could— or should—be restrained from disposing of his remaining slaves; but that he should have sold Fanny merely in order to provide the means of show to Mimms, to silence gossip—merely that his future bride should boast such a trousseau as would be inappropriate to her modest condition— that, in itself, made Fredonia look with a kind of guilt at Fanny. It was not right for her, either, Fredonia reflected, after agitated consideration. Fanny is young and strong, despite all the peculiarities she has known since Silas left her and her baby died, and she must see that Edwin has no money to keep her, and if Edwin had sold her to someone he knew, or to pay debts that pressed upon him, I should have no criticism . . . .

Not even the consolation offered by good-natured Auntie Williams can distract her from her misery. The latter’s attitude on the subject is likewise benevolent, but helpless:

"My dear, you must git yourself out of this hot stuffy room. If this has been Edwin’s decision, you, who will soon be his wife, and must always love him and obey him, ain’t got the right to question it. Certainly, for my own part, I think it is a cruel wicked extravagance. . . ."

And then in behalf of the slave, she continued:

"It ain’t right to the gal either. She always seemed to me a good hard-working darky, faithful to that hoity-toity Miss Sara to the day of her death, and with all that story of how she neglected her dying baby, I don’t set any store by a word of it. A darky is not a white man, but that don’t change our responsibilities toward them that must bear wood and draw water for us. When God made us masters and the niggers slaves, he made it so we should know in our hearts that a good darky deserves a good ownership. How does Edwin know, sending that gal way down to New Orleans, whether the right folks will git hold of her or not? No, It’s not right . . . ."

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1Tbid., p. 198.
2Tbid., p. 204.
3Tbid., pp. 204-05.
4Tbid., p. 205.
In contrast with the whites of the benevolent protective attitude, but like them accepting the Negro's position as inferior, is the insolent, arrogant, bigoted white. To his mind's eye, no lot is too degraded to be thrust upon the Negro. Sheriff Birdseye, who "hated three things: sassy likker, sassy clothes and sassy niggers," and on whose .44 automatic "five scratches on the barrel... stood as every little boy in Macedon knew, for five sassy niggers";² Armand Garvais, whose bigotry received its most morbidly sadistic satisfaction at the expected sight of a "nigger churned in a paddle wheel";³ the straggler who declared, "Well, ye ax whut I'd do, I would shoot down any man-jacl of you who had been impertinent to my sister, an' as for any blame animal nigger —";⁴ the tall thin transient who declared that "in Venus... when you pass a nigger... the nigger is supposed to get out in the street and take off his hat";⁵ the clerk of the plantation commissary who considered that all women "white, yellow, or brown were for a man's pleasure,"⁶ who flushed nevertheless defensively at the thought of being classed as a "nigger lover";⁷ and who resenting the greater attention paid to Mulattoes than to himself whom he knew to be classified by the gentility as "trash" accorded to the entire group of them an epithet generally assigned to persons bearing the stigma

¹ Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, p. 178.
² Ibid.
³ Nemours Henry Nunez, Chiên Negro, p. 25.
⁴ Evelyn Scott, Migrations, pp. 285-86.
⁵ Hamilton Basso, Cinnamon Seed, p. 212.
⁶ Lyle Saxon, Children of Strangers, p. 125.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid.
of illegitimacy\(^1\) -- all find themselves as much a part of the Southern landscape as the Negro. Occasionally, they are represented as psychological enigmas: Tard Sturkin who as a child poured kerosene upon a live dog and set him afire;\(^2\) Dan Lamar, as a child the "bully of the town,"\(^3\) as a man the murderer of a "poor defenceless nigger"\(^4\); Marie Elizabeth, glutton for power and attention from infancy to maturity.

Dan Lamar, besides his tendencies to sadism, likewise, had a tradition of bigotry behind him which anchored him in a security holding his arrogance:

Dan was not aware, threatening to blow the nigger's head off, that he was acting in any extraordinary or even unusual way. It was one of the tenets of the Lamar faith, handed down from one generation to another, that Negroes were not quite to be regarded as human beings. This was originally confirmed by great-great-grandfather St. John Lamar who, in the earliest days of the slavery debate, composed a learned monograph demonstrating that the Negro belonged to a suborder of the human species; a classification determined, as he carefully noted, not by malice, but by scientific and Biblical evidence. "These people," he wrote, "are not only the condemned sons of Ham, and heathens to boot, but they are constructed physically, from the heel of the foot to the thickness of the skull (a skull covered, it should be remarked, not with hair but with wool), as to make the Abolitionist hypothesis that they are human beings a mere figment of inflamed imaginations." The word of the scholarly St. John had never been doubted or questioned by his descendants. The truth he stated was only too obvious. Negroes had black skins; they smelled bad; they were shiftless; they stole; they gambled; they lied; they "took up" with each other with never a thought of marriage. It was all summed up in something that happened to Dan when he was about sixteen years old. He got into a quarrel with a Negro and, having already begun to carry a pistol, he shot the creature in the chest. It was a new adventure for him and while he was convinced that he had done the right thing, he was, being just a boy, a little worried. He went to the nearest telephone and called his father. Toomer listened patiently to his story.

"All right, son," he said. "If the nigger dies let me know."\(^5\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 122.
\(^2\)Hamilton Basso, Cinnamon Seed, p. 107.
\(^3\)Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, p. 162.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 238.
\(^5\)Ibid., pp. 182-83.
It was thus easy for Dan to make a Negro the focal point of a quarrel between himself and another white character, although the real reason for his distaste was a matter entirely different:

Dan's hate and fury leaped out snarling like unchained dogs.
"You know what I want! You know . . . well what I want! He's got to stop this deal. If you think I'm goin' to let a dirty nigger live in my granddaddy's house -- By God, I'll -- I'll --"

Rage overwhelmed him, choking back his words. He stood trembling, momentarily insane, and upward rush of blood inflamed his face and neck like a rash.
"And another thing -- if you don't keep away from my wife --"^1

The case of Marie Elizabeth likewise presents elements of interest from a socio-psychological point of view. A thirst for power and wealth, and of the inclination to bend others to her will, this woman, whom the smaller sympathies of life had escaped, looked upon Negroes with an unalterable contempt, meting out to them continuous insults, grudgingly allowing them comforts only insomuch as they seemed compatible with her social position and selfish desires:

In the morning she was comforted. She had the niggers to her bedside to get their orders. She never gave them any authority but told them each day what they were to do . . . .^2

Drunken by the knowledge that she had partially attained her life's end, she often allowed her imagination to build:

It was lovely owning this house and all these niggers. She couldn't help feeling as if she owned the niggers.

Used to hearing throughout childhood the lot of the Negro used as a measuring-stick when her mother pleading vainly with the father to send their child to a private school would in despair cry out that "he didn't

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^1Ibid., pp. 242-43.

^2Elma Godchaux, Stubborn Roots, p. 55.

^3Ibid.
care if their only child was brought up no better than a nigger,"¹ she herself resorted to the same techniques of judgment throughout life:

She knew she'd never want this fellow who rode round the country in a wagon and in overalls and smelled of sweat, and dust and mules. Mules and sweat — she declared he smelled almost like a nigger.²

To her cousin Metta, in love with a worker in a sugar refinery where he spent his time "sweeping trash, bits of cane and bagasse,"³ she exclaimed:

"Metta! Come on!" . . . her face red. "Come on. He ain't no better than a nigger sweeping trash! Come on!"⁴

Economically and socially successful, she could never forget that there were persons traditionally on the scale below her:

She stepped among them [the Negroes] and they moved aside making her a path. She didn't notice them. Just niggers, and she was become old to power now. The negroes' heavy musky smell hung all about her heavier than air and affected her strangely. It was as though all the blackness about her were populated with the slow weighted-with-passion negroes.⁵

Once, a blandly arrogant rationalization of his own errant conduct is brought out in the thoughts of a white character. The Captain in Evelyn Scott's Migrations tried to reason out the causes for his attraction to and seduction of the Mulatto slave-girl Fanny.

It was not lust that had driven him to Fanny, although he called it that. Rather it was Fanny's adolescent admiration of his character. He had not been able to resist her. Looking back, he was ashamed to recognize the value he had set on such a simple tribute.⁶

But when his mind began to dwell upon the offspring of their pernicious

¹Ibid., p. 13.
²Ibid., p. 4.
³Ibid., p. 17.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid., p. 49.
intimacies he reflected in defense:

As to the baby, why should he call it his own. It was not credible that he had been alone in enjoying Fanny’s favors. Negroes, notwithstanding the white influence, retained the immoral outlook of savagery. I understand them, he told himself. All children. We must take races and peoples as they are. He tried to persuade himself that he was magnanimous.¹

Including in his rationalisation an idea of the Negro’s easy lot, he reflected bitterly and jealously:

Happy-go-lucky, irresponsible, and us to look after them, went through his mind, and he recalled Silas. He could almost detest that hulking negro. Imagine that great strength married to my intelligence. He felt bitter and weak. And the negroes, he reflected, were probably insensitive of any debt to him.²

The character of the Captain combines the self-satisfied, benevolent, accepting type of Southern white character with the bigoted, selfish, and oppressive type.

