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Martyn Bone

Transnational and Intertextual Geographies of Race, Sex, and Masculinity: Cecil Brown's *The Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger*

During the last quarter century, American studies' "transnational turn" has radically refashioned academic understandings of American literature—including African American literature—in relation to "a wider world" (Gross). Some leading figures in African American literary studies have wondered out loud whether such transnational approaches signal "an end" to African American literature as a distinct oeuvre: in 2011, Kenneth Warren suggested that "the turn to diasporic, transatlantic, global, and other frames indicates a dim awareness that the boundary creating this distinctiveness has eroded" (8). For other critics, though, turning beyond traditional nation-based frameworks facilitates an exciting expansion of rather than an end to African American literature—and African American literary studies. Paul Gilroy's pioneering *The Black Atlantic* (1993) devoted chapters to W. E. B. Du Bois in Germany and Richard Wright in France; more recently, Heike Raphael-Hernandez's edited collection *Blackening Europe* (2010) considers "the African American presence" throughout the continent, while Brent Hayes Edwards explicates the "black internationalism" that connected African American authors and their Francophone counterparts. Established European cultural capitals—Paris in particular, as the "capital of the Black Atlantic" (Braddock and Eburne)—loom large in such accounts, with good reason: major figures including Wright, James Baldwin, and Chester Himes reworked the route to the Left Bank traced a generation or two earlier by Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald.¹

What happens, though, if one moves beyond Paris or Berlin to consider the relationship between African American literature and a more peripheral European capital like Copenhagen? One might answer this question by considering the curious case of Nella Larsen's relationship to Denmark, which over the last quarter century has exposed tensions between traditional African American literary studies and more recent transnational approaches. Larsen died alone and forgotten in 1964, but within three decades was widely recognized as a major figure in both the Harlem Renaissance and African American women's writing. Yet Larsen's self-identification as "the daughter of a Danish lady and a Negro from the Virgin Islands, formerly the Danish West Indies" (qtd. in Davis, *Nella Larsen* xviii), who spent time in Denmark during her youth, was met with considerable skepticism by scholars, including her first biographers.² In 1993—the same year that Gilroy identified "Nella Larsen's relationship to Denmark" (18) as another potential Black Atlantic case study—Charles Larson declared that "her Denmark years are a total fabrication, a fancy embroidery upon the tragedy of her early life" (189) as the abandoned daughter of a white Danish mother. A year later, Thadious Davis asserted that "throughout her public life [Larsen] displayed little intimate or firsthand knowledge" of Denmark, and that she formulated "public fictions of her past" as "not merely a 'mulatto,' but one had who grown up in a white, foreign country" (*Nella Larsen* 68, 140-41). These dismissals of Larsen's own statements about her Danish connections quickly influenced critical (mis)readings of her debut novel *Quicksand* (1928),

five chapters and two years of which take place in Copenhagen.³ But in 1997, George Hutchinson demonstrated that Larsen did spend time in Denmark (“Nella Larsen and the Veil of Race”). The impact of Hutchinson’s revelations, at a time when transnationalism was redefining (African) American literary studies, is evident in Davis’s Introduction to the 2002 Penguin Classics edition of *Quicksand*: here, Davis shifts course to stress “Larsen’s transnational concerns and international themes” and detail “her Danish heritage” (ix). Since then, other scholars—also in other fields, such as Scandinavian studies—have considered *Quicksand*’s depiction of Copenhagen (Lunde and Stenport; Bone).

The role of Denmark’s capital in the lives and literature of other African American authors has, however, remained largely unexamined. In this essay, I focus on Cecil Brown’s debut novel *The Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger* (1969), which is set partly in North Carolina and Sweden, but mostly in Copenhagen. Upon publication, *Jiveass* generated considerable acclaim, not least from Brown’s black male peers: John A. Williams declared that “It’s a marvelous book. . . . Brown writes his ass off,” while Himes remarked that “this book turns you on: it tells you how it feels to be a young, black male American in a permissive society of white women.”⁴ No less a mainstream tastemaker than *Time* lauded *Jiveass* for auguring a new literary era in which “[t]he community of perception and pain” articulated by Jewish American authors was becoming the province of young black writers like Brown (qtd. in Gates xi). Almost fifty years later, *Jiveass* has not been entirely forgotten, but it has been neglected. There are various reasons for this. First, *Jiveass* is one of only three novels published by Brown across half a century; his eclectic career also encompasses the memoir *Coming Up Down Home* (1993), scriptwriting for Richard Pryor, and scholarly work including the deliciously titled *Dude, Where’s My Black Studies Department?* (2007). Second, Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970) proved a truer herald of the ascent of African American writing via an extraordinary generation of black women authors that also included Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Cade Bambara. Third, the sexual dynamics of *Jiveass* celebrated by Himes often disturb contemporary readers: the explicit rendition of bedroom encounters between protagonist George Washington and a succession of white women appears to fix *Jiveass* firmly in the blaxploitation era, while the narrative’s male gaze seems to render those women as objects rather than subjects. Fourth and finally, the last word of the novel’s title poses obvious problems: as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. observed in 2008, “given the various public debates about banning the use of the n-word lately, it is difficult to imagine a contemporary novelist inserting it in her or his title today” (xii).

That *Jiveass* takes place in Copenhagen circa 1965 also seems to have stumped critics. Ewa Barbara Luczak, assessing *Jiveass* alongside other examples of “‘European’ fiction written by African Americans in the 1960s” (149), posits that Brown’s “choice of Copenhagen . . . is not accidental” because for “the American mind in the 1960s,” Denmark “stood for European quintessential whiteness” (152). Luczak proceeds to discuss *Jiveass* as a novel about “[t]he life of an African American man in Europe” (175) that reveals “latent European racial prejudice” (177) and ultimately requires George’s “decision . . . to leave what is the root of whiteness—Europe” (180) and return to the United States. I do not dispute Luczak’s related point that *Jiveass* interrogates received ideas of “Europe” as a safe haven from U. S. racism, but her repeated tendency to describe Denmark as representing a more general “European” whiteness eerily echoes earlier criticism of *Quicksand*. Scholars have often read Larsen’s detailed descriptions of Helga’s experiences in Copenhagen as one more example of the African American expatriate experience in “Europe,” or as “displac[ing] to Europe” the Harlem Renaissance’s response to “white fascination with the ‘exotic’ and the ‘primitive’ ” (Carby 172).⁵ Yet, like Larsen, Brown had considerable personal experience of Denmark’s capital. In 2011, he recalled, “I stayed

in Copenhagen during the summer and autumn of 1966 when I was in my early 20s. When I was in Paris in subsequent years, I would take trips to Copenhagen, feeling so close to her since my first trip. . . . The charm and quaintness that Copenhagen had in those years in the sixties still choke me up” (Brown, et al. 73). In a 2008 Preface to *Jiveass*, Brown recalled the city four decades earlier as “a Mecca for Black American expatriates—an alternative to Paris” where he encountered “war resisters, draft dodgers, and seekers of solace from brutish American racism.” Brown also revealed that the controversial title of his novel derived from an incident in Copenhagen when “a bunch of blond-haired kids . . . yelled, ‘Neger, Neger,’ a term that “means Black man or Negro in Danish, but to me it sounded like ‘Nigger!’” (xx-xxi).⁶ The anecdote vividly echoes Baldwin’s account in “Stranger in the Village” (1953) of “the children [who] shout *Neger! Neger!* as I walk along the streets” of Leukerbad in Switzerland, not least because Baldwin too connects “*Neger!*” with “*Nigger!*” (161, 168). Nevertheless, Brown’s reminiscences stress the specificity of his time in Copenhagen—including the city’s difference from Paris—rather than some generically “European” experience. As with Larsen, one need not reduce Brown’s debut novel to crypto-autobiography to recognize that the writer’s familiarity with Copenhagen might merit a more materialist analysis than is possible in readings that figure the city as a metonym for “Europe” or “whiteness.”

