

**THE FORGOTTEN HARLEM RENAISSANCE'S PIONEER
JESSIE REDMON FAUSET**

by

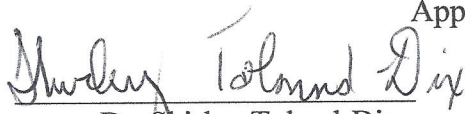
Sandra R. Shavers-Craig

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University at Montgomery
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts

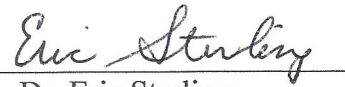
Montgomery, Alabama

22 April 2019


Approved by



Dr. Shirley Toland-Dix
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Dr. Eric Sterling
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Associate Provost

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Abstract

When searching for the pioneers of the Harlem Renaissance, names such as James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, and W.E.B Du Bois readily surface, but few have heard of Jessie Redmon Fauset. The purpose of this research is to gather information from a variety of sources in order to demonstrate the true value and importance of Harlem Renaissance contributor Jessie Redmon Fauset to the literary era in relation to her highly celebrated male counterparts. Many women played important parts in developing and cultivating the Harlem Renaissance. A few recognizable women contributors are Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Marita Bonner, Georgia Douglas, Dorothy West, and Jessie Redmond Fauset.

Jessie Fauset, one of the Harlem Renaissance's "midwives" was instrumental in helping to mold the young writers of the era. Her work has been buried under male writers, many of whom she mentored. Her name which should have been synonymous with her male counterpart was soon forgotten. Fauset is also credited for aiding in changing the direction of this literary period from folk to bourgeois as seen in the writing style in her novels *There is Confusion* and *Plum Bun*.

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I would like to thank my friend Karen E. Quinones Miller for introducing me to Jessie Redmon Fauset. Like many before, I had never heard of this great Harlem Renaissance pioneer. Thank you, Karen, for introducing me to this untapped jewel of a resource.

I would like to thank my husband, Joey, and daughter Shae', for being supportive, encouraging, and believing that I could do it. Thanks to my family and friends for being understanding during my absence from family functions and activities while dedicating the many hours that went into the completion of this thesis.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

When researching the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, names such as James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, and W.E.B Du Bois readily surface, but few have heard of one of the most prolific writers and pioneers of the era, Jessie Redmon Fauset. While conducting this research project, I would often ask people if they had heard of Jessie Fauset. The most common response was, “Who is he?” Once I shared with them who Jessie Fauset was as a writer, poet, essayist, and novelist, I was met with a newfound fascination for the writer from those who had never known of her contributions to the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance was birthed as a result of the mass exodus of blacks from the Southern cities to Northern cities. With the greater freedom they experienced, they were able to express their artistry and talent in theater, dance, art, literature, and music. The Harlem Renaissance spanned from 1918 to 1937, ending with the onset of the Great Depression and the Second World War

The purpose of this research is to gather information from a variety of sources to demonstrate the true value and importance of Harlem Renaissance contributor Jessie Fauset to the literary era, in comparison to her highly celebrated male counterparts. Many women played important parts in developing and cultivating the Harlem Renaissance. A few recognizable women contributors are Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Dorothy West, and Jessie Redmon Fauset. According to Jerkins, Jessie Fauset is perhaps the most forgotten Harlem Renaissance’s pioneers (Jerkins 2017). Langston Hughes describes Fauset as one of the “midwives” of the Harlem Renaissance. His parallel acknowledgment of Fauset placed her equally with two male pioneers of the era, Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke. Johnson was the Editor-in-Chief of the *Opportunity: A*

Journal of Negro life, a National Urban League Magazine, and the first African American Rhodes Scholar. Alain Locke is called “The Father of the Harlem Renaissance” (Hughes 218).

In an interview with Morgan Jerkins of *The New Yorker*, Claire Oberon Garcia, Colorado College English professor and author of 2013 essay “No one, I’m Sure is ever Homesick in Paris: Jessie Fauset’s French Imaginary”, concluded: “There is little to no scholarship on Fauset’s early short stories, travel writing, book reviews, translations, sketches, and reporting. A look at Fauset’s entire body of work reveals a writer who was more engaged with modern questions of race, class, and gender than she has been given credit for” (Jerkins). Garcia estimated that a total of fourteen poems by Fauset was published in *The Crisis*. When researching Fauset’s work, Sylvander noted that the total number of poems published by Fauset from 1912 to 1929 well exceeded three dozen (Sylvander 242-48). Fauset authored a large number of publications in *The Crisis* with over twenty-one articles, and over sixty reviews, which also included the column, “The Looking Glass,” a column which she began in 1918 for *The Crisis* magazine. This is not a complete list of Fauset’s work of publications. She also published translations, such as the poem entitled, “The Pool,” by Amedee Brun in the September 1921 volume of *The Crisis* (Fauset 205). Fauset is also credited for aiding in changing the direction of this literary period from folk to bourgeois with the writing style of her novels, *There is Confusion and Plum Bun* (Jerkins).

Although the Harlem Renaissance was noticeably male-dominated, it was not a “male phenomenon.” Women played a significant part in the literary era. Some of the most notable women writers were Jessie Fauset and Zora Neale Hurston, as well as Nella

Larsen, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Marita Bonner, and Georgia Douglas (Wall 9). Fauset is one of the most forgotten writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Very little research has been done in an effort to promote her scholarship as that of her male counterparts. Her lack of exposure had much to do with modern critics such as Robert Bone's negative reviews of her work. "The critics of Miss Fauset's novel generally dismiss her as a conventional middle-class novelist" (Feeney 375). Much of her work has been located under the work or in archives of those whom she mentored, worked alongside, or shared the Harlem Renaissance era. It is my hope to leave footprints in the sand for further research on the Harlem Renaissance's most prolific writer.

In chapter two, I provide a brief, detailed biography of Jessie Fauset. Fauset is one of the least researched Harlem Renaissance writers. During the research of this paper, I noted that very little background on her life before joining the *Crisis* was documented. Through the use of document resources such as the United States Census, newspaper articles, and archival papers of Arthur Fauset, along with the work of author Carolyn Sylvander, I was able to verify the limited details surrounding Fauset's life. Jessie Fauset's mother, Annie Fauset, died when Jessie was still young. Her father, Redmon Fauset, married Bella Huff, a widow, who had three children of her own. This chapter will trace the life of Jessie Fauset from her birth, her education, career, personal life, and her death in 1961. The chronicle of her life will establish her strength as an African American, a woman, and a new writer of uncharted territory in American literature.

Chapter three will take a look at the birth of the Harlem Renaissance and the contributions of Jessie Fauset in both *The Brownies' Book* and *The Crisis magazine*. The Great Migration, was the exodus of five million people from Southern cities to Northern

cities, was also called the Mecca. This great movement began before World War I. During this movement, the Harlem Renaissance began, as people brought their talent for music, art, literature, and acting to the streets of Harlem, New York. Jessie Fauset became one of the most important Harlem Renaissance pioneers with her talent as a literary artist in poetry, short stories, essays, and editorial guidance to younger writers. She became a great influence in the work of writers such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer. Although Fauset was not given the same credit for her contributions to the Harlem Renaissance as her male counterparts, she was a very accomplished novelist, essayist, poet, and editor. Fauset served as co-founder and editor of the children's magazine *The Brownies' Book* from January 1920 to December 1921 alongside the magazine's Editor-in-Chief, William Edward Burghardt "W.E.B" Du Bois. She also contributed several poems to *The Brownies' Book* magazine. *The Brownies Book* ran its course for only one year, printing its last subscription in December 1921. From 1920 to 1926, Fauset worked as the Literary Editor for *The Crisis* magazine, during which time she mentored new writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

In Chapter four, I will discuss two of Fauset's four novels, *There is Confusion* and *Plum Bun*, which were written and published while working at *The Crisis*. Fauset was a very accomplished novelist, who was successful in writing and publishing four novels in a span of nine years: *There is Confusion* (1924), *Plum Bun* (1929), *The Chinaberry Tree: A novel of American life* (1932), and *Comedy: American Style* (1933). She also contributed an essay, "The Gift of Laughter" to Alain's Locke's, anthology, *The New Negro*, in 1925. This was a feat that no other writer of her time, male or female, had achieved. Fauset is also credited for aiding in changing the direction of this literary

period from folk to bourgeois with the writing style of her novels, *There is Confusion and Plum Bun* (Jerkins).