An entirely different order of human portrayal, with a decidedly different method of logic is the liberal, unsatisfied questioning white. His analyses range from a grudging concession to the right of other whites to think as they choose, through a gnawing searching after the problems presented by the South, among which the question of race is ever present, to a general disregard of racial differences. The members of the first and third groups are in the minority. Old Man Steer, wearing yet "his faded gray [Confederate] campaign coat over his overalls, the string of medals meaningless but to him pinned across his chest,"³ who could, despite bitter conflict in the midst of the South’s bitterest struggle, forgive the neighbor who left to fight against his beloved Southland, is a rare

¹Ibid., p. 27
²Ibid., p. 28.
³Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, pp. 49-50.
specimen.

"I knew Ed Barondess all my life, we used to hunt together in the swamps, and when I first heard that he had gone off to fight for the Yankees I couldn't figure it out. He was as Southern a man as ever lived. I can still remember the way he used to talk in the swamps — about what a mighty fine place the South was, and how much better off it would be if the niggers was set free. Ed got all those ideas about niggers up North, when he went to school there, but I never thought he sure-nuf meant what he said — not until he took his hoss and rode off to catch the train up North. I was hopin' mad at first, sore as a boil that Ed would go and fight agin his own home people thataway, but all durin' the war I kept rememberin' the things Ed said in the swamps and finally I come around to thinkin' that maybe he was trying to do right — just the same as I was."

With a lack of settled conviction set against a willingness and eagerness to approach the manifold problems of the South, a host of white characters present themselves in the fictional analyses of the region, and like the returned prodigal of Basso's Courthouse Square, plunge courageously into its maze of perplexities, tending to throw all its jumbled bits of errant humanity into one sieve, and sift into distinct masses the separate sociological, economic, and political causes which at present weigh the region into lethargy:

This was his Darien, the hill on which he stood, and he thought of all this earth, this whole Southern separate world, dedicated to the principle that cotton was king. He saw the towns lying baked and torpid in the heat, the great desolate army of tenants and mules, niggers and poor-whites, he saw the ribbed tarred pattern of weathered cross-ties going northward, eastward, westward — away from cotton, into the world.²

Expressing now liberal conviction, now savage doubt, these characters show bewilderment before a race of so many varied types. There is Doctor Tate, who thought of Sam, an obviously educated and cultured Negro, in whom he could discover no inferiority.

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¹Ibid., p. 52.
²Ibid., p. 140.
"Why doesn't he go North? . . . There's nothing for him here. Why doesn't he realize it? He doesn't get a fair deal."}

But, an instant later, encountering another type which presented him with the necessity of plastering and stitching the woolly head, cracked with a chamber-pot when the head's possessor was found in a bed not strictly his own, he felt as he imagined his father felt when he said, our of the weary wisdom of forty years' practice:

"Niggers do just three things -- fight, fornicate, and fry fish."  

This wavering character may show a genuine curiosity about the accepted scheme of things as did the boy Dekker upon coming to the sudden realization that

Niggers were people. Peter, Gracie, Sam, Horace, Lance -- they were not just niggers. They were people. They led lives beyond the house where they were servants. They were human beings. They prayed, sang, laughed, cried. Niggers were people.

And with this new and disturbing discovery came the nagging question, for which he could get only vague and unsatisfactory answers.

He carried the thought around with him. He talked to Olivia about it . . .

"What's the difference, Aunt Olivia, between negroes and us? I mean except that we're white and they're black. What makes the difference, I mean?"

From his Aunt Olivia came the vague reference to a system arranged by his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and his "great-uncle Edward who was killed in the war." From the old servant Horace came a "Muffin makes de diffunce. De diffunce am already dere." Only one answer

1 Hamilton Basso, Cinnamon Seed, p. 73.
2 Ibid., pp. 73-74.
3 Ibid., p. 69.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p. 70.
seemed to strike at the heart of the question; it came from the Mulatto servant Sam: "It's because we are an oppressed, exploited people." But this answer was cut off in its youth by the interjection of Horace:

"Dere he is, . . . Dere's Mr. Edjucation hisself. He's gonter tell you what de diffunce is. One day he's gonter open dat big mouf er his'n onet too often. Den dey's gonter be a diffunce sho -- de diffunce 'tween a dead nigger en a live un. Yessuh!"2

When he returned to Sam later for an elaboration, he was met with bland denial:

"What did you mean, Sam, when you said negroes were an oppressed people?"
Sam closed his book.
"I didn't say anything like that. You must have misunderstood."
"You did, Sam."
"I'm sure I didn't. You must have misunderstood."
"What did you say, then?"
"I don't remember. It wasn't important, no matter what it was."3

The question was disturbing, indeed disturbing, for

The boy's confusion was now complete. He was disturbed for almost a week. Then he went alligator hunting with Lance, and found a nest of three black squirming young ones, and forgot all about it.4

This curiosity is not totally limited to the juvenile character. Edwin, playmate of the slave Silas, to whom he revealed an "unequivocal admiration for a 'fine specimen of a black man and a splendid fighter,"5 was jealous of the honor of his physical idol, who had been disgraced by the deflection from loyalty by his Mulatto sweetheart Fanny, recently

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1Ibid., p. 71.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Evelyn Scott, Migrations, p. 19.
become mother of a decidedly Mulatto child. He suspected the duplicity of his father, the plantation owner -- an "exciting and embarrassing supposition".\(^1\) But question he must, for he was not as satisfied with appearances as the majority of his generation, and considering social dogma he was strangely curious:

Edwin could never take the slaves -- though he had been reared with them -- as a matter of course. If he made a habit of speaking sharply to them, it was to emphasize a social distance which he did not feel. He tried his best to cultivate an aristocratic lack of imagination. Yet he was conscious that he did not succeed.\(^2\)

Sometimes, the limited liberality of the white may take a form something like the Old Plantation guardianship; but a more deeply sociological analysis enters into the reasoning period. Mr. Guy of Yuca Plantation reveals some of this transitional attitude when, upon finding his commissary clerk carrying on immoral relationships with Negro girls, he dismisses him, saying:

'...I've got no patience with your kind. Now, I don't know who was in your room tonight, and I don't care, but I'll bet you one thing: that girl you had tonight was some decent little mulatto. If you hadn't come along, she would have married one of her kind and everything would have been all right. But she was poor and needed a dress or shoes or something you could give her, and so she came to you....fourteen or fifteen years old probably.'

... .................................................................

'If you had let her alone, it's possible that she'd have married one of her own kind, and she would have been all right. But you've fixed that, probably. A year from now I'll see a girl with a white baby, and one of the boys will whisper that it's yours...But you'll tell me that its father was just a white man passing through...a stranger. Men like you take your pleasure but you won't take the responsibility. As far as you're concerned, they're all children of strangers.'\(^3\)

Occasionally, the character's point of view may be bound up in his

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 12.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 12.

\(^3\)Lyle Saxon, *Children of Strangers*, pp. 176-177.
personal honor. Theogene Chaisson, conscious of his own economic failure, could not force himself to conform to the general practice of cheating the Negroes:

Black fingers quick and hard on the clinging white balls. How many pounds? Dollars for picking pounds. Swinging sacks on the scale back of the barn. Oh but it would be easy to fix that scale and make it lie! The man offered to have it done. "You're crazy if you don't. Everyone else does, Chaisson. By God, you're letting 'um put one over on you, Chaisson." Hang your head, want to do it, want to, want to, until toes ache from squeezing inside your shoes. "Mais what do you think I am to take money like that from those poor niggers?" "Chaisson! Chaisson! But you're a fool, you!" "Maybe I am. I guess I'm just plain no-count."1

John Barondess, once judge on the bench in the little town of Macedon, had for the sake of his convictions played into the hands of political opponents, who, realizing his character, had chosen to turn the fleeting shallow public opinion of the little Southern town against him, selecting as their device a questionable accusation against a Negro whom they knew for lack of full proof the judge would not convict:

...he would permit no man -- no group of men -- to use his courtroom to settle an interracial grudge. It was not for his court room's sake alone, not for these stained walls and rough pine floors and brass bespattered spittoons that symbolized the law, but also for himself; his honor, his integrity, his pride. To see that all men received equal treatment before his bench, whether their skins were black or white, had been the basis canon of his creed. It had not always been easy to adhere to. Even simpler things -- such as asking a witness to refer to a Negro by name instead of "this nigger" or "that nigger" -- often created hostility.2

Sometimes a character is shocked into a liberalism, which apparently bursts from a sudden realization that the world which he had accepted as satisfactory, contains in reality seething undercurrents of distress. Two such characters are Félix Sévigné in Clelie Benton Huggins' Point

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1 Charles Martin, Unequal to Song, p. 79.