In the first section of the analysis that follows, then, I situate Brown’s novel within the historical, spatial, and cultural context of 1960s’ Copenhagen. I am equally concerned, however, with mapping *Jiveass*’s transnational and intertextual geographies. In the second section, I explore how *Jiveass* riffs on an earlier African American novel explicitly referenced in the book—Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940)—as well as the expatriate example of Baldwin. But I argue too that *Jiveass* can be read in intertextual relation to Larsen’s *Quicksand* and another Wright text, the short story “Big Black Good Man”: written immediately following Wright’s visit to Copenhagen in late 1956, first published in French in 1958 and subsequently included in *Eight Men* (1961). There are compelling connections between what, adapting Anna Brickhouse, I call the “intertextual geographies” of *Quicksand*, “Big Black Good Man,” and *Jiveass*. Brickhouse argues that reading and revision is “the self-referential subject of *Quicksand*”: Larsen references and reworks a wide range of anterior works by black and white authors to construct an “intertextual geography” and “literary genealogy that is unmistakably biracial” as well as transnational (535-36).⁷ *Jiveass* similarly alludes to and signifies upon a wide range of texts by American, British, and Danish writers. The geography of *Jiveass* especially recalls *Quicksand* in its transregional and transnational dimensions: both Larsen’s protagonist Helga Crane and Brown’s George Washington migrate between the rural U. S. South, the urban U. S. North, and Copenhagen before undertaking—or, in George’s case, contemplating—a return to the South. In the literary-historical context of black nationalism and the Black Arts Movement, however, Brown’s intertextual practice is most overtly engaged by other black male authors: not only Wright and Baldwin but also Eldridge Cleaver. In the third and final section, I assess the intertextual sexual politics of *Jiveass vis-à-vis* Cleaver’s controversial *Soul on Ice* (1968), published a year earlier. Beneath its ostensibly sensationalist rendition of interracial sex, *Jiveass* subtly deconstructs both the stereotype of the black male “stud” and the heterosexist, homophobic model of black masculinity that structures *Soul on Ice*, including Cleaver’s notorious critique of Baldwin.

Jive, Jazz, and the Geography of 1960s' Copenhagen

Jiveass opens with a prologue and “brief history” of George’s life prior to his arrival in Copenhagen. These sections adumbrate George’s rural Southern childhood, his sexual adventures as a young man in Harlem, and the performative dimensions of his identity as a black male: in particular, his practice of “jive.” Already as a teenager in Royaltown, North Carolina, George “became a hustler, a jiveass, a jazz player” (8). George’s “jiveass” world view draws deeply on the African American oral tradition of tall tales about the Signifying Monkey and Brer Rabbit: sly allegories of surviving and subverting slavery and white supremacy. As Brown recalls in *Coming Up Down Home*, such tales of “trickster” animated his own Southern childhood (33-36); in a 1991 Foreword to *Jiveass*, Brown made explicit that George derives from the “amoral trickster from African American folklore—a folklore upon which I cut my teeth in the tobacco fields of coastal North Carolina” (qtd. in Luczak 155). But because George also “became literate, . . . a voracious reader of any piece of printed matter he could lay hands on,” even in his youth George’s “philosophical view of life” is precociously literary and textual, a “conscious parody” of Ecclesiastes: “all is jive and vexation of the spirit” (*Jiveass* 13, 14; original emphasis). Young George once even “jived” a “cracker” into paying for lunch by pretending he and his friend Reb were two starving Harlem youths called Shelley and Byron (27).

In Copenhagen, George is not the only African American expatriate to draw upon the folk tradition of signifying: in the city’s bars, black men recount tall tales about slave trickster and “jiveass” Efan (60-65). George, though, takes this further: Efan becomes one of his many alter egos (70), which range from “ex-gorilla” Julius Makewell via barroom bon vivant Anthony Miller to Princeton graduate Paul Winthrop, “especially knowledgeable on English literature of the period 1590-1600” (8). George’s practice of switching between various aliases in Copenhagen, while combining folk-cultural and literary-canonical sources, is recognizably continuous with his childhood in North Carolina. As Gates notes, “Brown blends his intertextual echoes of classic Western literature with an equally commanding grasp of black vernacular discourse and speech acts, such as Signifying and Playing the Dozens” (xiv).

Brown also, however, connects the jive form of the novel to 1960s’ Copenhagen and the prevalence of jazz culture in the city during this period. In 2011, Brown recalled, “Jazz is a big part of the feeling that Copenhagen used to give me”; he “knew some of the expat musicians in Copenhagen, like Dexter [Gordon],” and had important encounters with jazz poet Ted Jones and jazz painter Raymond Saunders (Brown, et al. 73-74). As Anne Dvinge has observed, Jazzhus Montmartre, where many resident and visiting African American musicians performed, and which features in *Jiveass*, “played a seminal role in establishing Copenhagen as a jazz hub during the 1960s” (Brown, et al. 71). This extraordinary rise of Copenhagen as a global node of African American culture—Michael McEachrane suggests that the city became “the jazz capital of the world besides New York”—and the incorporation of jazz into “the cultural identity of Denmark and Copenhagen in particular” (Brown, et al. 69) helps explain why this supposed site of “European quintessential whiteness” shaped the subject *and* form of Brown’s text: “In writing *Jiveass*, I was extending the idea that jazz is a kind of ‘jive,’ and that the story was a kind of verbal jazz” (Brown, et al. 74). For Brown’s protagonist, the practice of “jive” becomes both transnational and transdisciplinary. Having adopted jive coming up in North Carolina, George adapts it to his expatriate experience in the Danish capital, where

he expands his repertoire of oral and textual-cum-musical performance. George continues to riff upon literary sources and model his personas on literary heroes, but the dexterity and spontaneity with which he “jives” black expatriate friends, white American lovers, and Danish locals alike is now informed by Copenhagen’s jazz milieu.

