
"For Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882–1961)"

Margaret Stetz

*Professor of Women's Studies
University of Delaware*

long pearls dangling
silk skirt swinging
buckled polished shoes
pounding 1920s New York pavements
rushing after editing
The Crisis
home again
to write about the
crisis of a woman
longing for a beauty that was
lasting
Black
not passing
raced and not erased—
in her novel
Plum Bun
Angela from Philly
became *Angèle*
with painter's brush
the stroke that sold her
in the market
until sick of being priced
and bartered
she escaped to Paris
(though her creator
chose to stay and battle
in a nation
where the Fruits
of so much labor
were Strange
and sometimes hanging)

When Langston Hughes
had called himself
an “Aesthete”
seeking Life in capitals
walking Harlem streets
looking into faces
finding subjects/objects
for his art
did he know
the bodies boldly
standing ground
and unconfined
demanding space
those women staring back
like Fauset’s Angela
were Angels of the Renaissance
all trying hard to fly
as high as he—
were artists too?