2 Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, p. 43.
Noir and David Barondess in Hamilton Basso's Courthouse Square.
The former, retreating from the morbid atmosphere of his home to what he expected to be the peaceful environment of the plantation, took upon himself the duties of overseer, only to find economic conditions among the Negroes on his place so appalling as to fill him with a "feeling of responsibility so keen that the building of the schoolhouse, and all that went before it [improved housing], had been an actual longing, painful, oppressive."¹

He stood there in the sun-baked clearing, unconscious of the sun, or of the dust, or of the impatient horse stamping and tossing his head. He stood there and saw the schoolhouse rising; his dream unfolded and stretched out, and he saw the schoolhouse filled with the children of Point Noir, with their mothers and fathers at night; he saw the wagon — later the bus — which would pass through the entire plantation every day, stopping at the little white houses which replaced cabins, gathering the children, until, jammed, it would roll up and deposit them before the schoolhouse. He saw the first graduating class; years from now, those who began next year would have a high-school education as good as any of the public schools for white children could give; a diploma and credits to enter college if they wished — there would be scholarships — and the school would be enlarged; there would be several teachers, a library . . . gymnasium.²

The latter character, seeking refuge in his native Southland, from a superficial success in the North he had learned to hate, found instead of the peace he sought a pervading strife of intolerance. Choosing to help a Negro to escape the persecution of the town's bigotry, he found criticism heaped on him from all sides, reaching out in its implications to include his father, who had already suffered the town's persecution to the point of losing all ambition, all hope in life. Such activity was not in David's scheme of things compatible with the idea of civilization, which he conceived to include a toleration of all men:

What that man [the Negro] has been through, you'll never know.

¹Clelie Benton Ruggins, Point Noir, p. 201.
²Ibid., pp. 199-200.
He's taken more on the chin than you or I ever dreamed of taking. He's got more guts than the whole... town put together. He doesn't deserve to be kicked around like this...

It's the dirty rotten intolerance of it that makes me sick.

... It makes me remember the... swamp of intolerance that's bogged the whole world. Concentration camps, blood purges, liquidations, murders, beatings, torture, terrorism, wars -- where in God's name are we heading? Back to the Dark Ages, that's where -- back to the Inquisition and the witch-pyre and the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day!... We're pretty cute the way we talk about our civilization. Christ, but we're cute! What... is civilization, anyway? Skyscrapers, subways, splitting the atom, talkies, central heating? If that's all it is take it... You can hang decapitated heads from skyscrapers just as well as from stone battlements and while scientists are splitting the atom a bunch of thugs and pimps and morons and gangsters are splitting somebody's skull. By Christ, we're cute about civilization. Here's a world obeying the original jungle laws and we talk about civilization -- just because we can make synthetic food. It makes me want to laugh. Civilization! I'll tell you what civilization is! Civilization is when tolerance is greater than intolerance and humanity is greater than hate. And either we forget our hates -- our precious sacred holy hates -- either we come together on a broad basis of friendship and tolerance and love -- yes, by God, love! -- or we're sunk.

David's tolerance is in reality of the same degree as that of another group of white characters, who appear in surprisingly large quantities. Forgetting for themselves the presence of an accepted, traditional racial difference, they take Negroes as they find them and make their problems their own. It is as through there were an indefinable attraction -- without desire or will. Sometimes the attraction is merely fleeting.

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1Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, pp. 312-13. It is interesting to note the present day criticism of civilization as compared to the former use of it as an excuse -- such as the inclusion of it in the justification of slavery in the Southern States. Such critical approaches are not rare in present day literature; perhaps, the most poetic example is given by the French writer René Maran: Civilisation, civilisation, orgueil des Européens, et leur charnier d'innocents...

Tu n'ès pas un flambeau mais un incendie. Tout ce à quoi tu touches, tu le consumes... Cf. Batouala (Paris, [1921]), p. 11.
and incidental like that of Jason Kent who lists them among his "surprisables" which include: "Victor's grandmother ... Mr. Schmidt who worked in the bakery, old Piavi, Negro stevedores on the wharves";\(^1\) or that of Tony Clezaca, who in periods of trouble recognized with them a feeling of kinship:

The streets that approached the river were almost deserted. Only a single person passed him during the course of his walk. This was an old negro, with a hacksaw on his shoulder, muffled to the ears and looking miserable and uncomfortable with the cold.

Tony stepped aside to let him pass. The negro shuffled by, looking at him from the corner of a watering eye. A voice seeped through the folds of the muffler, deep from a gaunt, dark bosom.

"Cold ain't it?"
"Sure is."

This was the extent of their conversation but it cheered Tony's heart. It made him realize, for one thing, that in the midst of perturbation he was not different from the rest of his fellows -- even a shivering negro with a hacksaw on his shoulder ... .\(^2\)

Sometimes, the attraction is given more depth of treatment, with implications suggesting a permanent dissatisfaction with the traditional, existent order, especially as it concerns the Negro. Primary examples of characters presenting this point of view are Paul Randolph of Saxon's Children of Strangers, Sister Kalavich of O'Donnell's Green Margins, and Olive of Martin's Unequal to Song.

Paul Randolph feels a sense of obligation to the Negro, a sense which he realizes that among Southern land-owners is peculiarly his own:

\(\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\)It has always been like this in the South ... I mean, white men leaning on black men ... from the beginning. We made slaves of you; we made you work for us ... You made us rich ... In rising, we pushed you further away from us ... And yet, the system failed somehow ... Not only the war and freeing the slaves ... Something else.\(\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\)

\(\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\)Hamilton Basso, Days Before Lent, p. 28.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\)Hamilton Basso, Relics and Angels, p. 135.
'I -- I am like this land. When your strength is taken away, I shall live no longer. Weeds will grow in the furrows, the fields will go back to the brush. Henry! This is why I couldn't get you out of my mind as I watched you sweating in the fields -- working for something that can never be yours because I have taken it from you.'

Sister Kalamvich, another such unorthodox character, indifferent to social bans, living her life strictly as she saw fit, casting her highest evaluations upon her interests rather than those of convention, saw little need of defending her friendships with Negro characters, taking them for what they were worth to her. Loretta, daughter of Southern aristocracy came upon this ostensible social indifference rather suddenly one day:

'Why does Unna behave so strangely?' [Loretta asked]
'I think it's on account of the husband. Perhaps she didn't tell him she's colored, and someone else may tell him at any time.'
Loretta stared at Sister, her face under the crisp aureate hair turning sallow, and no longer beautiful. She could not talk. She turned her head, to think. 'I believe I told you that,' said Sister.
'That Unna is colored? I don't think so.'
'Well, it's not important.'
'You told me you had been intimate friends, but --'
Loretta clutched her cloak nervously and looked away.
'I'm sorry to embarrass you,' said Sister, but she lifted her chin primly.
'Perhaps -- after all,' Loretta floundered, ' -- that is, I suppose it's not unusual in such an isolated place --'
'It is unusual. Our friendship caused Unna lots of trouble. Of course her people didn't approve.'
'But -- what about you? What about your friends?'
'I didn't want their approval.'
...
Loretta's eyes brooded upon Sister's valiant profile. She thought: 'Does she mean that? Does she care nothing for people's approval? I doubt it. Yet her life proves it. Her intimate friend a negress! Revolting! But my lips dare not affirm my heart's revulsion . . .'

Others likewise came upon her attitude:

A man approached, searching.
'Dat you, Sister?'
'Yes, Captain George-Pete.'

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'Me, I got to talk to you, Sister, You comin' inside, you?'
'Talk here, Captain.'
'It's about duh funeral. Duh pall-buryers. Yo' paw say for you to pick duh pall buryers.'
Sister mentioned six names, six good friends of Grampaw's, most of them from his native town in Dalmatia.
'But Pretty John is colored, him,' said the man.
'He was Grampaw's friend.'
'Duh people --'
'I'm thinking of Grampaw.'