From 1919 to 1926 Fauset served as Literary Editor and Managing Editor of *The Crisis* magazine with Du Bois. She was also active in the Pan-African Congress with DuBois, and actively participated in cultural topics and women rights issues. Fauset began contributing her writing to *The Crisis* as early as 1912, long before joining its founder W.E.B Du Bois, with her first short story “Emmy” and her poem “Rondeau.” She published dozens of poems, short stories, translations, and editorials during her career with the magazine.

Fauset’s contributions to the Harlem Renaissance include four published novels, and a short story contributed to Alain Locke’s Anthology, over a dozen short stories, several translation of short stories, poems, and essays, six travel essays, dozens of book reviews, poems, and essays and editorials, while serving as the co-founder of *The Brownies’ Book* and Literary Editor of *The Crisis* magazine. Fauset also worked closely with nurturing many new writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

Fauset, the most prolific novelist of the Harlem Renaissance era, was not celebrated as her male counterparts. In an Epilogue, I will share with the reader her thoughts that she saw as important for young readers. Her last possible manuscript was on the biographical sketches that she held dear as the days of working with *The Brownies’ Book*. Not only did she receive less attention over the years, but this talented and gifted Renaissance pioneer does not have an archive in her name. Her papers are not in a centralized location but scattered among male writers whom she had worked with over the years, such as, but not limited to, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Alain

Locke, James Weldon Johnson, and W.E.B Du Bois. It is important to share her notable work with those who have yet to know Jessie Redmond Fauset. She was not only a writer but also worked as an editor and mentor of new writers, molding and shaping many of the major authors associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes shared how important Fauset was in discovering him as a writer and poet and the impact she made as the Literary Editor for both *The Brownie's Book* and *The Crisis* magazine. Hughes praises Fauset for the opportunity she afforded him, "I wrote instead an article about Toluca, and another about the Virgin of Guadalupe, and a little play for children called, *The Gold Piece*. I sent them to the *Brownie's Book*...These pieces of mine were accepted, and encouraging letters came back from Jessie Fauset, who was managing editor there. So I sent her my poem written on a train, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." And in June 1921, it appeared in the *Crisis*, the first of my poems to be published outside of Central High School" (Hughes 72).

CHAPTER II: JESSIE FAUSET: BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Educator, activist, literary editor, poet, and essayist, Jessie Fauset was not only a writer of the era – she was a pioneer. This chapter will provide closer biographical information on Jessie Redmon Fauset and give a brief overview of the contributions that she made to the Harlem Renaissance.

Fauset was born on April 27, 1882, in Fredericksville (now Lakeside), of rural Camden County, New Jersey, to an African Methodist Episcopal minister, Redmon Fauset, and Annie (Anna) Seamon Fauset. Jessie Fauset was the seventh child born of this union. Annie Fauset died when Jessie Fauset was still a baby. Very little is known about Annie Seamon Fauset. Both parents were also listed on the 1880 U.S Census as “Mulatto.” The 1880 U.S Census gives accurate data on the family.¹ The children listed on the census are also categorized as “Mulatto” and are listed as John Henry, age eleven, Carrie, age nine, Redman, age seven, Mary (Helen), age five, Anna, age three, and Alice age one. Annie Fauset passed away when Jessie was still a very young child. Shortly after the death of Annie, Redmon Fauset left New Jersey and moved his children to Philadelphia. The youngest child at the time was the infant, Jessie Fauset. Not much is known about the children of Annie and Redmon Fauset. According to *African American Authors Bio-Bibliographical Critical Source Book*, “...Anna Seamon died young. So did five of Jessie's six siblings” (Nelson 155). To ensure the accuracy of the family’s history, it is important to provide these facts which correlates with findings made by Carolyn Sylvander, “Many errors about the facts of her life...persists in printed materials” (Sylvander 2). Sylvander lists the seven children as Ira Redmond, born in 1875, Caroline Susan Mabel, born in 1871, Anna Bella, born in 1878, Beatrice Birdie, born in 1879,

Francis R. Fauset, born in 1873, Mary Helen, born in 1885, and Jessie R. Fauset, born in 1882. All of the girls died before 1900 with the exception of Beatrice, Mary Helen, and Jessie Fauset.²

In 1882, shortly after the death of Annie Fauset, Redmon married Bella White Huff, a white Jewish widow who had three children of her own, one of whom was Jessie Fauset's step-brother and writer Earl Huff, along with his two older sisters, Emma Huff and May Huff (born Etta Mae Huff).³ After this union, the couple expanded their already large family, adding three more children, which comprised of Redmon Fauset Jr., Marion Fauset, and Arthur Huff Fauset, who also became a Harlem Renaissance writer. Bella Huff Fauset died in 1923, twenty years after the 1903 death of Redmon Fauset. She never remarried.⁴

Jessie Fauset's early education was in the Philadelphia school system. In 1881, Philadelphia ended the segregation of its schools. Fauset attended the Philadelphia High School for Girls where she was the only black student. On June 11, 1901, Fauset graduated with honors, receiving a Meritorious Diploma for Classical Courses from this academically competitive school. Her father offered a prayer during the graduation ceremony. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1901). Despite her accomplishment, when Fauset applied to the segregated Bryn Mawr College, her admission was denied. The school's President, M. Carey Thomas, worked as a leader for the National College Women's Equal Suffrage League, and Bryn Mawr under her leadership served as a hub for the suffrage movement, according to a special collection in the college library. Thomas worked closely with women's rights activists like Susan B. Anthony, but she was focused on expanding rights for white, privileged women. She refused the admission of black

students to Bryn Mawr as seen in the case of Jessie Fauset and was also against the hiring of Jewish faculty (Cohen 2017). Bryn Mawr College, which was founded in 1885 and led by Thomas from 1894 to 1922, would not accept their first known African American student until 1927 when Enid Cook attended.⁵ Although they did not accept Fauset for admission, they assisted with her acceptance to Cornell University. Fauset was awarded a full four-year scholarship to the university as announced by an article placed in the *Indiana Progress Newspaper*, entitled, “A Gifted Colored Girl.” Fauset competed against 120 students for one of the eighteen freshman scholarships offered. She came in the first place due to her talent in Latin and Greek. *The Woman’s Journal* writes, “She has a particular talent for languages” (*The Indiana Progress* 8).

Cornell University founders Ezra Cornell and Andrew Dickson White were open to racial diversity as early as 1865, at the university’s inception. White’s Inauguration address made this perfectly clear: “I believe myself justified in stating that the authorities of the University would hold under the organic law of the institution we have no right to reject any man on account of race” (Cornell, “Anyone”).⁶ However, in 1901, as a black female student at Cornell, Fauset was allowed to attend classes, but not allowed on-campus housing. From 1903 through part of 1904, Fauset lived at Sage College (Cornell, “Black women at Cornell”). In 1905, Fauset reported that she was the only African American girl in a college community of over 3,000 students. (Herbert 95). The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity founder, Henry Arthur Callis, states that in 1904 to 1905, the half dozen African American students that attended Cornell, did not return the following year due to the racially hostile environment. In 1906 the fraternity was founded to bring unity to those male students. Fauset mostly likely did not benefit from this formation due to her

gender. From 1904 to 1905, a liberal white family in Ithaca, New York provided her off-campus housing. In January 1903, Redmon Fauset died while Jessie was studying at Cornell University. This same year, she wrote W.E.B Du Bois, who became her mentor. The two men had similar leadership attributes, which presumably what attracted her to Du Bois. Jessie Fauset graduated from Cornell University in 1905 with a degree in Classical Languages: Latin, German, Greek, French, and English. Because of her high academic achievement, she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, becoming the first black woman to be inducted into the prestigious honor society.

