

Exhortation: Summer, 1919

Claude McKay

Through the pregnant universe rumbles life's terrific thunder,
 And Earth's bowels quake with terror; strange and terrible storms break,
 Lightning-torches flame the heavens, kindling souls of men, thereunder:
 Africa! long ages sleeping, O my motherland, awake!

5 In the East the clouds glow crimson with the new dawn that is breaking,
 And its golden glory fills the western skies.
 O my brothers and my sisters, wake! arise!
 For the new birth rends the old earth and the very dead are waking,
 Ghosts are turned flesh, throwing off the grave's disguise,
 10 And the foolish, even children, are made wise;
 For the big earth groans in travail for the strong, new world in making—
 O my brothers, dreaming for dim centuries,
 Wake from sleeping; to the East turn, turn your eyes!

Oh the night is sweet for sleeping, but the shining day's for working;
 15 Sons of the seductive night, for your children's children's sake,
 From the deep primeval forests where the crouching leopard's lurking,
 Lift your heavy-lidded eyes, Ethiopia! awake!

In the East the clouds glow crimson with the new dawn that is breaking,
 And its golden glory fills the western skies.
 20 O my brothers and my sisters, wake! arise!
 For the new birth rends the old earth and the very dead are waking,
 Ghosts are turned flesh, throwing off the grave's disguise,
 And the foolish, even children, are made wise;
 For the big earth groans in travail for the strong, new world in making—

1 **Exhortation: Summer, 1919**] Exhortation *Spr*.To
 Ethiopia *Lib*.

1 ,] *om. Spr., Lib.*

3 ,] *om. Spr., Lib.*

4 O] Oh *Spr.*oh *Lib.*

6 .] :- *Spr., Lib.*

7 O] Oh *Spr., Lib.*

12 O] Oh *Spr., Lib.*

17] - *Spr., Lib.*

17 !] , *Lib.*

19 .] :- *Spr., Lib.*

20 O] Oh *Spr., Lib.*

20 OOh] , *add. Lib.*

20 !] , *Lib.*

25 O my brothers, dreaming for long centuries,
Wake from sleeping; to the East turn, turn your eyes!

Textual Note

This poem also appears in:

- *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920)
- *The Liberator* (February, 1920)

The version appearing in *The Liberator* does not indent any poetic lines. Its organization into stanzas is also different: 1-7, 8-13, 14-20, 21-26.

25 O] Oh *Spr.*, *Lib.*
25 OOh] , *add. Lib.*

25 ,] *om. Lib.*