Olive, of a more investigative turn of mind than Sister, held, despite the disapproval of father and friends, quite as staunchly to her essential democracy, and her support of the Negro family she had rescued from poverty:

Even all alone as she was, Olive felt shy within herself about liking Bermadine. Timidly she knew her cheeks had grown a little warm with the shameful blood, and her eyelids fell. That was exactly the same way she had felt two years ago, taking the family, the whole black family away from their rotting houseboat hidden in an inlet of the bayou. Gloomily, and with a certain shame, she remembered finding them there, practically starving, half sick in the rotting houseboat, and she remembered taking them, a few at a time up here to her own house. Papa had been furious, wouldn't say a word to anyone for days because she had put some of the sick ones to bed in the house. He would have left, Olive knew, but he had no place to go.

Olive felt terribly ashamed now, recalling the strange wild smell like the taste of duckmeat that they left in the rooms where she had nursed them. They all lived out over the barn now. Olive liked Bermadine, she liked them all, and felt wretched and defiant about it.2

Olive could analyze stock attitudes and reject them, if necessary, as impractical:

"You like ever'one, you! Even those nigger that steal you ore." "I didn't say I like 'um. I say it's a shame they got to steal." "Mais Olive, you talk crazy some-time, yeh! They don't have to steal, they jus lazy." "I heard all that before. I know, Ed. They do have to steal. They need ore jus the same as me, and they don' get pay enough to buy wood an whittle 'um out. Don' tell me about nigger! Haven I got a whole family livin' out home wit' me?"3

1Ibid., pp. 190-99.
2Charles Martin, Unequal to Song, pp. 219-20.
3Ibid., p. 77.
She could pass through the unimproved sections of the town and gaze with critical economic realism upon the

... ramshackle cabins of Negroes and poor whites, all dun, all with sagging fences, dirt paths pounded hard by walking feet, broken gates, saved in porch-roofs.

Without a qualm, she could prick the smugness of her fiancé and his accepted opinions:

"Mr. Olive, you worry about those niggers like they were somebody important!"
"Well for God's sake!" she pulled away from him. "They are important to me."
"Oh they're not! Just a bunch of niggers. Olive I wish you'd marry me and quit all this crazy stuff about those black devils. I don't feel safe about you out there with them, I swear to God I don't!"

He had taken her close to him again. "Yes! And suppose our children turn out black like the ones in that story I read once? What about that, hein Ed?" She was grinning but he couldn't see it, and she made her voice sound particularly solemn for this piece of teasing.

He took his arm away. Calmly, with a bleak space in her somewhere abruptly formed, she watched the gulf come between them, bleak as the space inside. It was all right. She didn't bother to make clear to him what she meant. The bleak space was a surprise. Why, the poor fool believed it! He thought she had nigger blood. God only knew what he didn't think!

Indeed the clash between the orthodox and unorthodox seems fairly inevitable. It flared between Tony and Helen, in Relics and Angels, leaving him disillusioned, her as tightly enclosed in her shell of content as ever.

The negro woman grinned. She put her pipe back between her lips and went inside. Tony went back to Helen.
"She's nice, isn't she?" he said.
"Nice! That filthy old woman!"

There was a viciousness in her voice that surprised Tony.

He looked at her in astonishment.
"I don't understand you," Helen said. "I don't understand the way you take up with all sorts of low persons."
"But that negro woman isn't a low person."
"If she isn't, I'd like to know who is. She's nothing but a filthy old nigger. All niggers are filthy!"

\footnote{\textit{Tbid.}, p. 339.}
\footnote{\textit{Tbid.}, pp. 241-42.}
For a moment, as she stood there with tightened mouth and her blue eyes very cold and harsh, they were on the verge of a quarrel..."

It came between Anton and Marie Elizabeth -- one considering the influences of education and change upon the Negro, the other holding fast to stock opinions:

Where was the man to eat? A man like Rilleaux couldn't sit with the mule drivers and stable hands. "I don't see why not," Marie Elizabeth had flared back, "he's a nigger, ain't he? As far as I'm concerned one nigger ain't no better than the rest," Anton remembered her exact words. They had spilled out of her mouth hotly. "I reckon you want to eat with him youself," Anton had smiled at her excitement. "I could."  

Like the white characters he portrays, the author of the Louisiana self-critical and realistic fiction presents a questioning, investigative attitude toward the Negro. Often, it may be said that the white characters he delineates represent, to a limited extent, the author himself. It is conceivable that some of the questions which beset his liberal creatures, some of the convictions that hold them, have likewise upset the calm of the author's own mind, or stirred him or people he knew to action. It is certainly possible to think that the arrogant bigot he portrays is as distasteful to him as to the reader. But the best means of passing judgment upon the Louisiana author's attitude toward the Negro is through a search into the Negro characters he portrays.

The Negro as a traditional character has been revealed. The Negro as the focal point of contrarious white opinion has been revealed. The Negro as the main sufferer of traditional regional arrogancy has been revealed, but here the author of Louisiana allows himself his greatest number of asides. Sometimes he is explicit champion of a cause, as in Nunez in these words:

1Hamilton Basso, Relics and Angels, pp. 119-20.
Approximately ten years before the time in which our tale begins, the servitude of the southern negro had been abolished; but the lot of those unfortunate underlings was scarcely improved, for they were forced in those pressing times to earn a scant livelihood by laboring most servilely under the exacting and often cruel supervision of the white masters who in actuality retained an absolute racial supremacy . . . . Defenseless, their black toil-worn bodies often felt the weight of the bludgeons of the white superiors . . . .

At others, he is the unsatisfied, idealistic dreamer:

--- Dream, brown mother, dream. Always and always. Until you die. Never open your eyes. Your dreams would be spilled. Were I cruel I would spill them. They would be spilled like the milk that drips from the corners of his greedy mouth.

--- I would say: That babe of yours, do you know what he will be? A low down buck nigger, stinking of sweat, his hands broken to the shape of a scythe. He will be consumed with brute passions. He will sing songs. White men will beat him. With whips sometimes, with words and looks more often. Even if unwittingly, will beat him.

--- He will get into a brawl with a white man. The white man's throat will choke with blood, and your babe will throw the knife in the road. He will take to the swamps. Men and dogs will hunt him. Mosquitoes will torture his flesh. The miasma of the swamps will rise about him. He will be beaten with primitive fears. Devils and demons will yell at him. He will try to escape.

--- White men will see him dashing across the road. Dogs will howl after him, bring him to earth. After that the end will be swift and frightful.

--- Only once in his life will he know tenderness. A brown girl will love him. They will go to the clearing where the cane-field ends. Crickets will sing. The wind will whisper to them.

--- Next day he will be a buck nigger again, stinking of sweat.

But the Louisiana author also shows another type of Negro, an equally inevitable part of the South, presented with some trait forcing him into the ranks of the departures from the tradition. Zeno, who, rather than suffer the humiliation of a scourge at the hands of Armand

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1Nemours Henry Nunez, Chien Negre, pp. 9-10.

2Hamilton Basso, Relics and Angels, pp., 122-23.
Garvais set fire to the ship Orlando for purposes of revenge; Elmira, who had "too much independence and too many notions in her head" to render her the good servant; Lizzie Balise, who "had little to do with the other negroes, and hardly ever went to church," who sat stiff and stern . . . [and] never shouted or clapped her hands . . . [because] she was too proud -- though she was as black as anybody else, and ugly, too"; the "negro pie man who was fishing for catfish in the river," who looked at the interested young white boy "without much enthusiasm," answering his questions with a "grumbling disapproval;" and his tall stories with "You's de lyin'est white boy da lebbor I heard,-- these characters form as much a part of the atmosphere as the traditional character, but they play their roles out of the strict accepted element.

There are presented, too, the depraved Negro characters, like Bosh of Migrations and Dee-Dee of Cinnamon Seed, both experiencing keen sensations of delight at the thought that a white woman had been given cause for fright by them. It is significant to note that it is only the character under mental torture of some particular type arising from reasons over which he has no control, who is represented as molesting white womanhood, and then without intentions of rape.

There is the Negro ne'er-do-well, like Bonus of Green Margins, who

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1/ Henry Munez, Chien Negre, pp. 122-23.
2/ Hamilton Basso, Relics and Angels, p. 162.
3/ Lyle Saxon, Children of Strangers, pp. 189-90.
4/ Ibid., p. 190.
5/ Hamilton Basso, Relics and Angels, p. 7.
6/ Ibid.
7/ Ibid.
8/ Ibid., p. 8.
"had been places and enjoyed talking about his adventures,"¹ who was attractive to women, "black, brown, and yellow,"² winning them with "his geniality and his childish, grotesque capers."