Having said that, *Jiveass*’s prologue also raises pointed questions about the limits of jive—be it folk-, text-, or jazz-based—as a resource for black male being in the (post)modern world. We learn that George is flying to Copenhagen following a failed trip home to Royaltown, during which he discovers that “[t]he place had not changed,” except that Reb is now “in the army in Vietnam.” “The tale” thus begins with George choosing “*in final desperation*” to take the transatlantic trip to Denmark rather than resettling in the South: “Three days after that he was in Copenhagen.” Moreover, George is beginning to ask himself, “*why it is that you tell so many lies. Do other people lie like this? Is there any motherfucker in this spiteful world who ever told himself the truth?*” These and related questions become central to George’s “life and loves” in Copenhagen. Is a jazzed-up form of jive sufficient for a young black man to thrive in this wider world? Will George “survive because he was a beautiful, jiveass nigger” (*Jiveass* 15; original emphasis), as he tells Reb’s wife? Or does living, loving, and jiving in Copenhagen *evade* serious questions about black identity—especially black masculinity—at a time of sociopolitical upheaval in the United States?

In intertextual-geographical terms, George loosely retraces Helga Crane’s migrations between the rural South, New York, and Copenhagen. Aboard the ship transporting Helga across the Atlantic, following her failed sojourn at the Southern school Naxos and spells in Chicago and Harlem, she “revel[s] like a released bird in . . . that blessed sense of belonging to herself alone and not to a race” (Larsen 66). But Helga’s racial identity is exoticized rather than erased in Copenhagen, not least because she appears exceptional: Helga is designated as “*Den Sorte*” (literally, “the black”) when she appears on the streets of the city. *Jiveass*’s opening description of Strøget, Copenhagen’s main commercial thoroughfare, seems to provide a more promising tableau of cross-cultural, interracial tolerance than the “astonishment,” stares, and comments that greeted Helga’s “dark, alien appearance” a few decades previously (Larsen 75). Observing a “young English student . . . with his Danish girlfriend” as well as “an African prince . . . push[ing] a baby carriage alongside his blond-haired Danish wife,” *Jiveass*’s narrator remarks that “the spirit of the city seems to offer them protection.” Although the narrator qualifies that Copenhagen “is chock full of impostors,” this merely seems to confirm that the city might be the ideal sanctuary for a jiveass performer of personas like George (*Jiveass* 18). Indeed, we first encounter George’s Anthony Miller alias at the Drop Inn, one of two bars in Copenhagen frequented by African Americans. Like Strøget, Montmartre, and another bar called the Cassanova, the Drop Inn is one of the named sites that tie Brown’s narrative to the material geography of Copenhagen: Founded in 1934 by Danish veterans of the Spanish Civil War, by the mid-1960s the bar in Kompagnistræde was a hub for African American musicians and soldiers, and where Brown first encountered Jones.⁸

At first glance, this small black expatriate community congregated between the Drop Inn and Cassanova—“the only place in Copenhagen where Soul Music could be heard” (58)—appears to offer George welcome sanctuary from both white supremacy in the U. S. and the kind of individualized exoticization that Helga experienced in Denmark during an earlier era. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that racial politics remain: drinking at the Drop Inn, George has a heated dispute with Jero, “a very smug, black cat who was supposed to be from Africa” and who “didn’t like American Negroes because they were only *half* African” (19-20; original emphasis). George’s ongoing conflict with Jero punctures the vision of postcolonial

and pan-African solidarity that, circa 1965, was a significant facet of black nationalism in the United States. Yet Jero, a Somali immigrant, is also the first black character to question whether Copenhagen really offers release from American racism: “you’re naïve, man. You don’t understand that you’re living in an International Racist Environment” (20). Like Helga before him, George too begins to recognize forms of racism and segregation in Copenhagen that are eerily familiar given his experiences in the U. S., even as they reveal the legacies of Denmark’s own colonial history.

At the Drop Inn, George notices “five Greenland Danes; they looked like Chinamen or Eskimos, and they didn’t speak to the Danes. . . . they were Danish, yet they were discriminated against by the Danes. . . . By the Danish standards of looks, these Greenlanders were certainly . . . strange-looking. So why did they come to Denmark at all? Because they are Danish, too” (67-68). George’s feeling of “sudden warmth” (67) toward the Greenlanders derives partly from his own experience of what W. E. B. Du Bois dubbed “double consciousness.” Much as U. S. blacks must always negotiate the “two-ness” of being both “American” and “Negro” (Du Bois 11), so the Greenlanders’ ambivalent status as “Danish, too”—“screaming to be noticed by the other Danes, screaming to be accepted”—is continuously compromised by the ways in which they are “discriminated against” (*Jiveass* 68, 67).

George’s familiarity as a black American with “always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (Du Bois 11) is triangulated by his own “looking” at these “Greenland Danes,” uprooted people who embody the racial politics of Denmark’s recent colonial history. Before 1950, the year in which the Danish colonies of North and South Greenland were combined, very few Greenlanders moved to Denmark, and most who did were there for educational reasons; in the first four decades of the twentieth century, a mere 225 Greenlanders were educated in Denmark. After 1950, a new, more proactive “development strategy” (*udviklingsstrategi*) was implemented, including the forcible removal of Greenlandic children to Denmark to make them learn Danish (Togebj 25). In 1953, the colony of Greenland was incorporated into Denmark on “equal terms” as a county (*amt*), and more Greenlanders migrated to the Danish capital. Yet these migrants were rarely regarded as equal by their fellow Danes: Lise Togebj’s 2004 study of Greenlanders in Denmark is appropriately subtitled “An Overlooked Minority.”⁹ What we might then call George’s inchoate triple consciousness—of his own racial difference in a nation that already marginalizes its own nonwhite subjects—echoes Baldwin’s observations almost two decades earlier about the status of “the French African” in Paris. Baldwin’s remarks in “Encounter on the Seine” about the “conspicuous and subtly inconvenient” status of the “colonial” who “leads here the intangibly precarious life of someone abruptly and recently uprooted” (121) also speak powerfully to the situation of Greenlanders displaced both within and beyond their homeland by Danish government policy.¹⁰

