



Bal Jeunesse (about 1927), Palmer Hayden. Watercolor on paper, 14" × 17". Collection of Meredith and Gail Wright Sirmans.

The position of my white neighbor is much more difficult. No brown specter pulls up a chair beside me when I sit down to eat. No dark ghost thrusts its leg against mine in bed. The game of keeping what one has is never so exciting as the
 60 game of getting.

I do not always feel colored. Even now I often achieve the unconscious Zora of Eatonville before the Hegira.⁶ I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background.

For instance at Barnard. "Beside the waters of the Hudson"⁷ I feel my race. Among the thousand white persons, I am a dark rock surged upon, overswept by a creamy sea. I am surged upon and overswept, but through it all, I remain myself. When covered by the waters, I am; and the ebb but reveals me again.

Sometimes it is the other way around. A white person is set down in our
 70 drafty basement that is The New World Cabaret with a white person, my color comes. We enter chatting about any little nothing that we have in common and are seated by the jazz waiters. In the abrupt way that jazz orchestras have, this one plunges into a number. It loses no time in circumlocutions, but gets right down to business. It constricts the thorax and splits the heart with its tempo and narcotic harmonies. This orchestra grows rambunctious, rears on its hind legs and attacks

6. **Hegira** (hĭ-jĭ'ra): journey (from the name given to Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Medina in 622).

7. **Barnard . . . Hudson**: Barnard is the college in New York City from which Hurston graduated in 1928. "Beside the waters . . ." is a reference to the first line of the college song.