There is, occasionally, the transitional character like Tee Paul or Laura in Huggins' Point Noir. The former worshipped and adored the plantation guardian Félix, less from a sense of personal gratitude for benevolent protection, than for a social gratitude for Félix's attempts to raise the entire group of plantation Negroes economically and intellectually. He is the only Negro on the Point Noir plantation who actually welcomes the addition of a school.

The latter character stands out particularly for her psychological motivation. Feeling herself repressed, as a part of a race she deems, in reflection of the bland acceptance around her, as contemptible, she plunges herself into a search for vicarious glory. Through purely selfish motives -- no altruism, no self-sacrifice, she attempts to make her mistress, 'Selle Val, the dominating figure on the plantation, because she, Laura, as her servant will then enjoy a new position of prominence in the eyes of the surrounding Negroes:

For a moment it was as though Val had not heard her. Then she turned slowly, and against the darkness of the night outside, her peculiar austere beauty made a dramatic effect. Laura drew herself up, threw back her head, and for a moment she was transformed into another Val; she was tall and white and hawk-like, her flat nose was long and beaked, her loose mouth was a thin colorless line.... A bitterness which was a physical hurt contorted her; why wasn't she Selle Val? She would show them, those .... niggers. She wouldn't even bother to show them, because like Selle Val, she wouldn't even be conscious of them. Not to be conscious of them, not to be conscious of them, O God! Not to care, not to care! To be able to have Point Noir and everybody in her hands -- and not to care, even!²

¹E. P. O'Donnell, Green Margins, p. 173.
²Ibid., p. 176.
³Ibid.
⁴Clelie Benton Huggins, Point Noir, p. 193.
But these characters are a mere introduction to the more minutely treated characters, each of which is selected as the focal point of some particular problem, and presented, as he persistently suffers it, in a manner calculated to disturb the hitherto unruffled calm of acceptance.

The most widespread treatment afforded any particular problem is that given to the "tragic Mulatto." Represented by his blood mixture as a different category of human being to the full-blooded Negro -- although in civil matters his status is identical -- the Mulatto finds himself the apex of pity from one side of him, and resentful contempt from the other:

The white woman understood at once that wistful word. White. Yes, that's what they all wanted, poor things. Mulattoes, neither one thing nor the other. 1

Inside the kitchen, Mug, the fat black cook, snorted: "Humph! Givin' coffee to them mulattoes, same as if they wuz white folks!" she said under her breath. 2

Often of extraordinary physical attraction, of a type represented, save for the "coffee brown" color (and ranging upward toward white), as bearing little indication of the Negroid, and generally described as similar to a "Spanish girl," 3 a "Central American," 4 a "South Sea islander," 5 or, more romantically, a "delicate race of Latins which had lived too long near the sun," 6 the Mulatto is portrayed as the member of a closed corporation operating for the purpose of gradually increasing the whiteness of its number. 7 And because of physical features and the semblance

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1Iyle Saxon, Children of Strangers, p. 17.
2Ibid., p. 239.
3Ibid., p. 6.
4Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, p. 142.
5Evelyn Scott, Migrations, p. 257.
6Iyle Saxon, Children of Strangers, p. 40.
7Ibid., p. 229.
of education, as good as circumstances permit, generally attributed to him, his self-imposed task decreases in difficulty.

Considering himself to be of a superior social level to the full-blooded Negro — a stratification which is often recognized by the whites as well as by himself—— the Mulatto stands between two opposing forces: the Negroes whom he has cast out of recognition, and the whites who have cast him out. Thus, his is a lot of unrequited love and, without the compromise of marrying another Mulatto, a life of single "blessedness." This is a lot which, thus befalls a series of Mulatto characters in the novels of Louisiana: Famie of Saxon's Children of Strangers, Sam of Basso's Cinnamon Seed, Chlora of Nunez's Chien Negre, and Unga January of O'Donnell's Green Margins. This does not mean that these characters were denied all the intimacies of sex; far from it, for, generally, denied the possibility of a legitimate tie with a partner of choice, the Mulatto character resorted to free and uninhibited love, without, however, the accepted scheme of the family, and should a rebound connection be effected, a life of compromise and lack of complete satisfaction.

Sam of Cinnamon Seed is the only Mulatto of this group of characters who was not driven into the escape of free love. His is a double distinction, for besides the maintenance of his chastity, he stands out as the only male representative of a character whose love crossed racial lines. With only the "timbre of his voice . . . . negroid," and bearing a countenance "serious and intense . . . . the color of coffee mixed with cream," Sam bears the stigma of his race with a mixture of moving resent-

1 Ibid., p. 122.

2 The preference for female characters in this connection is probably drawn from the situation in real life. See above, Chapter I, pp. 19-21.

3 Hamilton Basso, Cinnamon Seed, p. 51.

4 Ibid., p. 52.
ment and forced acceptance. Sore spot of contention for the traditional character Horace whom he denounces as an "old ignorant fool," Sam looks upon his fate as one in common with "an oppressed, exploited people," a "nigger" in what is "not a nigger's world." Educated, after a fashion, beset with the doubts of the person not strictly satisfied with his lot, he entered into his everlasting tragedy by presuming to fall in love with Miss Ann, his young plantation mistress, with an intense passion that sometimes swelled to proportions of unreason, as he considered with jealousy the room she walked in, the "knowing bed she slept in," the clothes she wore. Sam's lot is embelished by the fact that the attraction was not entirely one-sided, for Miss Ann, as she realized later in life, "was attracted to him the way a woman is attracted to a man," despite the fact that "she was white and he was a Negro." But fear born of a sense of adherence to the traditional and conventional, after causing her a long period of torment, at last drove her into the arms of another man.

Disgusted by his lot, Sam left the South for the North where he was forced for a time to carry garbage and wash dishes, while studying commercial arts at night-school, to do "work far more menial than any he had done on the plantation," but which he gladly accepted for the returning award

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1 Ibid., p. 53.
2 Ibid., p. 71.
3 Ibid., p. 314.
4 Ibid., p. 52.
5 Ibid., p. 80.
6 Ibid., p. 330.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 285.
of knowing that "he was not merely a negro any longer. He was a man."¹

At last forced back to the South by the conditions of the Depression, he was allowed to maintain something of the status he had made for himself while away. He was given a job keeping plantation books.

Sam asked permission to work in the old plantation office, and Olivia said he could. All day long he bent over his books, sitting on a high stool, making entries in his neat, careful, labored hand. He buried himself in work as some men bury themselves in art. It was at one time a refuge and an escape. . . .

Not even the presence of Eleanor, who looked so much like Ann, disturbed him. When he first saw her . . . her thin, pale face and the way she looked at him out of her mother's eyes . . . all the tragic unhappiness of his early life returned with a bitter sharpness which left him distressed and miserable. It lasted, however, only a few days . . . and then it slowly passed; until, finally, he could look back upon it from a great distance, without feeling any hurt.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

So now, with lust and passion long since spent, he could look at her daughter, and remember what had happened, and tell himself that although it had not been criminal . . . as they would make it out to be and as he, because of them, once thought it had . . . it had been most unwise.²

To an extent satisfied with his lot, he was, nevertheless, faced once too often in his old environment with the accepted contempt of the South, and unable to bear the humiliation of being "so completely and helplessly a nigger,"³ he committed suicide, hanging himself after a precision of preparation that characterizes the man who holds no hope.⁴

Even less lucky in fate, but perhaps, accounted less tragic for the absence of a suicidal end were the three female figures of the unlucky Mulatto, Unga January, Chlora, and Fannie Vidal. Unga January "should have been happy with no fixed home, and no responsibility,"⁵ but she was

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., pp. 285-86.
³Ibid., p. 358.
⁴Ibid., pp. 363-64.
⁵E. P. O'Donnell, Green Margins, p. 37.
seldom so. For all her "white, finely moulded face" ¹ and attractiveness to the opposite sex, she was "viciously chaste . . . [and] never tried to appear seductive." ² For the protection of her honor, she kept the "fingernails of her right hand, her 'rape nails,' . . . dangerously pointed." ³ She married a Scandinavian sailor with whom she passed a short span of time, never happy, fearful lest some one tell him of the colored blood. Leaving him she fell in love with the artist René Davidson, vainly, for his love was fastened likewise hopelessly upon Sister Kalavich, Unga's best friend.