Like the Greenlanders, black Americans are conspicuous in Copenhagen in part because of the demographic legacies of Danish slavery and colonialism. In contrast to slavery in the U. S., where African-descended people were enslaved within the nation’s borders, Danish slavery was concentrated in the trading posts of Africa’s Gold Coast and three small islands in the Caribbean, St. John, St. Thomas, and St. Croix, collectively known as the Danish West Indies. Richard Wright’s *Black Power* (1954), a rather conflicted response to the Gold Coast’s quest for postcolonial independence, stresses Denmark’s significant role in “the desperate struggles that went on between European powers” over the Gold Coast during the late seventeenth century, especially Danish control of the Christiansborg and Cape Coast castles, both of which Wright visited (405).¹¹ Even after the abolition of slavery in the Danish West Indies in 1848, few colonial subjects settled in Denmark itself before the \$25 million “transfer” of the islands to the United States in 1917. Hence a young woman like Nella Larsen, the “Negro” American daughter of a white Danish

mother and black Danish West Indian father, could well have appeared distinctive, even exceptional (“*Den Sorte*”) during her time in pretransfer Denmark. During the two decades after World War II, a period when postcolonial immigration was diversifying much of Europe, Denmark remained largely homogeneous despite the modest numbers of Greenlanders and African American expatriates. In a 1961 article for *The Crisis*, “A Negro Reports from Denmark,” journalist and Copenhagen resident Leonard Malone observed that “there are few Negroes, Jews, Italians, Puerto Ricans, lepers, green-haired people, and other minorities. . . . Everyone is the same—a Dane.” Malone noted that because white Danes were “unaccustomed to extreme ethnic differences,” “[t]he Asian, the Oriental, the Greenlandic Eskimo, all may be recipients of the same naiveté” and “provincialism” experienced in Denmark by black Americans like himself (Malone 452, 453).¹²

One other incident in *Jiveass* gestures toward Denmark’s dubious role in Black Atlantic history and demographic traces that can be faintly discerned within Copenhagen itself. After meeting a local girl called Michele at the Drop Inn, George ends up in bed at her apartment, where Michele dramatically reveals her descent from a “black man from Africa, a man who was a sailor and who had come to their little port city.” George feels an uncanny affinity across Black Atlantic time and space with Michele’s African great-grandfather, whom he imagines to be “like some American G.I. who ends up in the Cassanova” (76). The scene also sees George recast in a Danish context the U. S. racial discourse of “passing”: studying a photograph of Michele’s brother, George observes “it was amazing that he looked like an American Negro” even as the rest of the family “could pass for undiluted Danes” (77). George’s sense that Michael cannot “pass” as Danish, despite four generations of descent from his immigrant grandfather, echoes Malone’s observations about the rigidly provincial and homogenous definition of Danish national identity. By connecting and interrogating the visual economy of U. S. and Danish racial classifications, *Jiveass* again recalls *Quicksand*. In the U. S., the racial taxonomy of the one-drop rule defines both Helga (who has one white and one black parent) and George (who has two black parents but also a grandmother “with very definite strains of Indian blood” [12]) as “Negroes.” But in Denmark, Helga is also denied her matrilineal “birthright”; like the Greenlanders at the Drop Inn and Michele’s brother, Helga is deemed to be a dark “foreigner, and different,” rather than a true Dane (Larsen 70).

Intertextual Poetics of Relation: Wright and Baldwin

For all that George takes on multiple personas during his time in Denmark, they all revolve around the performance and affirmation of black masculinity. Critical to these various performances is their clearly stated textual antithesis. Shortly after George’s initial clash with Jero at the Drop Inn, he imagines himself in contrast to Bigger Thomas, Wright’s protagonist in *Native Son*:

He was Mr. Jiveass Nigger himself. . . . But cats like Jero didn’t relate to that. They related to Bigger Thomas. Yes, Bigger, who went through life living masochistic nightmares, who lived in fear of The Great White Man. . . . yes all those stupid ass Biggers who think violence is sex, who don’t have enough cool to seduce a “white” woman but who end up *stealing* a kiss from a “white” girl when he should have fucked her. . . . Bigger’s fear was so great that a mere kiss stolen from a white woman’s breath . . . has to be smothered in a fiery furnace. George Washington could not relate to demoralized Bigger (Nigger Chigger) Thomas. He could relate to Julien Sorel, to Tom Jones; he could relate to the nigger in Malcolm X, LeRoi Jones, James Baldwin, and Eldridge Cleaver. George could relate to the Outcasts of Life and Literature. He could relate to the protagonists of *The Satyricon* and *The Golden Ass*.

But he could not relate to Bigger. He could not relate to stupidity, fear, and demoralization. (22-23; original emphasis)

From this deeply textualized sense of self, George conceives of seducing white women in Copenhagen (whether Danish or American) as a political act that will negate Bigger's botched murder of Mary Dalton. Through George's sense of "relation" to Baldwin (and as we will see, Cleaver), *Jiveass* also gestures to the larger debate among African American (male) authors about Wright's influence and legacy. In the early essay "Everybody's Protest Novel" (1949), Baldwin explicitly and explosively repudiated Wright's literary model by linking Bigger Thomas to Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom—whom Stowe had "robbed of his humanity and divested of his sex"—and declaring that "[a]ll of Bigger's life is controlled, defined by his hatred and his fear," which "drives him" to rape and kill Mary Dalton ("Everybody's" 18, 22).¹³ George's similar focus on Bigger's emasculated "fear"—mentioned three times in the above passage—helps clarify his appreciation for Baldwin, whose second novel *Giovanni's Room* (1956) broke even more dramatically from *Native Son's* vision of black male identity defined *vis-à-vis* white women and "The Great White Man." Against a Parisian backdrop, *Giovanni's Room* explores same-sex desire between the "dark and leonine" (31) Italian bartender of the novel's title and white narrator David, "an American boy . . . doing things in France which you would not dare to do at home" (103). David's girlfriend, Hella, the white American woman with the notably Nordic name, becomes increasingly marginal until she returns alone to the United States.

Yet there is another intertextual twist. In December 1956, soon after Baldwin published *Giovanni's Room*, Wright gave a lecture in Copenhagen during a four-day visit to the city; on the train back home to Paris he began writing a short story set in the Danish capital.¹⁴ "Big Black Good Man" revolves around three characters: Olaf Jenson, a white Danish night porter at a "cheap, water-front Copenhagen hotel that catered to sailors and students" (80); Jim, an African American sailor staying at the hotel; and Lena, a white Danish prostitute. What makes this story so remarkable—rather than a transnational rehashing of the racial and sexual tensions between black boy/man, white woman, and white man already familiar from *Native Son* or "Big Boy Leaves Home" (1936)—is that its homoeroticism echoes Baldwin's recent novel. In "Big Black Good Man," Jim's "intense blackness and ungamely bigness" (78) intimidates and overwhelms Olaf, so much so that the porter tries to convince himself that he is "not prejudiced" (80), a belief derived from his own earlier experience as a sailor who had "worked and eaten and slept and fought with all kinds of men." Wright's phrasing here hints at a homosocial-cum-homoerotic dimension to Olaf's interactions with other men that begins to explain his obsessive focus on Jim's body. Olaf repeatedly racializes, animalizes, and sexualizes Jim as "the huge black thing" (77) with a "black neck . . . like a bull's" (79) who "tak[es] it for granted that Olaf would obey" him (78). This erotic tension is triangulated when Jim demands that Olaf provide him with "a bottle of whiskey and a woman" (79). Olaf agonizes over his submissive complicity in setting up Jim's trysts with Lena; worried that he should be protecting white Danish womanhood from "that black mountain of energy, of muscle, of bone," Olaf displaces this anxiety by dehumanizing both Jim and Lena as "a nigger and a white whore." Yet Lena seems to sense the sexual aspect of Olaf's obsession with Jim. Handing over the porter's cut of Jim's payment for her services, Lena slyly asks Olaf whether "[y]ou wanna take over my work?" (81).