After graduating from Cornell, Fauset found it hard to find a teaching job due to a combination of racial and gender discrimination. She was afforded a teaching position at Fisk University in Nashville in 1905, where she taught for a summer. Her experience with racism in the South gave her first-hand knowledge of the brutality of segregation, something she was not accustomed to while living in the northern cities of Philadelphia or Ithaca. The northern racism was both subtle and overt.

In the fall of 1905, Fauset moved to Washington, DC where she taught in a predominately black high school for 14 years before moving to Harlem in 1919. She was denied employment as a high school teacher in Philadelphia due to both racial and gender discrimination. In the 1922 article "Some Notes on Color," she shared her experience, "I have had to leave Philadelphia, because I was educated to do high school work and it was impossible for a colored woman to get that kind of work in that town. So I, too, have assisted in the Negro Exodus which the student of Sociology considers in class-room and seminary" (Notes on Color 77). Black women working in professional roles was frowned upon by traditionalists. Fauset accepted a teaching position at the Douglas High school of

Baltimore from 1905-1905 and later the Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. She taught high school in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. for fourteen years. She later attended the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned her Master's of Arts in French.⁷

Fauset began contributing her writings to *The Crisis*, as early as 1912, long before joining its founder W.E.B Du Bois as a staff member. *The Crisis* is the official magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It was founded in 1910 by Du Bois, who worked as the editor. The original title of the magazine was *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Race*. Fauset worked closely with Du Bois in other capacities besides as a magazine contributor, as noted by a letter dated August 5, 1914, in which she addressed Charles T. Hallinan, informing him of Du Bois' illness. In the letter, Fauset states, "Mr. Du Bois is ill just now and I am serving for him in the office" During the summer of 1914, Fauset took courses at Sorbonne University in Paris. Upon her return, she published "Tracing Shadows" in 1914 in the *Crisis*, which spoke of her experience in Paris. Sylvander credits Fauset as having "extensive power and influence in the day-to-day running of *The Crisis* from November 1918 to April of 1926." She excludes times where Fauset was traveling or studying abroad in 1921 and 1924-25 (Sylvander 59). In 1919, Fauset moved to New York, where she worked at *The Crisis* as the Literary Editor, and would maintain in the position until 1926. Fauset became a novelist while working in the position as the literary editor of the magazine.

Fauset became a novelist while working as the Literary Editor of *The Crisis*. She is best known for her novels, *There is Confusion* (1924), which she wrote while working at *The Crisis*, and *Plum Bun* (1928), written after she had left the magazine. Two other

novels written by Fauset were *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931), and *The American Comedy* (1933), which shone a light on class, gender, and race in the African-American culture. Fauset also served as co-founder and editor of *The Brownies' Book* from January 1919 to December 1920, alongside W.E.B Du Bois, who served as the magazine's Editor-in-chief.

On April 3, 1929, at the age of forty-seven, Fauset married Herbert Harris, an insurance broker. Fauset's sister Helen Lanning invited W.E.B Du Bois to attend the wedding reception of Jessie Fauset and Herbert Harris, which was held at the Utopian Neighborhood Club (Lanning 1929). The couple lived with Lanning in an apartment in Harlem until Lanning's death in 1936.⁸ During her marriage, Fauset continued to write, publishing two novels, *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931) and *The American Comedy* (1933) and an autobiography, "Wings for God's Chillun: The story of Burghardt DuBois."⁹ Although it was published anonymously, Sylvander identified Fauset as the author. (Sylvander 248). Fauset also continued to teach parttime, with a brief appointment as a professor at Hampton Institute in 1949.

In 1939, the couple relocated to New Jersey, where Herbert died in 1958. The couple had no children. After the death of her husband, Fauset returned to Philadelphia, the city which she hailed in Cullen's *Caroling Dusk* as "the dear delight of my life." Fauset spent the remaining three years of her life in the home of her stepbrother Earl Huff, suffering from arteriosclerosis. In 1961, Fauset died of hypertensive heart disease. Her surviving siblings were Arthur Huff Fauset, who died in 1983, and Marian Fauset, who died in 1993.

CHAPTER III: THE BIRTH OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE, *BROWNIE BOOKS*, AND *THE CRISIS MAGAZINE*

The Great Migration was the mass exodus of African Americans from Southern states to the Northern States in search of safer and better living environments, it was an effort to flee racial oppression and violence. The great migration was a result of Jim Crow laws, state and local laws enforcing segregation in the Southern United States. Jim Crow laws placed blacks at a disadvantage. Any infraction or accusation of an infraction of Jim Crow laws could mean the loss of freedom, finances, and even life. The Jim Crow Era, which began in the 1890s, was a time of systemic racism and segregation of the races. The separation of water fountains, restaurants, theaters, restrooms, stores, buses, trains, courtrooms, workplaces, and other public facilities were typically designated with “White Only” and “Colored” signs (Loc.gov). Those who were subjected to this type of segregation were American Indians, Mexicans, and Africans Americans. These types of laws existed until the 1960s.

The fear of black men as rapists was used to keep the races separated. Politicians used this tactic as a platform in their race for political office. The 1898 North Carolina election became violent as white politicians spread fear in hopes of gaining office. They spoke of blacks who raped white women in their sleep to rile up the anger of white citizens. For Daniel Shrank, a Democrat, the slogan was simply “Nigger.” He incited fear into whites that black men would rape them while they slept in their beds. Georgia’s feminist and white supremacist Rebecca Felton stated in a speech, “If it takes lynching to protect women's dearest possession from drunken, ravening beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week.” She condemned anyone who dared to question the South's racial policies. In 1902, Andrew Sledd, a professor at Emory College, wrote an article which

was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, supporting “separate but equal” practices, but condemning the lynching and brutal violence of blacks by white Southerners. Sledd’s article caused an uproar with those who upheld segregation. Rebecca Felton was instrumental in forcing his resignation from the school (Parker).

Over 350,000 black soldiers served in World War I in segregated units. The war, also known as “the Great War” lasted from July 28, 1914, to November 11, 1918. The soldiers fought in Europe for the rights of people that they themselves did not have. Upon returning home from war they expected their own freedom as they had fought for the freedom of others. This was not to be the case. One of the first victims of “Red Summer” of 1919 was a returning soldier. In the May 1919 issue of *The Crisis*, W.E.B Du Bois wrote “We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why” (Du Bois). Although Fauset was yet to become the Literary Editor of *The Crisis* during this time, she was an active participant in *The Crisis Magazine* and the NAACP as early as 1914.

The year that Fauset went to work for *The Crisis* as its Literary Editor was deemed the most deadly year for African Americans in United States history. The summer of 1919, was coined by NAACP’s field secretary James Weldon Johnson as “Red Summer.” At the height of the Great Migration as thousands of African Americans took flight from southern states in search of better job opportunities and living conditions, they were met with resistance from workers of those northern states. In fear that their jobs would be taken by the incoming black workers, many white workers demanded that these newcomers be turned away. When their voices were not heard, white men and women

took to the streets in an act of vigilantism and took the law into their own hands. These acts of violence were numerous throughout the United States. During this time, riots broke out across the U.S., leaving a long list of casualties. There were riots in twenty-five cities across the country, including Chicago, Omaha, Washington, D.C, and Longview Texas as a result of racial tension. In Washington, D.C from July 19-24, 1919, a riot erupted, in which white servicemen attacked blacks in response to the stories printed in the newspaper of black men attacking white women. Even without factual evidence of such claims, a sense of vigilante aroused the men. Fauset was an active participant in the NAACP through her work with *The Crisis* magazine in which she represented the organization in the Pan-African Congress in 1921.