Chlora, escaping the sensual clutches of one greedy, selfish planter, fell victim of the selfish passion of an arrogant, insular character whose primary end in life was to hate blindly and uncontrollably all Negroes. Giving at first to Chlora the kindness he had ever before denied the members of her race, he learned too late that she was going to give birth to his child, an offspring who would always be classified among those for whom he had everlasting contempt. Because he attempted in his awakening to murder her, Chlora's love turned to hatred, and she devoted her life to helping another Mulatto Tamor, who shared her hatred of the man who had fathered her child, to gain revenge. But her life ended in unhappiness when the son she loved was discovered and killed by the white father, and the man in whom she had put her trust turned from her to the embraces of a younger and comelier woman.

The most vivid and detailed treatment of the tragic Mulatto case, the internal battle of bloods, is that accorded Fanie Vidal. Reared in a tradition revealing the neighboring Negroes as different in religious and cultural beliefs and discounting them as inferior in social caste, Fanie

¹ Ibid., p. 17.
² Ibid., p. 37.
³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.
appointed herself, as did the other members of her immediate group, to the task of progenating a lighter race. Even her adolescent romantic dreams held the image of a man whose "skin was white."¹ Finding an affair with a fugitive white desperado more to her tastes than the vassal devotion of Numa Laour, neighboring village Mulatto boy, she found herself at an early age in the position of an unmarried mother, a position which was rendered to her and other members of her caste, decidedly less distasteful because her co-partner happened to be white.² Robbed of the man she loved by the law and the jealous Numa who acted only for motives of love, she was faced by the task of making the way for herself and the "white man's child" who in her affections "would always come first."³ Dedicating herself thus to the provision for him of every advantage in life, Famie turned to every avenue for revenue, selling — to the dismay of her kinspeople — her furniture, her silver, heirlooms from the wealthy Creole Grandpère Augustin,⁴ and her land, and finally losing caste completely among her own group of people, by going to work with the Negroes of Yucoa plantation, passing a compromisingly satisfactory existence, her only happiness in the knowledge that her son, who in complete ingratitude had elected to disown her, could indeed leave the ranks of the Negro.

A little different in treatment is the portrayal of Eugenia DeNegre Blair who escaped to a certain degree the stigma of her blood, by virtue of her vast financial means handed down through extremely wealthy ancestry and important social connections held because her family had never really admitted, despite the diffusion of the rumor, that there was Negro

¹Lyle Saxon, Children of Strangers, p. 51.
²Ibid., p. 229.
³Ibid., p. 135.
⁴Ibid., p. 122.
blood in the background. After spending a number of years abroad which added greatly to her general intelligence and culture, she married a young man of prominence, who frankly knew of the whispers going on about her, but whose love outweighed, even in ante-bellum days, the conventional racial barriers. But to this young man she brought only disqualification in the eyes of his friends, and disappointment because she herself could not equal his racial liberality.

Occasionally, the Mulatto is represented with a conglomeration of motives superimposed upon the eternal tragedy of blood mixture. Two such characters, dedicating themselves to the cause of total racial betterment, are Vera Paxton of Point Noir and Alcide Fauget of Courthouse Square. Vera Paxton's background had been quite different from the accepted tradition of the Mulatto. A "mulatress, with sandy coloured, kinky hair, and clear tawny-yellow skin, and her eyes... the same colour and flecked with yellow, and set very wide apart," she possessed a lack of the usual assets attributed to her group. Coming to Point Noir with a wealth of nearly tragic but entirely enlightening experience—full of the jealousies of Negroes, and the bigotry of whites, she presented herself with a phlegmatic front which she deemed more secure than her former efforts at individuality. In the resentment of the Negroes and the over-zealousness of her white employer she recognized at Point Noir a situation apparently more acute than she had ever before known:

... she had been dismayed at the situation at Point Noir; she knew that kind of nigger... not that kind, not so savage and uneducated and suspicious and hostile, but she

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2 Ibid., p. 318.
3 Ibid., p. 399.
had experience with something almost as bad; and Félix -- she was more frightened of him than of the niggers, even.

It was her inability to resist the love of Félix which engendered her final undoing -- the returning of the love of Félix, who loved her because he had never been able to pity her. Despite her protests and the knowledge that tragedy was a possible outcome, this love persisted. When at last she did engender the pity of Félix, a pity born of the knowledge that real freedom could never be hers, her doom was sealed. The bullets he fired "straight and close at her head" were calculated to end her eternal tragedy; the shotgun he placed close to his own, to stem the havoc of heart and conscience.

The latter character in this group, Alcide Fauget, had a background of training similar to that of Famie Vidal, for he was raised in the traditional quadroon caste of Louisiana. He had begun his career "passing" as a white man. As such he had received a degree in medicine from a "prominent Southern University," but finding his life too full of fears and bewilderment lest his pretenses be shattered, he had dropped his assumed role for the safer one of an openly announced Negro. When questioned about his decision to enroll himself permanently in the ranks of the Negro race, he had declared:

"You are a sensitive man, Mr. Barondess. So, in my way, am I. I want you to try to imagine what it is like to know you have Negro blood, to be made to feel ashamed of it, to have to conceal it every moment of your life. Imagine what it is like to look into every mirror you pass, to examine your face a hundred times a day -- afraid that something in your appearance will betray you; your nose, your eyes, your mouth, your hair. Yes, especially your hair. Imagine what it is like to attend a school where a Negro is something to be laughed at

1Ibid., p. 404.
2Ibid., p. 470.
3Ibid., p. 511.
4Hamilton Basso, Courthouse Square, p. 256.
or despised -- little better than a beast of the field. Imagine what it is like to live in the same room with a boy who would consider your intimacy a disgrace if he knew the truth; to lie awake night after night with your secret burning like a hot poker in your mind; to surreptitiously take three and four baths a day -- afraid of even a smell! God God, no!" He lifted his hand. "Anything is better than living a nightmare."}

And so, with his decision firmly made, he had come to the town of Macedon, declaring only his degree in pharmacy which he had obtained at a Northern University. By some streak of fate he had happened by the house of a prominent family when their only child was choking on a fish bone and had performed an emergency operation with a pen-knife which had saved the child's life and won for him the town's acclaim. But previously his existence had been beset by rumor:

Some thirty years before, around the turn of the century when Abeide first came to Macedon, he had been something of a man of mystery. He could have easily passed for white -- he had the education and manners of a member of the middle class -- but he immediately let it be understood that he was of Negro blood; to what extent nobody knew. He seemed, which deepened the mystery, to have money of his own; not much perhaps, no fortune, but enough to convert the front room of the house he bought into a drugstore: displaying, when the not overly sympathetic city fathers of Macedon questioned his right to do so, a pharmacist's diploma from a reputable Northern university. He was expected to be an "uppity nigger" and "not to know his place" and the town waited for trouble. It waited, however, in vain. He married a Negro woman, lived simply and to himself, treated all white persons with the deference they expected of him. In due time the town came to accept him and he became simply "the nigger druggist." His pocket-knife operation on little Elsie Cannon made him a local celebrity, he was formally voted the thanks of Macedon by the town council, but even then he took no liberties.

But at last trespassing the province assigned to Negroes in Macedon, by attempting to buy the deserted Legendre Mansion, of historic significance in the city, he called down the nether forces upon his head. The lengthy persecution began without investigation of his motives -- which if known would doubtless have allayed the greatest questions -- wherein he was made

1Ibid., pp. 261-62.
the buffeted pawn of the inimical clashes of white characters, who capitalizing on the provincial intolerance of the town, used his case to stir up social conflict:

... when The Macedon Mercury announced that he was going to buy the Legendre house and live in it, the town was baffled. Perhaps he was going to turn out to be an uppity nigger after all.¹

The mob that sought out his house was no surprise; the surprise was that he escaped. As he left the little town, which had denied him the right of purchasing the house of his secret father, "the town’s founder and principal hero of the Civil War: Cincinnatus Legendre,"² he meditated:

"There was a little city, ... I came to that city in the night. My heart was hot within me. I held my peace. ... Macedon, ... Macedon." It had a proud and tragic sound, touched with glory and with death, and in the host of memories it summoned up he wondered if men like John and David might know victory in the end.

Victory? He shook his head. There is no victory. There is no victory for there is no peace. The war between tolerance and intolerance goes on. There will always be two lines of trenches, two camps, two barricades, there will always be death and dying.³

The characteristics generally denied the Negro, a dissatisfaction with his lot, and intellectual groping, a recognition of economic exploitation, when conceded to him, are more often given to the Mulatto than the full-blooded Negro. This is not always the case, however, and Henry Tyler of Saxon’s Children of Strangers, Silas of Scott’s Migrations, and Zero of Godchaux’s Stubborn Roots prove the outstanding exceptions.