These racial and sexual tensions culminate during a remarkable scene when Jim is checking out of the hotel: Olaf "felt the black paw of the beast" as Jim pulls him into "his gorillalike arms" and "the giant's black fingers slowly, softly circled his throat." Olaf's conflicted desire for and fear of Jim's body materializes in "a hot stickiness flooding his underwear." Olaf feels profoundly humiliated when Jim departs with the words "I wouldn't hurt you, boy" (83, 84)—a diminutive more

often used by whites in the U. S. South to demean black men, as Wright details in *Black Boy* (1945). For a full year Olaf indulges bizarre psychosexual “fantasies of cannibalistic revenge” in which Jim’s ship is sunk and “the black beast” is consumed by “a shark, a *white* one” (85; original emphasis). But in the final scene, Jim briefly returns to the hotel and presents Olaf with six white shirts as an expression of gratitude for the porter’s role in facilitating his six nights with Lena: far from planning to strangle (or ravish) Olaf a year previously, Jim had been measuring the porter’s neck for the shirts. The story concludes with Olaf meekly remarking that Jim is “a big black good man” (88), as even now the Dane is unable to recognize the American’s humanity without first registering physical and racial markers. “Big Black Good Man” can be read both as a critique of white stereotypes about the hypersexual, bestial black stud and as a satire on Denmark’s vaunted but homogenous social egalitarianism, which proves brittle when faced by a single black “foreigner” with fewer ties to the country than Helga Crane.

Much as George Washington’s rejection of Bigger Thomas is mediated through these other intertexts by Wright and Baldwin, Brown’s depiction of Copenhagen can also be read palimpsestuously in relation to the narrative cartographies of Wright and Larsen. Like *Quicksand* and “Big Black Good Man,” *Jiveass* depicts the city as a contact zone between and across racial and sexual boundaries. Depending on one’s point of view, *Jiveass*’s structuring of George’s life and loves in Copenhagen around multiple, successive encounters with white women may seem either more radical (at least more explicit) or more conservative (at least more heteronormative) than the pioneering explorations of same-sex desire in *Giovanni’s Room* or “Big Black Good Man.” Yet as the narrative proceeds, *Jiveass* interrogates the political significance of sexual and racial performance across the color line. Moreover, even as the novel’s final chapter and epilogue seem to affirm the value of recovering an “authentic” black masculinity untainted by political or sexual relations with whites, George’s most significant friendship in Copenhagen—with another African American expatriate, Melvin “Doc” Jerrell—shades between the homosocial and homoerotic.

Literary Genealogies of Race and Sex: Cleaver and Larsen

In Copenhagen, George is not the only African American male who asserts his manhood through the sexual conquest of white women, nor is he alone in conceiving cross-racial seduction as a political act. Early on, George witnesses Ned Green, a poet from Mississippi, simultaneously humiliate and seduce a young Danish girl at the Drop Inn via an extended disquisition on (her own) white racist assumptions, leading the embarrassed girl to declare “I think black is very beautiful” (53). George recognizes that Ned is using black militancy quite cynically as a seduction technique, but is at this point sufficiently inspired to imagine himself in the role of “the Lover, the Seducer” (90)—in intertextual terms, perhaps also a parody of Johannes in Søren Kierkegaard’s *The Seducer’s Diary* (1843), another narrative set in Copenhagen. In a narrow sense, seducing white women might be seen as a form of sexual politics in which African American men like George, Ned, and hairdresser-cum-“gigolo” Bob Jones subvert U. S. social and legal conventions. After all, in 1965 merely a decade had passed since Emmett Till’s murder in Money, Mississippi, for allegedly wolf-whistling at a white woman, and George himself recalls a similar terrifying experience “[w]hen I was around fifteen, down South” in a town called Whiteville (188). Only with the 1967 Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia* were

state laws prohibiting interracial marriage finally overturned. This is the sociohistorical context in which, as GerShun Avilez points out, black nationalism inclined to “a focus on heterosexual acts and patriarchal heterosexuality as having special political value.” This heteronormative, masculinist sexual politics is evident in various black cultural forms of the period; superficially, at least, George’s “Mr. Jiveass Nigger” avatar resembles Melvin Van Peebles’s Sweetback in *Sweet Sweetback’s Badasssss Song* (1971), a blaxploitation film structured around “detailed sexual depictions in the experiences of the protagonist Sweetback” and which “imbues the sex act with transformative powers” (*Radical Aesthetics* 134). George is employed as a waiter at a U. S. embassy party by consul Ruth Smith, who then pays for the plush hotel room in which George has sex alternately with Gloria Rowan, daughter of the embassy’s political analyst, and Ruth herself. On the surface, then, George’s sexual acts also seem political: he “fucks” the U. S. state apparatus (personified in female form), which, despite reformist legislative advances like the 1964 Civil Rights Act, continues to deny black men their full, revolutionary humanity.¹⁵

Significantly however, it is between these two trysts that George learns that Malcolm X—another one of the black male public figures George can “relate to”—has been assassinated. Initially, George tries to sublimate the shocking news of Malcolm’s murder through rough, even vengeful sex with Ruth: “*Malcolm, Malcolm. You white bitches done killed Malcolm*” (105; original emphasis). But even during intercourse, George registers a “numbness at the back of his head . . . as though he had been lobotomized” (103), and it is no coincidence that hereafter he begins to question the political limitations of performing black manhood through sex with white women. Having previously admired and imitated Bob’s “profession of lover, because the black lover was a true warrior,” George realizes “he didn’t want to say anything that would lead Bob to think that he thought Bob was simply a gigolo” (110)—an identity disturbingly close to George’s own given his economic reliance on Ruth. George is shaken too when he witnesses Bob seducing Gloria at the Drop Inn by using much the same tactic of humiliation that Ned used on the Danish girl. Jero observes that white women like Gloria will “do anything to prove to you they’re not” racist and “that jiveass Bob is hip to that shit” (146). Although George humors Bob’s bluster about using the wealth of his Swedish heiress wife Mischa to form a revolutionary movement “to machine-gun down some Georgia Crackers” (112), he recognizes that there is a yawning chasm between Bob’s life of luxury as a kept man for wealthy white women and the grassroots political activism underway in the South and, increasingly, across the United States.