The Harlem Renaissance, an era of new music, visual art, theatre, and literary works resulted from the African-Americans journey to find themselves and was birthed from a place of pain and desperation for freedom. The great migration was the movement of millions of African Americans from the south to northern cities. This newfound freedom from “Jim Crow” laws of the south created what Alain Locke coined “The New Negro” (Wall 1). The Jim Crow laws were built around segregation, racism, and maltreatment of African Americans, which included, but was not limited to lynching and unjust imprisonment. The migration to northern cities meant better living conditions, but it was not without racial violence. According to the Equal Justice Initiative, after World War I, an estimated 100,000 black veterans migrated north, where they still encountered segregation, racism, and inequality. The Equal Justice Initiative reports that the summer of 1919 was the most violent and deadly period for African Americans in United States history. Not until January 26, 1922, would the U.S House of Representatives pass the

Dyer Anti-lynching bill. It passed by a vote of 230 to 119 but faltered by filibuster in the Senate. This prompted Du Bois' January 1923 editorial in *The Crisis*. "Many persons, colored and white, are bewailing the 'loss' which Negroes have sustained in the defeat of the Dyer Bill. Rot. We are not the ones who need sympathy. They murder our bodies. We keep our souls. The organization most in need of sympathy, is that century-old attempt at government of, by and for the people, which today stands before the world convicted of failure" (Du Bois 106).

As an answer to the Jim Crow laws and maltreatment of blacks in the South, a mass exodus of blacks headed for the Northern cities. The Great Migration, the literal migration of southern blacks to the north, was symbolic of the Biblical exodus of Israel led by Moses from Egypt. The Biblical reference to the Promise Land was parallel to what most looked forward to in the north. This modern-day exodus embodied a mental shift, which carried the promise of better living conditions in a better land. In the south, most African Americans were trapped in a sharecropping economy, poor economic conditions, physical and psychological maltreatment, and disenfranchisement under the Jim Crow system. This migration introduced a new dynamic of the nation, both physically and mentally (Ritchie 49). The Harlem Renaissance was made possible by the migration of blacks from southern cities.

During the early stages of the Harlem Renaissance era, Alain Locke's main focus was on the youth and the promotion of their work. Fauset, Georgia Johnson, and Larsen were not young, nor were many of those "new negroes" that he targeted. Fauset was approaching age forty at the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance. The level of unequal treatment toward the women writers, as opposed to male writers, was well noted.⁹

In her new role as literary editor for *The Crisis*, Fauset took new writers such as Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes under her wings as she guided their writings. Fauset served as the literary editor of *The Crisis*, with duties that expanded to managing editor as she frequently found herself having to take charge of matters for the journal during Du Bois' absences.¹⁰

She maintained this position as Literary Editor for seven years until May 1926, when she took on the role as the "Contributing Editor" until February 1927. Shortly after her departure, the magazine began to lose readers, due to both financial issues and the quality of the magazine (Sylvander 113). Even with her multiple duties, she continued to contribute to *The Crisis* as noted by her various published essays and articles, book reviews, translations, poetry, and short stories (Wall 47). It was a rare occasion for Fauset not to contribute her work to the magazine. She published dozens of poems during her career as Literary Editor and long after resigning, such as: "Stars in Alabama," that she submitted in 1928, and "Courage! He Said," submitted in 1929, long after leaving her position at *The Crisis* as the literary editor in 1926 (Fauset 1928:14).

In his biography, Langston Hughes held Fauset in high esteem for being instrumental in his development as a writer: "Jessie Fauset at *The Crisis*, Charles Johnson at *Opportunity*, and Alain Locke in Washington were the three people who midwived the so-called New Negro literature into being" (Hughes 218). Although W.E.B Dubois was the founder of *The Crisis*, and Fauset was the editor, Hughes credited her mentorship to his success, adding, "they nursed us along until our books were born." Those new writers reference by Hughes as being mentored by Fauset were: Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, Arna Bontemps, Randolph Fisher, Wallace Thurman, Jean Toomer, and Nella

Larsen. Although the new writers held Fauset in high esteem, Du Bois, Johnson, and Locke never credited her for the significant role she played in directing and shaping these new and upcoming writers.¹¹

Black women of this era not only had to face racism but sadly, among their own race, they were slighted because of their gender. Of the struggles between racism and sexism, Fauset chose to fight the latter. Jerkins points out sexism as being heavily exhibited by male leaders of the Harlem Renaissance. One instance in which male chauvinism reared its ugly head was in Locke's 1925 anthology of fiction, poetry, and essays, *The New Negro* which only allocated eight of the thirty-six slots of contributors to women. In this book, Jessie Fauset published an essay entitled, "The Gift of Laughter."

The celebration of Jessie Fauset's publication of her novel, *There is confusion* was the debut of the Harlem Renaissance. Jerkins deems the 1924 Manhattan Civic Club dinner as the initiation of the Harlem Renaissance. The dinner was initially planned by Charles S. Johnson to be a small event of twenty people to celebrate Fauset's first novel. However, Alain Locke expanded the event to celebrate black writers in general instead of exclusively Jessie Fauset. (Jerkins). The guest list expanded from twenty to over one hundred guests. Those in attendance were a mixed group of publishers, magazine editors, artists, and writers. The rug was pulled from under Fauset by Locke and Johnson, as they overlooked her as the guest of honor, allowing many writers to speak before her. The event was no longer about the work and contributions of Jessie Fauset but a welcoming event for current and future male writers (Jones 19). Locke, who was the Master of Ceremony at the event to honor Jessie Fauset, directed the attention away from her to Langston Hughes, Walter White, James Weldon Johnson, and other male writers in

attendance. Fauset was only allowed to speak toward the end of the ceremony. Jerkins reported that in 1933 Fauset addressed the incident in a letter to Locke, in which she expressed her painful memories of that evening. She surmised his action was to “keep speech and comment away from the person for whom the occasion was meant” (Jerkins).

The effect of the Civic Club dinner signified a change in the dynamics of the era for women writers. The next three years led the way for male-only leaders to overshadow the female writers. Lewis describes some of the leaders as male chauvinists and misogynists. After the Civic Club dinner, Fauset left to study abroad in France. Fauset traveled to Europe and studied for six months at the Sorbonne in Paris. Upon her return in 1926, perhaps still feeling perturbed by the Civic Club incident, she resigned her position as literary editor at *The Crisis* (Lewis xxix). Soon after she returned to the United States, she began to teach at De Witt Clinton High School in New York until her retirement in 1944. During those years, she published three more novels. She returned to the classroom in the fall of 1949 – this time as a visiting professor at Hampton Institute, Virginia, but only for a semester

Jessie Fauset, known for her ability to mentor the finest writers, was without a blemish on her reputation, yet she was unable to find work as a writer after leaving *The Crisis*. When she left the magazine in 1926, racism and sexism were still the discriminating factors that kept her out of universities and publishing houses.¹² In his book, *When Harlem was in Vogue*, David Levering Lewis acknowledges that Jessie Fauset was treated unfairly because she was a woman. He also praised her talent and potential “There is no telling what she would have done had she been a man, given her first-rate mind and formidable efficiency at any task” (Lewis 121).

FAUSET'S WORK IN *THE BROWNIES BOOK* AND *THE CRISIS*

Before *The Brownies' Books'* creation, there were very few characters of color depicted in books, none of which shed a positive light on children of color. *The Brownies' Books* paved the way for new voices and new identities to represent African-American children in an uplifting and positive light. The magazine allowed readers to participate in writing contests, trying their hand at writing poems or short stories, and even corresponding with the editors. These entries were often published in the monthly issues. The magazine also praised the accomplishments of high school and college graduates, as noted by the July 1921 issue, which highlighted "Graduates of 1921" (*The Brownies Book* 194-200).

In January 1920, Du Bois and Atlanta University Professor Augustus Grandville Dill started *The Brownies' Book*, which was a collection of stories and works by African-American writers created for black children, whom Du Bois affectionately called, "the children of the sun." Du Bois served as the editor and Dill as the Business Manager. Du Bois's purpose for this magazine was to show a positive portrayal of African Americans in literature. It taught self-love and achievements, and gave the young reader a sense of identity and self-pride (Wilkins 26).

One of those children who was inspired by this new magazine which encouraged young people to share their literary work was a high school student by the name of James Langston Hughes. Hughes first articles and play was accepted for publication in *The Brownies' Book* in 1921 (Hughes 72).