In appearance, Henry Tyler would not have conjured up any different picture from that of the traditional servant. His case is simple:

Henry Tyler was a field-hand who lived on Yuco plantation. He was a big black man, strong as an ox, humble as a mule. His eyes asked questions. He was

¹Ibid., p. 248.
²Ibid., p. 3.
³Ibid., p. 352.
born on the place and had never been more than twenty miles away from it in his life. His wife was a fat, loud-mouthed woman with gold hoops glittering in her ears; she shouted at his four black sons, sang louder than any one else in the African Baptist church, and 'meddled' Henry when he was studying things in his mind.

Henry plowed the east field day after day, year after year. Up and down, slowly, behind his mule and plow. It was known as Henry's field, although of course it belonged to Mr. Guy, the white owner of the two-thousand acres that made up the plantation. Henry, in a sense, belonged to Mr. Guy just as the land did.¹

Henry wanted to learn too bad. But every thing hindered him. His wife laughed and shouted, or got mad and burned up his books. She taught her four black sons to laugh too. 'Nigger is nigger;' she said, mocking him, shaming him before people. But that wasn't true, and Henry knew it.²

When despair with its all-engulfing clutches had all but descended, hope presented itself in the form of Mr. Paul, brother of the plantation owner at Yuca. Paul, with his offerings of lemonade to the sweating Negro in the heat of the day, his selection of the Negro as the subject of his picture, his recognition of the general exploitation of Negroes throughout the South, and his promises to take Henry up North with him that he might see the strange things he'd dreamed of, awakened the spark of hope within the breast of Henry Tyler. But one night Paul, before he could fulfill his rich promises, died. And Fannie Vidal, remembering the night Henry Tyler came to report the death of Paul, recalled that "she had seen stark misery in his face, and, in that moment, she knew that his misery equaled her own."³ And yet of these two persons whose greatest aims in life had been thwarted, one particularly caricatured white character, pronounced in excitement:

"... Harry, I'll bet I've got the grandest picture. They were

²Ibid., pp. 160-61.
³Ibid., p. 185.
so typical. You know, Harry, I always say that the niggers are the happiest people. Not a care in the world."

Silas was physically "the finest negro on the plantation" at Mimms. His mistress's favorite in maturity, treasured playmate in childhood of the boys, he had led a life comparatively sheltered, and presented on the surface a bland acceptance of tradition. One day the white Edwin, who periodically displayed his preference for and unequivocal admiration of this slave, asked the question: "How would you like to be a free nigger, Silas?" The reaction was somewhat startling:

Against the flaring lamp, the profile of Silas was dark and immobile. A cord bulged in his thick brown throat. Slow to reply, Edwin had seconds in which to study the opaque contour... In Silas' too-controlled hand, a dish snapped. Still the negro did not speak.

Freedom, he was saying to himself derisively. Massa Edwin, he doan know whut Ah means when Ah says freedom. Yet, did he know what he meant. The abolitionist jargon did not represent the word for him, either. For an instant it had appeared all red, violent before his eyes. Then the color faded and was blotted in the steam from the shrill-twinkling tin pan. The fading of his anger left in Silas's bosom a weakness very actual and physical. "As faw freedom, Ah reckyn Ah's free 'nough aready," he said aloud, surlily.

But for Silas even a simulated acceptance was not prolonged. Humiliated by the deflection from loyalty by his sweetheart Fanny, and hating the white man who was her obvious partner, he took the violent course,

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1Ibid., p. 294. It is interesting to compare the admonition of George Washington Cable to this idea:

This woman had stood all her life with dagger drawn, on the defensive against what certainly was to her an unmerciful world... And yet by inexorable decree, she belonged to what we used to call "the happiest people under the sun." We ought to stop saying that.

--- The Grandissimes, p. 173.

2Evelyn Scott, Migrations, p. 18.

3Ibid., p. 19.

4Ibid., p. 20.
after engineering to himself a torrent of abuse, of running away
toward freedom, which although he passionately desired, he had never
known or understood. He was never seen again.

Stranger in appearance than either Henry Tyler or Silas is Zero.
In reality a huge proportioned man, but carrying himself around in the
outlandish dress of a woman "going slowly about the affairs of the plan-
tation with his eyes dead,"¹ Zero presents a figure on the surface
ridiculous. But Zero was indispensable to Anton Schenmaydre, the plan-
tation owner. Reputed to have Voodoo powers, engendering fear in the
other Negroes, he was the only person who had enough influence over them
to make them continue working at the plantation instead of running off at
various intervals to the city, during a time when plantation labor, although
necessary, was scarce. His motive was an interest in the well-being of
the Negroes, who, in this particular instance, he didn't believe to be
fitted for any other work. But that did not cause him to limit his con-
ception of the general capacity of Negroes. His enthusiasm for Vascon
Rilleaux, colored inventor of the vacuum pan for the refining of sugar, was
great.

... when Zero had met Rilleaux those eyes had come to
life; a beam had seemed to pierce through the film that
curtained them.²

The object of the intense hatred of the plantation mistress, Marie Eliz-
abeth, Zero was in himself important enough to defy her, to neglect her
requests even though he knew that to comply would enable him to "fix his
power over her."³ Yet, he had the wisdom and strength of courage to ad-
vice the foolhardy Ginny, who had suffered humiliation at the hands of the

²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 83.
plantation mistress, not to attempt retaliation, since it would be impossible for her to escape punishment for her acts. Zero stands, in spite of the ridiculous figure which he cut, as the outstanding example of the Negro who can recognize trends, and act accordingly, who can at once speak the language of the ignorant backward Negro, and the forward-looking educated Negro.

It is the recognition of the different intellectual levels of the Negro which sets the Louisiana author who writes in the vein of critical realism apart from the author who continues only the traditional picture. Approaching the Negro from two points of view, namely, the opinions and attitudes accorded him by the white character, and the personality and character of the Negro himself, these authors reveal a penetrating awareness that the problems presented by the Negro in the South represent in essence a unity with the sociological instability of the region, which groping between the former addiction to tradition, and the present trend toward intellectual realism unfold on the part of the white author three conflicting attitudes, the first two definitely related by unity with tradition: (1) the attitude of benevolent guardianship of a Negro tacitly accepted as inferior, (2) the attitude of racial bigotry to a Negro who must be confined to a prescribed social strata, and (3) the attitude of liberalism to a Negro whose shortcomings are recognized as products of social repression and environment, rather than of inherent inaptitude. This same realistic trend unfolds a Negro character befitting the attitudes of the liberal white, a Negro character, ambitious, mentally capable, qualified for leadership, and willing to accept responsibility, but handicapped by pervading tendency within his region to disqualify him for the apparently preferable traditional type.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Liberalism . . . is a combination of both constructive and destructive elements. For centuries after the liberal resurgence which accompanied the Renaissance, it was primarily negative and destructive in character. The liberals were largely engaged in tearing down the ancient bulwarks of feudalistic tyranny and clerical despotism. They were the foes of established order, the enemies of entrenched privilege. It may be said, none the less, that even at this period liberalism enjoyed certain positive attributes, in that one result of the destructive activities of liberalism was a distinct improvement in the status of the average man. . . . A concern for the welfare of the average citizen is, indeed, one of the prime attributes of liberalism. An uncompromising foe of autocracy in whatever shape disguised, it is, as Lord Morley once pointed out, an eternal advocate of "the dignity and worth of the individual."

If, as Virginius Dabney has pointed out, the "liberal resurgence which accompanied the Renaissance . . . was primarily negative and destructive in character . . . tearing down the ancient bulwarks of feudalistic tyranny and clerical despotism," it was merely a reaction prophetic of the critical, disintegrative forces accompanying what is termed today the South's Cultural Renaissance, a movement growing out of a rising intellectualism in the region. This comparatively new intellectualism has manifested itself in a critical, analytical, investigative spirit on the part of certain Southern men and women, who have become increasingly dissatisfied with the regional stereotypes and stock attitudes which, having sprung from the thought patterns surrounding the departed economic order of pre-Civil War dominion, continue to mould the philosophical outlook of the section. It has revealed itself in an enthusiastic introspective analysis of the region by both sociologist and artist.

Literature in the South during the nineteenth century, and indeed during the earlier decades of the twentieth century, labored under the yoke of a sovereign pattern paralleling the economic and political

\[1\] Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. xiii.
arrangement of a social structure neo-feudalistic in character. The basic elements of this structure constituted a pattern not unlike that flourishing in the European Middle Ages; for the old plantation South presented both an aristocracy consisting of the wealthy Southern planter and his family, and a peasantry consisting of Negro chattel slaves, bound as equally to the soil as their precedent counterparts. This pattern became the foundation for the aristocratic or plantation tradition, which developed in accordance with the prevailing trends of thought and arguments of pro-slavery rationalization. Except for its exaggerated grandeur and romantic magnificence, this tradition might have been applied with veracity to the Old Dominion culture pattern as it really existed.