Two characters help George to perceive the limits of his life and loves in Copenhagen. When a young African American woman named Pat reveals she is a prostitute, George finally confesses, “[m]ostly I’m a gigolo” (121). Like Jero, Pat poses hard questions about racism as a transnational rather than exceptionally American reality: “You over here hiding in white-ass Copenhagen, think white people don’t see your ole ass don’t you. But what do you think these people are but honkies?” (119). When George tries and fails to assist Pat in securing an abortion after she becomes pregnant by a white Danish man, he worries that he is an “*Uncle Tommy Gigolo [who] can’t even be a good gigolo and help your own women out*” (136; original emphasis). George’s other critical interlocutor is Melvin Jerrell, a Harvard-educated doctor who doubles as a barstool philosopher at the Drop Inn. “Doc” Jerrell offers the most explicit critique of how “all you cats here to get pussy, man. And that’s about as far as it goes. . . . gigolos—a poor man’s Don Juan. A black man is a gigolo as a poor man” (153-54). According to Doc, even seeing oneself “as a gigolo” gives a falsely “strong sense of your own masculinity” (156). George is rattled further when Ruth shrewdly observes that “[you are] too busy covering up your loneliness with sex” (172); when Ruth also reveals she knows his real name, George rightly begins to worry that his white female conquests are “*jiving Jiveass himself*”

(172; original emphasis). George is even more disturbed when Mischa reveals that Bob once impregnated and then beat Ruth, causing her to miscarry (195)—a revelation rapidly followed by news of the consul's suicide (197).¹⁶

In this disturbing sequence of events, we see how, as Avilez argues, Brown's "aesthetic radicalism" includes "invoking the sexual stereotypes that circulate around Black bodies to deconstruct them"—especially the myth of "the patriarchal, oversexed Black man" (*Radical Aesthetics* 136-37). In doing so, *Jiveass* makes another intertextual move: as Gates notes, "Brown's novel sought to deconstruct the stereotype" of "the black male as mindless libido, as rapacious stud" via a "brilliant extended riff and parody" of the "black phallogentrism" (Introduction xii) coursing through *Soul on Ice*, the sensational collection of essays by another of George's "relatable" black male role models, Eldridge Cleaver. Brown himself interviewed Cleaver in Berkeley, California in July 1968, having "just read *Soul on Ice*" and believing it to be "the new direction in African American literature" (Brown, "Eldridge Cleaver" 317). Yet for all its focus on black male virility *vis-à-vis* white women, *Jiveass* departs markedly from *Soul on Ice*'s infamous sexual politics, which exhibited "the persistent reliance upon patriarchal and heterosexist conceptions of black identity and collectivity" that characterized some radical black male art and activism during this period (Avilez, "Black Arts Movement" 56).

Soul on Ice was most notorious for its opening prison letter, in which Cleaver recounts his one-time "technique" of raping white women—after "practicing on black girls in the ghetto"—as "an insurrectionary act" against the white man's "system of values" (*Soul on Ice* 14). Cleaver's book also featured a sustained attack on Baldwin that conflated interracial politics with homosexuality, figured as "a white aberration" (Field 68). Noting that "Baldwin's nose . . . is forever pointed toward his adopted fatherland, Europe" (*Soul on Ice* 105), Cleaver declared that Baldwin's writing revealed a "racial death-wish" rooted in desire for "whiteness" and white men that characterized "the black homosexual" generally (103). Cleaver attributed Baldwin's antipathy for Wright and his "greatest creation" Bigger Thomas (106) to the notion that Baldwin "despised—not Richard Wright, but his masculinity. He cannot confront the stud in others" (109). Even a snide aside about Baldwin's "little jive ass" (100) is rhetorically associated with Rufus Scott, the central black male character from Baldwin's third novel *Another Country* (1962), "who let a white bisexual homosexual fuck him in his ass" (107). In his July 1968 interview with Brown, Cleaver recapitulated his "very hostile reaction" to *Another Country* and Baldwin's alleged attempt "to make Rufus the embodiment of black masculinity in our time," although he offered the loaded qualification that "I've met Baldwin and consider him a friend as long as he keeps his mouth shut" (Brown, "Eldridge Cleaver" 320).¹⁷

In *Jiveass*, George's intellectual, homosocial camaraderie with Doc Jerrell can be read as a counterpoint to Cleaver's hypermasculinist, homophobic rhetoric. In the penultimate chapter, following a fight with Jero at the Drop Inn, Doc treats George at a hospital. From his sickbed, George declares to Doc that the antidote to how "everybody in this town, every black person, seems to be living off someone or something else" is to live off one's "*insides*" (203; original emphasis). What George does not say is that he confronted Jero following the Somali's taunts about Doc's homosexuality. Although George's showdown with Jero may seem to derive from fear that his own masculinity and sexuality are being maligned—Jero leers, "I mean, he [Doc] fucks cats like you in the ass" (198)—George is hardly a crude homophobe. Throughout *Jiveass*, George remains uniquely compelled by Jerrell's worldview despite rumors that "Doc was a homosexual" (159); even during the fight George is acutely conscious that he wants "[t]o defend Doc, to defend himself, to defend their love. He certainly loved Doc if he loved anybody, but can you ever explain that to some stupid-ass like Jero" (199).

At the hospital, George continues to regard Doc as “a beautiful cat” (201) and appears unconcerned by the possibility that Doc makes a pass at him (206-07). George does, though, tell Doc that “[i]t is a tragedy if a black man lets himself love something in white women, just as it is if a man lets himself be fucked by another man”: both scenarios, he now believes, imperil “my identity” as “black and a man” (205). *Jiveass* thus simultaneously iterates and interrogates the prejudice—explicit in *Soul on Ice*—that black gay men were not merely degenerate but also a danger to black manhood. In 1966, another of George’s role models, LeRoi Jones, linked Baldwin’s failure to be a “real black m[a]n” and supposed desire to become white with the “gay, exotic plumage” of his “ideas” concerning individualism (“Brief Reflections” 117, 118; original emphasis).¹⁸ It is significant, then, that George maintains his intellectual “relation” to both Baldwin and Jerrell. For his part, Brown became close friends with Baldwin: during their first meeting in Paris, Baldwin confessed to Brown “I thought you would hate me,” as the older author had come to expect criticism from emerging black male writers (Leeming 315). Brown even became the model for former Black Panther turned playwright Daniel in Baldwin’s late play *The Welcome Table* (1987).¹⁹

Beyond *Jiveass*’s engagement with the racial and sexual politics of *Soul on Ice*, there are further intertextual echoes of both *Quicksand* and “Big Black Good Man.” Despite the obvious gendered difference, in Denmark both Helga and George become mired in the quicksand of racial and sexual stereotypes—including their own complicity in those stereotypes. Much as the Danish artist Axel Olsen claims Helga has “the warm impulsive nature of the women of Africa” as well as “the soul of a prostitute” (Larsen 89), and Olaf Jenson reduces Jim to a highly sexualized “black thing,” white American and Danish women alike expect George to perform as the black male “stud” (*Jiveass* 94). Not unlike the auto-orientalism through which Helga gives “herself up wholly to the fascinating business of being seen, gaped at, desired” by Olsen and other white Danes (Larsen 76), George’s self-identification as “the Lover, the Seducer” in Copenhagen plays into stereotypes of black male virility at the service of white female pleasure. This is a stereotype that still circulates in Denmark today. In a 2018 article for the Danish national newspaper *Politiken*, Mary Consolata Namagambe drew on interviews with black Danish men to demonstrate how white Danish women continue to exoticize and sexualize them. *Jiveass*’s detailed descriptions of George’s erotic encounters ultimately serve to show how the frisson of cross-racial seduction remains inextricable from stereotypes concerning black male hypersexuality.