Fauset replaced Du Bois as editor of *The Brownies' Book* in the July 1920 edition. Prior to this date she was not listed as staff for the magazine. Fauset published a poem

entitled, “dedication,” which was printed in *The Brownies’ Book’s* February 1920 edition. The poem gave insight into the purpose of the magazine:

To children who with eager look
Scanned vainly library shelf and nook
For history or song or story
That told of colored people’s glory

We dedicate *The Brownies’ Book* (Du Bois 56). In the May 1920 subscription, Fauset published six poems under the heading, “Spring Songs.” Although her name was printed correctly on the page that printed the work, her name was misprinted on the “Content” page as “Jessie Pelmet,” which could have led to oversight of her work. In the January 1921 edition, Fauset was listed as the Managing Editor of *The Brownies’ Book*. Not only was Fauset an editor of the magazine, but she was also a contributor with over a dozen poems published in the magazine.

The Brownies’ Book printed its last edition in December 1921. After publishing for one year, which consisted of twenty-four issues, because of funding issues and a lack of needed subscribers. Fauset signed off, “Goodbye dear Brownies! How I shall miss your letters” (Fauset 348). Fauset was excluded from the article which announced the discontinuation of the magazine, which addressed the regret of Du Bois and Dill (Du Bois 354).

A look at Fauset’s entire body of work reveals a writer who was more engaged with modern questions of race, class, and gender than she has been given credit for” (Jerkins). During her career at the *Crisis*, She wrote six travel essays, describing her experience in Europe and North Africa, which she published in *The Crisis*. Her first

travel essay, “Tracing Shadows” was published in September 1915. In 1925, she published four more travel essays, “Yarrow Revisited” (January), “This way to the Flea Market” (February), “The Enigma of the Sorbonne, (March)” and “Dark Algiers the White (April).” In January 1926 she published her last travel essay, “The Eucalyptus Tree: A Reverie of Rome, the Catacombs, Christianity and the Moving Beauty of Italy.” While working at *The Crisis*, Fauset wrote several reviews in the column “As to Books.”

The total number of poems published by Fauset in *The Crisis* from 1912 to 1929 well exceeded over twenty. Periodicals published in *The Crisis* by Fauset were over twenty-one, and over thirty-five reviews, which also included “The Looking Glass,” which she began in 1918 for *The Crisis*. This is not a complete list of Fauset’s work of publications in *The Crisis*. She also published translations, such as the poem entitled, “The Pool,” by Amedee Brun in the September 1921 volume of *The Crisis*. (Fauset 205).

Fauset also published several short stories written between 1912 and 1923, which were published and appeared in *The Crisis and The Brownies’ Books*. Fauset’s earlier work prior to working with *The Crisis* was her short stories such as “My House and a Glimpse of My Life Therein,” (1914) ““There was One Time’ A Story of Spring” (1917), and “Mary Elizabeth (1919). Her work before publishing her first novel included, “The Sleeper Wakes, (1920)” and “Double Trouble (1923).” She published nonfiction work to *The Crisis* in 1920 and along with two essays on her Pan African Experiences. “New Literature the Negro” (1920). “Impressions of the Second Pan-African Congress (1921), and “What Europe Thought of the Pan African Congress” (1921).

After leaving *The Crisis* in 1926, Fauset continued to write, but it is unknown just how much of her work was misplaced and undocumented under other writers’ body of

work. Some of her work can also be found under the names of Jessie F. Harris, Jessie H. Harris, and Jessie Harris, as noted by work published in *The Crisis* and archives of Du Bois and other male writers. Fauset does not have an archive in which we can search for her work by title, but her work has been found under the names of Langston Hughes, W.E.B Du Bois, Charles Johnson, and other male authors with whom she has collaborated. It was reported that she was writing a manuscript prior to her death, but it was discarded after a distant family member inherited Fauset's home after her death. Kauffman suggested that Fauset planned to write a "Plutarch's Lives of the Negro race," but had never gotten around to doing it. It is a possibility that this could have been the manuscript she was writing (Kauffman 33). Fauset sent an outline of a manuscript to her step-brother Arthur Fauset, entitled, "Junior Reading Book on Negro-White Relationship," which may very well have been the discarded manuscript. Arthur Huff Fauset reported that upon his step-sister's death, her landlady held her belongings and proved to be quite stubborn when Fauset's surviving brother Arthur Huff Fauset, attempted to retrieve her belongings. As indicated in his papers, Fauset's manuscript was discarded after her death.

In the *Literary Ladies Guide*, Emma Ward introduces six of Jessie Fauset's poems: "Dead Flies," "Enigma," "La Vie C'est la Vie," "Oblivion," "Noblesse Oblige," and "Word! Word!" (Ward). There are dozens of poems written by Fauset, some perhaps undiscovered, as there were many unpublished and unsigned poems in Du Bois' archive, which possibly have been those of Jessie Fauset. Her body of work has been scattered throughout the literary era in the United States and abroad.

Sylvander shares Arthur Davis' appraisal of Fauset's work in *The Brownies' Book* and *Crisis*. "the most cursory of glances at the pages of *The Brownies' Book* and *The Crisis* will show that Jessie Fauset was a prolific and versatile contributor to both periodicals during the twenties" (Sylvander 104). Fauset played a pivotal role as the Literary Editor of both *The Brownies' Book* and *The Crisis* magazine. She was instrumental in discovering and mentoring new talent as well as being a major contributor to the magazine for well over twenty years.

CHAPTER IV: NOVELS: *THERE IS CONFUSION, PLUM BUN*

In 1912, Fauset penned a short story entitled, “Emmy,” which was first published in *The Crisis* in two installments: the December 1912 and January 1913 issues. The story told of the life of Emmy, a young black girl who was forced to face racial integrity issues at an early age, when her school teacher introduced the five races: “white or Caucasian, yellow or Mongolian, Red or Indian, brown or Malay, and the black or Negro.” Emmy, who had never known any difference between herself and her schoolmates, soon learned that racism and colorism were the driving force in the lives of those around her. Emmy’s friend Archie, a thirteen-year-old mulatto, is having a different kind of issue with the race problem. He faces discrimination only when his black heritage is known. As the two grow into young adulthood, Archie leaves home, finds work as a gifted engineer, and is mistaken as a foreigner rather than a Negro. He is faced with an opportunity to become financially wealthy, but he can’t live in a white neighborhood with obvious Negro, Emmy. He decides to use his racially ambiguous characteristics as a means to an advantage before marrying Emmy. Fauset seemingly inserts her personal history when Emmy, expresses her displeasure in Archie’s passing, “I don’t like the idea of considering the end justified by the means” (Fauset 84).

In the April 1924 issue of *The Crisis*, Fauset penned a review in response to T.S. Stribling’s 1922 novel, *Birthright*: “If Mr. Stribling went too far depicting shiftless, atavistic Peter Siner, care must be taken too to avoid the portrayal of a character too emasculate and ‘too good for human nature’s daily food.’ ... the portrayal of black people calls increasingly for black writers” (Fauset 176). Fauset took on the responsibility of showing African Americans in a different light as in the publication of

her first novel, *There is Confusion*. Edward Byron Reuter's 1918 book, *The Mulatto in the United States*, riled Fauset's feathers as she herself was of mixed heritage. In a letter to Journalist Paul Kellogg, Fauset expressed her displeasure with Reuter's depictions of people biracial race and African Americans (Fauset 1919). Fauset is quoted in an interview as saying, "Here is an audience waiting for the truth about us. Let we who are better qualified to present that truth than any white writer tries to do so" (Starkey 219). The historical portrayal of African Americans by white writers was overwhelmingly negative, often describing them as dirty, shiftless, unambitious, and unequipped.

Perhaps these two novels were the catalyst for Fauset's *There is Confusion*, but they were not the only catalyst. In a letter written to Du Bois in 1914, Fauset refers to her novel *There is Confusion*, which had yet to be written. "I really think myself 'There is Confusion' is a decent rite and if I can just put in the book...Oh then folks will begin to know something about us and our problems." In this same letter Fauset shares her desire to write a book of essays after completing her first novel and her aspiration to become an essayist (Fauset 1914). Fauset's novels *There is Confusion* and *Plum Bun* shared a common theme which focused on race, color, class, and gender.