Had the early Louisiana author adhered as completely to the tradition as did his fellow-worker in several other states, the romantic background of his state might have permitted him most consistently to combine authenticity and tradition, for the fertility of its soil, the wealth of its proprietors, and the "woes" of its slaves\(^1\) might easily have been translated into unsurpassable portraits of aristocratic grandeur. Unity with tradition did not prevail, however, for George Washington Cable, who ushered the state into the realms of the literary South, threw off at the outset the shackles of tradition and with true liberal spirit, declared war upon "entrenched privilege." Enlarging his definition of the "average citizen" to include not only the white, but the Negro, especially in such proportion as he fell into the Mulatto group, and concentrating upon a social structure at once alike to and different from that of the remaining South,\(^2\) Cable supplied Louisiana fiction with a parentage

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\(^1\)See above, p. 3.

\(^2\)See above, p. 18.
piercing the dogmatism and insularity of the South, and touching upon the core of its social injustices.

To such an immediate heritage handed down through Cable, and possibly tinctured with the wider scope of today's critical realism, must be added the aristocratic legacy of the Southern regional expanse, developed fully by such authors as Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris, and the variations of negative, destructive pro-slavery rationalization employed by such writers as Thomas Dixon. With this composite background, the Louisiana novelist of the past two decades set about his task.

The thirty representative novels used in this study did, with small variation, select one of these two general heritages to follow through. Except for rare emphasis on situations peculiar to Louisiana, such as the distinct social history of the Mulatto and the Acadian, the novels of Louisiana, lacking the occasional references to the bayous, the Gulf, or the Mississippi, might represent any portion of the Southern United States. The Negro in his relationship to the Southern aristocratic tradition is treated in one of two patterns: the romantic or strict adherence to conventional stereotypes; and the critically realistic, limiting or departing from them.

In the novel of the first approach, there are two types of delineation: the incidental, wherein the Negro is shown largely in accepted conventional relationships with the white characters constituting the major portion of the text; and the directed or concentrated, wherein the Negro is portrayed within the province of his own peculiar community with distinct social organization, and distinct customs and mores, often growing out of the inherent character of the people who foster it. Despite the fact that the latter is a more detailed and descriptive treatment reaching to a wider scope of Negro life, its difference from the former is more in degree than in kind. Except when he creates for himself a
peculiar employment bound in the community life of his people, the Negro, in both types of treatment, is given, for the most part, the conventional role of the servant. In the direct portrayal, his role as a servant, to be sure, is sublimated to the treatment of home and community life; but the existence of his conventional status, with its inevitable implications in interracial relationships in a society considered structurally white and demanding of the Negro continued dependence on friendly whites, is ever-present.

Composed chiefly of a large number of similarly constructed characters who exude the author's conception of inherent kindness, exuberance, emotionality, cheerful ignorance, lack of ambition, and, should the occasion arise for it, savagery and cruelty, the community life of the Negro, gay, irresponsible, happy-go-lucky, and resistant to outside changing forces, remains at one particular, almost unindividualized level. There are, however, a few distinct types who stand out from the mass: perhaps, the leader, often chosen for the respect accorded him by whites; perhaps, the witch doctor or Voodoo king, who by the dispensation of good and evil charms evokes from the gullible people a mingled attitude of reverence and superstitious fear; or, perhaps, the transient elder, noted for the ease with which he ingratiates himself into the confidence of the women of his parish, often to the point of leading them into immoral relationships. The ease and frequency with which these relationships are effected throughout the community, as well as the existence of specific cases of sexual license, often crossing racial lines, unrestrained by any organized code of ethics or morals tends to throw upon the Negro community a light of a-morality.

With the ever present exception of the supply of means of employment which invariably introduces the necessity of relying upon sources outside the neighborhood, the Negro community is represented as a self-
sufficient unit presenting an indomitable resistance to outside forces making for change. Of these factors, education is met with the most resistance. An object of the resentment of the traditional Negro, it is considered by him as not only unnecessary but disagreeable, apt to rob him of his native freedom and irresponsibility.

Although the Negro is represented with a general carelessness with regard to his own fictional self-made problems, he assumes willingly the cares of the white master or employer, often to the point of earning the genuine friendship of the white, which serves to place him in the class of the faithful servant and friend, the type of which the majority of the respectable population of the Negro community consists.

With the possible exception of a wider variety in descriptions of physical appearance sometimes recognizing in Negroes individual attractiveness of an awe-inspiring or magnificent variety, the representation of the Negro in nineteen of the thirty novels included in this study, does not depart from the traditional concept which overspread the Southern fiction of the nineteenth century.

In the remaining eleven of the group, however, the Negro is accorded a treatment tinged with the liberalism accompanying the Southern Cultural Renaissance. The authors of this smaller group of novels have indeed taken to themselves an interest in the "dignity and worth of the individual"; but finding, despite the yet prevalent belief that the South is unreasonably, much that goes contrary to the basic tenets of liberalism, they have identified the Negro, in renewed and enlightened conception, with the cause of the total downtrodden forces in the whole Southern community. Approaching him, as well as the entire section, with critical realism, they have reported two existing factors which indicate a progressive conception of the character of the race. In the first place, a change is evident in the attitudes extended him by the whites.
The traditional attitudes of benevolent guardianship and arrogant bigotry, rationalizing chattel slavery by attributing to the Negro an innate inferiority, give way increasingly to the more liberal attitude, recognizing the Negro's individual rights, his ability and enthusiasm for education, his ambition and dissatisfaction with social oppression, and his willingness and capability for accepting responsibility. In the second place, signs of advancement are shown through a characterization of the Negro befitting the new liberal attitude accorded him by whites. Like George Washington Cable, several authors give concentrated attention to the problem of the "tragic Mulatto" who apparently exists as living testimony of white transgression. The Mulatto in these treatments bears the penalty of social discrimination for which increased financial opportunity, afforded by secret but wealthy fathers, cannot compensate. This Mulatto, generally educated and cultured, but trained in a tradition which tacitly accepts the premise of white supremacy, finds himself separated from the group he considers superior, not by physical appearance or detectable indication, but by presence of an elusive blood strain.

Despite the tendency to grant in the majority of cases to the Mulatto capacities for education and leadership, there are various attempts to show the full-blooded Negro as equally capable of these qualifications, the notable example being that of the Negro character who, lacking himself the opportunities for education, yet appreciates their significance, and therefore stands as a possible integrating force between the old- and new-type Negroes.

The novels of the second group cannot be classified as complete departures from the aristocratic tradition, for along with their Negroes who show the influence of social change, they present others who yet labor under the patterns of the Old Dominion. This must be counted less an evidence of illiberality than realism, however, for one cannot question the existence
of just such Negroes. It is the unwillingness to accept along with the
traditional Negro, the presence of a type capable of meeting and adapting
himself to the demanding forces of society, which is accounted a lack of
liberalism, in the treatment of the Negro by the Southern author.

As in every group, there are those member parts of the composite
number of novels represented in this analysis which stand out above others
for evidences of liberal treatment. As, in this study, the attitudes of
individual authors are unimportant save as they contribute to the composite
picture of thought tendencies, judgments upon them shall be withheld.

Suffice it to say, that many of the authors, in according a critical
treatment to the Southland and consequently extending a liberal treatment
to the Negro, undauntedly and fearlessly set aside prejudices and proclaimed
with Gerald Johnson a new and progressive conception of the South:

The horrible South was the South that was morally,
spiritually, and intellectually dead. The South that fatu-
ously regarded every form of art, literature included, as a
pretty toy, but in no sense one of the driving forces of
civilization -- that was the horrible South. The ghastly,
cadaverous South that for forty years after the Civil War
groped in the twilight region between civilization and
barbarism was a figure of horror . . . .

But a South full of bitter muscular men with swords --
that may be alarming, but it isn't horrible. A young man who
raves and curses with the voice of Stentor and the venom of
Jeremiah, may be described by any number of adjectives, but
no rational man will intimate that he is dead . . . . The
pretty literature of thirty years ago . . . reeked of tu-
beroses, funeral flowers. An undertaker's parlor, banked
with floral designs, smells sweeter than a compost-heap;
but death is in the midst of one, and the promise of a gold-
en harvest in the other.¹

¹Gerald W. Johnson, "The Horrible South," Virginia Quarterly
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BACKGROUND MATERIALS

Books


**Articles**


Unpublished Material


**AVAILABLE LOUISIANA NOVELS (1920-1940)**