Quite what “liv[ing] right out of your insides” (*Jiveass* 203) will entail remains opaque at the end of George’s “tale,” but it does assume returning to the United States and recovering a decidedly heterosexual model of black manhood. George tells Doc: “I’m getting sorta fed up with this town, with everything. I mean, I’m beginning to break up inside. . . . My life, it seems so phony” (202). This is quite some confession from a man who has long insisted that “all is jive”; it contrasts too with his earlier belief that “there was nothing under the sun that was really phony if it was functional”—including being “a hopeless homosexual” (22). For George, jiving as a gigolo in Copenhagen no longer seems like a personal form of the political: it appears not just inauthentic but evasive of life “back home” (207) in the United States, and so George announces to Doc his intention to return to “the dirt farm where I came from” (205). Here again, *Jiveass* recalls *Quicksand*, and Helga’s return from Copenhagen to the rural South. But for Helga, turning south again proves fatal as she sinks herself in the “quagmire” of marriage and motherhood (Larsen 134). Because *Jiveass* concludes before George actually departs Copenhagen, the outcome of George’s proposed return home remains unknown. To be sure, George remains connected to black Southern folk culture in a way that Helga—a biracial, bicultural woman with no familial or ancestral connection to the U. S.

South—never could be. Yet the shadow of George’s earlier failed return to Royaltown looms large, and there is reason to doubt that going back down home to a “dirt farm” in North Carolina will be any more successful than Helga’s settling “in the tiny Alabama town” where her husband preaches (Larsen 119). The suspicion at the end of *Jiveass* that George can’t go home again uncannily anticipates the coda to *Coming Up Down Home*, in which Brown recounts his own return visit to Bolton, North Carolina, in 1990: “As I looked for the green trees that I remembered, what I saw was a brown, treeless, uninteresting little town. There were no more farms” (220).

It is notable too that George is not planning to join the civil rights movement upon returning to the South; rather, he wants to “write a novel, a book about the race problem” (205).²⁰ Here, George seems to be affirming the political efficacy of fiction, taking his stand in the ongoing debate about the aesthetic and/or activist value of African American literature—a debate in which Wright, Baldwin, Cleaver, and Jones/Baraka had all intervened. George qualifies, though, that “I’d hate to be a black author in America. . . . I would like to write a serious book, but because I’m black, America wouldn’t let me. All the publishers are interested in selling books and if you say anything about sex and being a nigger then you got a bestseller” (*Jiveass* 205-06). There is a kind of *intratextual* metacommentary here, given that *Jiveass* itself was presented and promoted as a novel “about sex and being a nigger.” The back cover of the 1971 British paperback edition was even emblazoned with the headline, “The Autobiography of a Super Stud,” despite the narrative’s actual deconstruction of sexual and racial stereotypes.²¹ Such self-reflexive meditation on the politics of both black writing and black manhood takes another turn in the epilogue, in which the narrator addresses George:

You think that your acts have been lies because you have been acting like a white hero in some white man’s novel. But you need to realize that your creator is not some white man, but a black brother, a nigger, a jiveass very much like yourself. And if you chose to see only blackness, that doesn’t mean you’re blind; it means only that you are living out of your insides, living out of where you first began. (212; original emphasis)

George’s time in Copenhagen began with his repudiation of *Native Son*; as George prepares to leave Denmark and return to the United States, however, the narrator rejects the “white man’s novel.”

Given the extent of *Jiveass*’s intertextual engagement with both African American *and* classic “Western” texts, this advised rejection of the “white hero” and “the white man’s novel” may appear paradoxical.²² Similarly, George’s belated affirmation of heterosexual black male identity appears to contradict the various ways in which his experiences in Copenhagen demonstrate that blackness is less authentic or essential than mutable and performative. Yet, as we have seen, *Jiveass* no more cleaves to the vision of black manhood articulated by Cleaver in *Soul on Ice* than it does the one represented by Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*. Nor is it likely that George’s experiences in Copenhagen (or Harlem, for that matter) can be sloughed off and supplanted by a return to his rural Southern roots. Indeed, there is one final twist: twice in the epilogue the narrator lectures George on the perils of the “white man’s novel,” and on the dangers of dealing with “a white publisher,” only to backtrack each time: “*Ah, even this, in the final analysis, even this is jive. All is jive*” (212; original emphasis). There is more than a hint here that, however tempting it is to yearn for a residual, authentic, or “national” vision of blackness, in the final analysis such yearnings may be a form of false consciousness. George’s transnational turn beyond the boundaries of the U. S. nation-state—and beyond what Gilroy provocatively termed “the easy claims of African-American exceptionalism” (4)—understandably engenders feelings of exile from blackness that echo Larsen’s and Baldwin’s work as well as a concomitant desire to return “home”: “*There comes that time. It is called ‘The End.’ You know the Atlantic Ocean is beneath your feet. You know you*

are going home. Home. Home. Home? Home!? (Jiveass 213; original emphasis). But if you can't go home again, it may be because there is no *there* there—no rejuvenating dirt farm, no pure and sustaining folk culture, no reassuringly heteronormative model of masculinity. The sociohistorical disappearance or textual deconstruction of such certainties does not mean, however, that Brown's novel represents the beginnings of "the end" of "African American literature." With its unheralded role in what Warren terms "the turn to diasporic, transatlantic, global, and other frames," *The Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger*, more than *Soul on Ice*, extended the possibilities of what "African American literature" might be.