In *There is Confusion*, Fauset explores the life and struggles of Joanna Marshall, a black girl who passes for white in an effort to obtain her dream of becoming a singer. Fauset explores the value of love in the lives of African Americans, which was not a popular topic in literature at that time. In the case of the young black couple, Joanna Marshall and Peter Bye, Fauset explores Joanna's love for Peter, which was centered on his ambitions and steadfast goals and promises of "when I grow up, I'm going to be...." Not only did Fauset focus on the daily lives of African American of the era, but those

who paved the way by discretely introducing those “great” black men and women as suggested by the young Joanna. In her novel, perhaps we see the young and inexperienced Fauset in the heroine, who views marriage as a means for security as seen in the case of Joanna’s acceptance of Peter Bye’s wedding proposal. The novel ends with a “happily ever after” feel, “Nothing in the world is so hard to face this problem of being colored in America” (283). Marriage for Joanna is security and a solution to her troubled life, “Nothing in the world is worth as much as love. For people like us, people who can and must suffer love in our refuge and strength (284).

Later critics, such as Robert Bone, gave little pause to Fauset’s first novel. Although the novel was a ground-breaking work toward freedom for African American writers, it was met with negative criticism from Bone in 1958, who referred to her work outdated, describing it as “old guard” and “rear guard.” The negative review from this modern critic aided in keeping Fauset’s work out of the limelight. The lack of appreciation for her work and acknowledgment during the era did not seem to be part of the critic’s equation in the appreciation of her work. Perhaps when reading her work, the critics did not take into account that Fauset was a black woman writing on lightly chartered territory. In an essay written in 1962, entitled, “The Myth of a Negro Literature,” Leroi Jones claims “writers identified with the black middle class had impeded the emergence of an American Negro literature. Wanting to be white, they had tried to express themselves as Anglo-Saxons and had failed to be either black or white” (Jones 1962). Fauset work has been criticized as lacking black vernacular, however, she herself wrote and she spoke. Fauset was raised in a mixed-race, middle-class family, a white neighborhood, and attended an all-white school. Jones criticized Fauset for not

being “black enough.” Fauset shares her dilemma for such criticism, “I am a colored woman, neither white, nor black, neither pretty nor ugly, neither specifically graced nor at all deformed. I am fairly educated, of fair manners and deportment. In brief, the average American done over in brown” (76). She also shares an incident while riding a crowded subway, when a white man readily stood for a woman, but sats back down when he saw that she was the one that was in need of a seat. His chivalry evaporated as her race took precedence.¹³

Jones heavily criticized Fauset’s style of writing; however the author wrote as she spoke and lived. In “Some Notes on Color,” she describes her personal experiences with racism, which is reflected in her novels,

An acquaintance – a white woman – phones me that she she can accept a long-standing invitation of mine for luncheon. We meet and I suggest my old standby. “Let’s go somewhere else,” she urges. “I don’t like this place.” Ruefully but frankly I stammer, “Well you see – I’m not quite sure – that is –” “Oh, yes,” she rejoins in quick pity. “I forgot that. I’m so sorry” (Fauset 1922)

Fauset created a similar incident in *Plum Bun*, in which the black student, Miss Powell, is invited to lunch by Angela, only to be reminded that the noticeably black woman would most likely not be served. Such incidents of racial discrimination were repeated throughout the novel. This was the case with the black family that was forced out of the restaurant at the insistence of Angela’s date, Roger, who assumed that the sight of blacks eating near her would spoil her dinner (134). Fauset also frequently uses incidents of discrimination as being turned away from movie theaters and restaurants. The author

recalls in her essay “Some Notes on Color,” that these incidents were from her personal experiences with racism (76).

Joanna looks up to great women of color, such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth as those whom she wants to emulate. This was a key point for Fauset, as she deliberately made it an effort to introduce significant black figures in her fictional work, as she had in her work as editor of *The Brownies Book*. Fauset’s use of Byrn Mawr as a neighborhood, once owned by the white Byes, does not go unnoticed as her relation to Byrn Mawr College, which did not permit her acceptance because she was black (Fauset 24). In *There is Confusion*, love prevails as the couple Joanna and Peter come to a compromise on her dream of becoming a famous singer and her love for Peter Bye. The significance of the success of the relationship is noted as it contradicts the common notion of love within the black community. The positive depiction of middle-class African American families and their search for careers, love, and personal goals seldom written in novels before Jessie Fauset’s *There is Confusion*. This novel shed a spotlight on the culture of middle-class African Americans.

Fauset visits the issues of color and class in her novel, *There is Confusion*, where Joanna Marshall warns Maggie Ellersley to stay away from her brother, which was solely based on the social status of the black couple, “only people of like position should marry each other...your lowly aims would only be a hindrance to him” (86). In the novels, *There is Confusion* and *Plum Bun*, Fauset challenges the irrational idea of race classification and highlights the idea of ambiguous race individuals who passed for white (McDowell xxiii). The impression that race does not matter until the individual’s racial identity is known is a repeated theme in Fauset’s short stories and novels. In the short

story “Emmy” young Archie, was praised for his talent as an engineer. Only after the knowledge of his black heritage was he discredited and regarded as being incapable of performing the same job as before. When it came to the matters of love, only after the character’s race was identified was there a notable issue with that same love and trust or lack thereof. In these noted incidences, Fauset proved that the black characters did not change nor their ability to love or perform at a higher level in school or in the workplace, but others’ perception of the characters changed when the character’s true racial identity was revealed.

Fauset’s choice of writing in the style of bourgeois rather than the folk literature impacted the views on African-American literature and culture. The black working class was limited to domestic and service jobs, such as waiters, cooks, laborers, barbers, farmers, laundress, hairdressers, and seamstress. The characters that Fauset portrayed in the literary work were educated professionals, which was not prevalent in African-American literature. When Alain Locke reviewed *There is Confusion*, he described it as what “the negro intelligensia has been clamoring for” (*Crisis* Feb. 1924 161). Gwendolyn B. Bennett dedicated her poem “To Usward,” to Jessie Fauset. “Dedicated to all Negro youth known and unknown who have a song to sing, a story to tell or a vision for the sons of earth. Especially dedicated to Jessie Fauset upon the event of her novel, “There is Confusion” (Bennett 19).

Fauset’s second novel, *Plum Bun: A novel without a moral*, was published in 1928. In the novel, Fauset took a look at passing in America and its effect on the family as depicted in the relationship of the characters Angela Murray and her younger sister Virginia. A recurrent theme in Fauset’s novels, as noted in *Plum Bun*, “It isn’t colour that

makes the difference, it's letting it be known" (Fauset 78). Fauset shows the irony of how her character Angela Murray is often met with open arms and acceptance when it is thought that she is white; however, when her true racial identity is discovered she is scowled and ostracized as if she had suddenly changed. When writing this novel, the manuscript was rejected by Liveright, but eventually accepted and published by Frederick E. Stokes with the new title, *Plum Bun* in 1929. Fauset believed her novel was rejected and met with resistance by publishers because of her style of writing and the type of people she wrote about – middle class, educated, and those who were not “pressed too hard by the furies of prejudice, ignorance, and economic injustices (Fauset foreword, *Chinaberry Tree* ix).

Plum Bun is divided into five sections: Home, Market, Plum Bun, Home Again, and Market is Done. Fauset used the second stanza of the 1805 nursery rhyme, “To market, to market to buy a plum bun. Home again, home again, market is done.” The readers are taken along on the journey of Angela Murray from a young teen to a young adult in her pursuit of finding her place in society. In *Plum Bun*, along with race, Fauset also addresses class, gender, and color. Color and the practice of colorism play a major part throughout the novel. Julius, a black man, is married to Mattie a racially ambiguous woman, who is often mistaken for a white woman. Like her mother, Angela could easily pass for white, and often does; however, the youngest daughter Virginia with a noticeably darker hue is not included in the game of passing shared between Mattie and Angela. Angela is described as closely resembling her mother’s “creamy complexion and her soft cloudy, chestnut hair,” she experiences less racism than her younger sister, who had a darker hue of “rosy bronzeness.” Angela relates her light complexion to joy and freedom,

“It was from her mother that Angela learned the possibilities for joy and freedom which seemed to her inherent in mere whiteness” (14). ‘Passing’ while shopping was a pastime for the two Murray ladies as they indulge on the finer things in life, which the two darker Murrays cannot partake. Mattie interprets these incidents of passing as balking against society’s “silly old rules, rules that are unnatural and unjust” (32). Perhaps Angela misinterprets her mother sentiments, as she comes to believe, “Stolen waters are the sweetest” (123). Alain Locke praised *Plum Bun* for avoiding “the swift muddy waters of the negro underworld and the hectic rapids and cataracts of Harlem” (*Crisis* Feb 1924 161).

In her second novel, *Plum Bun*, Fauset explores the effects of passing between races. In her pursuit of becoming Angele Mory, who longs for the race she has left behind when she abandons her former life. In the course of dating Roger, Angela is placed in a dilemma of being exposed when she is scheduled to meet her sister at the train station. Before Jinny could exit the train, Roger unexpectedly appears. Angela panics at the thought of Roger seeing her with Jinny. When the young girl approaches Angela in their childhood fashion, “I beg your pardon, but isn’t this Mrs. Henrietta Jones?” Angela responds as scripted, “Really you have the advantage of me. No, I’m not Mrs. Jones” (158). Roger steps forward and rudely dismisses the young girl, before hurrying Angela away. Jinny is left her standing alone at the train station. Angela chose her position as ‘passing’ over the relationship with her sister. Her rejection of her sister comes full circle when Jinny decides to play along with her game and shuns Angela. While at a speaking event, Virginia sees her sister across the crowded room but avoids Angela. Angela feeling shunned by her sister, retorts, “You might just as well speak... plenty of white and

colored people are getting to know each other and they always acknowledge the acquaintanceship. Why shouldn't we? No harm could come of it." Jinny opined "no good could come of it either" (210). Angela's desire to the best of both world is laced with hypocrisy as she forgets how she abandoned her sister at the train station. Like many who have 'passed' throughout history, the nostalgia of the relationship with family and friends that she abandoned overcomes her. "Her roots! How marvelous to go back to parents, relatives, friends with whom one had never lost touch! The peace, the security, the companionableness of it! This was a relationship which she had forfeited with everyone, even with Jinny" (241).

In Allyson Hobbs' 2014 book, *A Chosen Exile*, the author illustrates the consequence of passing. "Passing works as a prism: it reflects different aspects of what we commonly think of as a racial identity and reveals what is left once the veil of an ascribed status is stripped away" (14). Hobbs also described passing as a loss. The person loses the connection to the life and family that they left behind (Hobbs 14). As Angela Murray goes back home, she realizes that it is better to live in peace as a black woman than to forever look over her shoulders as a white woman. In Gail Lukasik's book, *White Like Her*, she describes her mother's secret turmoil of fearing that someone will find out that she is of African descent. She begged Lukasik to hold her secret until her death, "You can't tell anyone...until after I die" (Lukasik 22). The shame of being a black woman or the thought of how she would be ostracized by her husband or friends motivates Gail Lukasik's mother to take her secret to her grave. Her husband passes away before he learns her secret.

Fauset introduces the reader to the topic of “passing” and its effect on the family dynamic. Her work has aided in opening the door for modern writers to breach the subject of “passing in America.” Fauset’s novels and short stories gave a voice to her personal life experiences as well as the voice of other African Americans. In *There is Confusion* and *Plum Bun*, Fauset raises the question of the rationale of racism based on racial integrity. The characters in her novels were highly motivated, gifted, and well-educated young people, whose only “disability” was their race. Joseph Feeney summarize Fauset’s purpose for writing, “there is also a strong, underlying social purpose: to portray the educational black middle class and thereby uncover racial prejudice” (Feeney 375). Fauset challenges her reader to recognize that color does not limit an individual’s ability. Who better to write on the complexity of racism, sexism, classism, and colorism, in America than a black woman who experienced it firsthand?

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The contributions of Jessie Fauset to the Harlem Renaissance are ground-breaking and momentous and should be recognized for the impact that she brought to the literary era. Fauset can be given credit for introducing a different style of writing to the Harlem Renaissance era. She should also be given praise for accomplishing something no other male or female had achieved by writing and publishing four novels over a span of ten years, *Plum Bun* (1928), *There is Confusion* (1924), *Chinaberry Tree* (1931), and *Comedy, American Style* (1933). This accomplishment, like most of her other achievements as a woman in the era, was overlooked and met without recognition.

Male writers of the Harlem Renaissance were given more attention than Fauset despite her significant contributions. David Levering Lewis, a historian, described Fauset's contributions to the Harlem Renaissance as being inferior to those of her male counterparts. Due to the male dominance of the literary era, Fauset and her contributions were given less attention. Langston Hughes, one of the most celebrated writers of the Harlem Renaissance, studied under Fauset's tutelage, named her one of the midwives of the era, and placing her parallel to two of the Era's founders and noteworthy pioneers. Her contributions to the Harlem Renaissance exceeded others' expectations of her as an African American and as a woman. The impact that she had on the literary scene is unmistakable as that of a great mentor, writer, and editor. During her career with the *Crisis*, the magazine flourished, new writers were born, and countless poems, essays, articles, and short stories were published monthly. Each issue was packed with some form of essays, articles, book reviews or literary work; however, after her departure in 1926, the magazine publication became subpar. The quality and quantity of literary work

from writers diminished considerably. After her death, her last unpublished manuscript was discarded by a family member or landlord. Unlike the male writers of the Harlem Renaissance, Fauset's work was not placed in a designated archive, but randomly placed in the archives of other male writers, such as W.E.B Du Bois, Charles Johnson, and Langston Hughes. Based on her contributions to the Harlem Renaissance, Fauset's name should be synonymous with the names of W.E.B Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, and Charles S. Johnson. There is much research needed to unearth the lost and forgotten literary works of Jessie Redmon Fauset.

EPILOGUE

Jessie Fauset is credited for writing four novels and rumored to have been writing a fifth novel at the time of her death in 1961. Over the years, researchers have searched for her final manuscript without success. During the research of this paper, I was able to locate what is possibly the outline of the fifth and final novel that Jessie Fauset was writing at the time of her death. Perhaps as a keepsake or a request for his opinion on her work, Jessie Fauset sent her brother, Arthur Fauset, a letter which contained an outline of her working manuscript. The outline is entitled *Junior Reading Book on Negro-White Relationships* and was signed as Jessie Fauset Harris. In the “Foreword” she listed her purpose for writing this book as to show African Americans’ pioneers in books for the classroom. “If they read their stories and see their pictures in books...the habit of thought with regard to colored American could be deflected, even though gradually, to a more understanding and appreciative angle” (Harris 1).

In this outline of the manuscript, Fauset gave background information and eight chapters of overview for the manuscript. The background section, entitled, “The Hills and the Hillocks,” listed the characters as the Hill family: “Daniel Hill, his wife Virginia, and their four children whom the Hills, with love and laughter, call “The Hillocks.” This section of the outline describes the four children and the family’s dynamics. The family is comprised of the two biological children of Daniel and Virginia and the children of Daniel’s brother, who the Hills are raising after the couple’s untimely death. Although it is not known when Fauset wrote this outline for her book, she has hinted that the character, Mrs. Hill is a teacher at a mixed school in Newark, NJ. The school system was segregated until 1954. Fauset passed away in 1961. In the outline, Fauset writes, “This

father and mother feel that the Race Question will certainly loom heavily in their children's lives before they are much older and that they must be prepared to meet it" (Harris 3).