Notes

1. In Raphael-Hernandez's collection, see especially Ch. Didier Gondola, "'But I Ain't African, I'm American': Black American Exiles and the Construction of Racial Identities in Twentieth-Century France" (201-15).
2. The source here is Larsen's 1926 publicity statement for publisher Alfred Knopf.
3. For example, Tate derives the claim that "Larsen embellishes the novel with Helga's trip to Copenhagen" explicitly from Larson's and Davis's dismissal of earlier critics' belief that "the Copenhagen scenario in *Quicksand* was factual" (235, 236).
4. The Himes and Williams quotations appear on the back cover of the 1971 British paperback edition published by Sphere.
5. See also Jeffrey Gray, "Essence and the Mulatto Traveler: Europe as Embodiment in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*," *Novel* 27.3 (1994): 257-70. Gray's essay only rarely mentions Copenhagen specifically, and never acknowledges that while in "Europe" Helga remains entirely in the Danish capital.
6. At the time Brown wrote this preface, his most recent visit to Denmark (which the preface references) was in 2006. One September evening that year, Brown took me on a tour of Copenhagen bars and cafes he had come to know over the previous four decades.
7. Brickhouse too, however, tends to figure Copenhagen in *Quicksand* as a broadly "European site of . . . displacement" (550).
8. Brown recalls his encounters with Dexter Gordon, Raymond Saunders (on Strøget), and Ted Jones (a.k.a. Joans) in "Midnight Sun" 74. Cassanova—actually Casanova—on Farvergade was also known as an "amerikanerbar" in the 1960s.
9. Thanks to my University of Copenhagen colleague Kirsten Thisted for advice about Danish colonialism in Greenland.
10. Included in *Notes of a Native Son*, "Encounter on the Seine" was first published as "The Negro in Paris" in the June 1950 issue of *The Reporter*.
11. See also Wright, *Black Power* 66, 407-08. The Gold Coast became the independent nation of Ghana in 1957.
12. Brown recalls his friendship with "Skip" Malone in "Midnight Sun" 73. In another article from 1962, for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Malone quotes John Caffy, "a writer who has been living in Copenhagen for about two years": "If 1,000 Negroes suddenly cascaded upon Copenhagen, there would be a very definite racial problem here. . . . The reason there is no discrimination against Negroes in Denmark . . . is that there are not enough Negroes here to build a formal structures of discrimination against" ("Negro in Europe" 16). Caffy's insistence that Denmark's apparent racial tolerance really derives from the country's ethnic homogeneity recalls scenes in *Quicksand* during which Helga's aunt and uncle try to dispel her doubts about marrying a white Dane. Poul Dahl comments: "Come now, Helga, it isn't this foolishness about race. Not here in Denmark." But tellingly, Poul then qualifies: "It isn't. . . . as if there were hundreds of mulattoes here. That, I can understand, might make it a little different" (Larsen 92). For more on this, see my "*Den Sorte*" 216-17. I am grateful to Ethelene Whitmire, who is writing a book about African Americans and Denmark, for providing me with access to her research materials on Malone.
13. Although Baldwin's migration to Paris in 1948 echoed that of his mentor Wright three years previously, the publication of "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Alas Poor Richard" (both later included in *Notes of a Native Son*) fractured their friendship.
14. On Wright's visit to Copenhagen (including a photograph of Wright drinking Carlsberg beer with Danish author Jens Schade), see Fabre 442-44.
15. Avilez links black disillusionment with the limits of legislative advances like the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act to the resulting turn "from reform to revolution" that informed black nationalism and the Black Arts Movement ("Black Arts Movement").

16. The possibility that white women—the supposed victims of black male “jive” and seduction—are actually jiving the black men has already been raised by Jero, while he and George witness Bob seducing Gloria: “But man, there are a lot of white chicks who are hip to this shit, and go through with it anyway just to get fucked; so in that case the fool is the brother, you know, because he isn’t hip to the fact that this chick is hip to his shit” (*Jiveass* 147). Avilez notes that “[a]lthough George wants to claim agency through his apparent womanizing, women often take advantage of him” (*Radical Aesthetics* 137)—especially Ruth Smith, who facilitates almost all of his sexual encounters with white American and Danish women. Avilez argues that ultimately, not merely women but the narrative itself is “jiving” George; its picaresque form figures George himself as “both the vehicle *and* object of satire in the novel” (141).

17. Ironically, the first sex scene in Baldwin’s *Another Country*—between Rufus and the white Southerner Leona—exhibits something like the heterosexual dynamics of black male “insurrection” against white power that Cleaver posits in *Soul on Ice*: “And, shortly, nothing could have stopped him, not the white God himself nor a lynch mob arriving on wings. Under his breath he cursed the milk-white bitch and groaned and rode his weapon between her thighs. She began to cry. *I told you*, he moaned, *I’d give you something to cry about*. . . . he beat her with all the strength he had and felt the venom shoot out of him, enough for a hundred black-white babies” (*Another Country* 20; original emphasis). In *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (1979), Michele Wallace redirects Cleaver’s own logic that “the black homosexual is counterrevolutionary” to argue that if power and sex are inextricable, the black queer who has intercourse with the white male is the truly revolutionary figure: “If whom you fuck indicates your power, then obviously the greatest power would be gained by fucking a white man first, a black man second, a white woman third and a black woman not at all. The most important rule is that *nobody* fucks you” (68). I want to thank Baldwin scholar Douglas Field for directing me to Wallace, sharing his thoughts on *Another Country*, and for his feedback on this essay more generally. Field’s fine study of Baldwin, *All Those Strangers* (2015), features an overview of late 1960s’ black radicalism’s heterosexist, homophobic model of black masculinity, and its related denigration of Baldwin (68-71).

18. Jones (later Amiri Baraka) concludes that if black South African author “[Peter] Abrahams and Baldwin were turned white, for example, there would be no more noise from them,” and that Baldwin was getting in the way of the revolutionary “work at hand. Cutting throats!” (“Brief Reflections” 120). Cleaver claimed to have “lived” the controversial lines from Jones’s “Black Dada Nihilism” (included in 1964’s *The Dead Lecturer*): “Rape the white girls. Rape their fathers. Cut the mother’s throats” (qtd. in Cleaver 14).

19. Brown and Baldwin also became mutual friends of Huey Newton and spent time together with the Black Panther leader in Oakland (Leeming 293). Brown also became close with Cleaver in the years before the latter’s death in 1998: see Brown, “Eldridge Cleaver” 323. On Brown and *The Welcome Table*, see Leeming 375 and Zaborowska 222.

20. The notion that African American expatriates *should* return to the U. S. and join the freedom struggle famously haunted Baldwin, who returned on various occasions between 1957 and 1965 to work with Martin Luther King and other black leaders of the civil rights movement. Malone concluded “A Negro Reports from Denmark” by remarking that “[m]any Negroes living in Europe suffer from a very subtle guilt complex. . . . There is nothing really to fight here and we feel guilty that we are not on the racial battle field” (454). But in *Jiveass*, the civil rights struggle also figures as another way in which white power can police black males’ yearning for autonomy. During their first encounter at the U. S. embassy, Ruth Smith suggests that “‘you should be back home helping out others’—George knew she was trying to say he should be joining Martin Luther King” (36).

21. George proceeds to declare that he will write a second book for which “I’d get Marshall McLuhan to write a preface, like having Jean-Paul Sartre writing an introduction to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*”: a sly reminder that, more than a century after the African American slave narrative, black experience and literature remains subject to white authority. George’s related remark that “I’ll tell them the book is autobiographical, and that it reflects a black man’s struggle to live in white society” (*Jiveass* 206), should also provide a salutary warning that, whatever the value of relating Brown’s own experience of Copenhagen to a more materialist reading of *Jiveass*, the author is not synonymous with George Washington—and not necessarily with the narrator of the epilogue either.

22. *Jiveass* features numerous other riffs on canonical British literature: For example, George interprets John Milton’s *Comus* (1634) as a tale of racial and sexual power relations (55-56), and dreams that he is Sir Edmund Spenser promoting *The Faerie Queene* (1590) at Queen Elizabeth I’s court (77-78).

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