In Chapter one, Fauset introduces the hymn, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*, which has a special meaning for Mr. and Mrs. Hill. Chapters two through five gives a short synopsis of the children's experiencing with racism in school. Fauset uses chapters two through four to introduce positive images of African Americans in history. The children educate their classmates on the contributions of African Americans, such as inventors (Benjamin Banneker, G.W. Carter), Revolutionists (Crispus Attucks), Abolitionists (Harriet Tubman, Paul Cuffe, Vesey, Mathew Denson, Martin Delany), beautiful African Americans, such as Lena Horne, and famous African-American doctors and surgeons. In chapter five, the youngest Hill encounters racial discrimination when her best friend at school, Ella Moody, a white girl misses school after a brief illness. Young Margery goes to Ella's home to take her schoolwork, only to be faced with being called a "Nigger" and told to never come back to her home or have any interaction with her friend, Ella. The next chapter is a reflection of an incident that occurred three years earlier when the family takes a trip to the world's fair. When the family attempt to dine in the restaurant, they are refused service. As they leave, the cashier is overheard saying, "That's the way we treat them. The idea of their coming in where they're not wanted!" The effect of the exchange leaves the family in a somber mood and with an experience that is not forgotten. In chapter seven, the family is met with racism in the South as they travel to Virginia. Never experiencing "Jim Crow" laws, they are met with the shock of seeing three U.S Army soldiers arrested for not sitting in the "colored" section of the bus.

This first-hand account of racism leaves the family feeling sunken. In the final chapter, Fauset deals with forgiveness and acceptance of gratitude. Months after the incident with Margery and Ella's mother, while the class is on a picnic, Margery places herself in grave danger in an effort to save Ella. Ella's family is ashamed and tries to make amends for the previous maltreatment of the young girl. Margery refuses any type of award, as she still feels bitter and resentful toward Ella's family. Mr. Hill and Mr. Moody construct a plan that will work for everyone regarding this matter. Mr. Hill tells the story of having to flee from the South and being saved by a white man, to whom he is very grateful. He believes that she too will endure the memory of her bitterness. The outline ends with the repeated hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way. His wonders to perform..." (Harris 13).

Like the outline of her manuscript, which was buried in an archive belonging to her step-brother, Arthur Huff Fauset, perhaps other work of this writer is cataloged in archives of male writers who worked with her. Fauset has worked as a translator of Latin, Greek, French, German, and English while traveling and studying abroad. Her transcultural interaction gives credence to that idea her work may be stored in archives in different countries and in different languages. For this reason, it is most important that Jessie Fauset is given more scholarly attention in research both in the United States and abroad. As a writer of such extensive work, Fauset deserves her own archive. The talented Jessie Redmon Fauset's name should resonate as her contributions to the Harlem Renaissance as loud as the names of her male counterparts.

NOTES

- ¹ To give a more in-depth view of the dynamics of the Fauset family, it is best to look at the U.S Census in order to paint a clearer picture. The 1880 U.S Census gives an early snapshot of the Fauset family prior to Jessie Fauset's birth. The spelling variation of the family's name on this document is listed as "Fossett." Redman Fauset is listed as born 1840, which is contradicted in another census. He is listed as age forty, married, race identified as Mulatto, his occupation is that of a minister. Annie E. Fossett is listed as a thirty-six-year-old Mulatto, which contradicts sources that report that she died at a very young age. In 1882, at the age of thirty-eight, Annie gave birth to her seventh child, Jessie Fauset.
- ² Beatrice died in 1900 at the age of twenty-one. One of the daughters of Annie and Redmon Fauset, Mary Helen (Helen Fauset Lanning) became a well-known participant of the Harlem Renaissance alongside her younger sister, Jessie Fauset. Fauset dedicated her 1933 novel, *Comedy: American Style* to three of her sisters who had died before this time" "To my sisters, Caroline, Anna, and Beatrice Fauset...loved long since and lost awhile" (Fauset).
- ³ The Huff-Fauset lineage can be traced to a niece and daughter of Mae (May) Huff, Conchita Fauset, who passed away during the writing of this thesis.
- ⁴ According to the 1910 U.S Census, Redmon Fauset, Jr. was six years old, Arthur Huff Fauset was four years old, and Marion Fauset, the youngest, was only two years old at the time of their father's death. Bella Fauset would live twenty years after her husband's death. However, she never remarried.

- ⁵ As revealed by Allyson Hobbs, there will never be an accurate account of the first African American in any situation, since “passing” dates as far back as slavery. The first “known” student of color to graduate from Cornell University was Francisco de Paula Rodríguez y Valdés, a male student from Cuba, who graduated from the university in 1878.
- ⁶ The university’s founders’ openness to diversity was also evident by a letter sent to Ezra Cornell by John Corbin, in 1868, requesting admission of a “colored” male student. Cornell’s reply was simply “send him.”
- ⁷ Although some have referred to Jessie Fauset as Dr. Fauset, as noted in *The Crisis* Magazine July/August 2000 Issue, Fauset’s highest level of education was a Master’s degree. (*Crisis* 2000). Perhaps some have confused her with her brother, fellow Harlem Renaissance writer and anthropologist Dr. Arthur Huff Fauset. (Cullen “Fauset”). In Countee Cullen’s 1927 Anthology, *Caroling Dusk*, Fauset lists her place of birth as Philadelphia. She also lists her education as a Bachelor of Arts from Cornell and a Master’s Degree from the University of Pennsylvania, adding, “so much for education.” She also acknowledges Phi Beta Kappa, stating “...and came back with a Phi Beta Kappa key, which can be seen hanging from a necklace in a photo of her taken at Cornell University” (64-65).
- ⁸ Attendance at Lanning’s funeral included her siblings Jessie and Arthur Fauset. Harlem Renaissance’s writer Alain Locke served as the pianist at the funeral service. In 1939 in honor of her sister, Fauset endowed a “Helen Lanning Corner” in the New York public school where Lanning had worked as an Elementary school teacher in New York. (Hauffman 33). Fauset writes in a letter to fellow

writer Harold Jackman, giving specific details of the books to be offered, “It is to contain books only about colored people, especially colored children.” (Sylvander 81).

- ⁹ Although the men did not feel the need to appear younger, the women felt compelled to change their age in order to appear younger, perhaps for a better chance of an opportunity. Larsen, who was approaching thirty, went as far as to appear ten years younger than her actual age (Wall 12).
- ¹⁰ An example of Du Bois’ absence from the magazine can be seen in the 1924 subscription of *The Crisis*, in which he wrote under “The Looking Glass” his journey from October 1923 to March 1924. He gave an account of his travel, signifying time away from the magazine at which time Fauset took the position of Managing Editor. (Du Bois, *The Crisis*, vol. 28(1):31).
- ¹¹ Like Jessie Fauset, Alain Locke was from Philadelphia. He was a studious scholar, who received his undergraduate degrees from Harvard University in English and Philosophy. He received his Ph.D. from Howard University in Philosophy. After the end of the Harlem Renaissance, Alain Locke began teaching at Howard University where he met actor Ossie Davis, who recounts his experience as Locke’s student. Davis held Locke in high esteem, and crediting him for encouraging his career in theater. Davis expresses in the interview how Locke not only mentored him, but provided him with money for travel as he went in search of his career as an actor. This interview gives credence to the claim of Locke’s partial toward the males (Davis).

- ¹² Like most of the Harlem Renaissance writers, Fauset returned to the classroom as a high school teacher after failing to find work as a writer. *The Opportunity Magazine* August 1926 Issue, under the “Education” published an entry on Fauset and her return to teaching: “In recent examinations held in the New York City School System for teachers in the Junior High Schools, Miss Jessie Fauset was rated second over many competitors for position as French teachers” (*Opportunity* 124).
- ¹³ In “Some Notes on Color” published in *The World Tomorrow* in 1922, Fauset shares her insecurities as a black woman in America, “Often when I am sitting in a crowded assembly I think, “I wish I had taken a seat near the door. If there should be an accident, a fire, none of these men around here would help me.” The practice of chivalry, “place aux dames” was not extended toward colored women (Fauset 77).

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