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# PAROLE LIBÉRÉE

# #4

Si l'émancipation s'avère être un échec complet, le statut de l'homme noir a changé. C'est sorti de ses habits d'esclave et apte à prendre la parole qu'il va, tel le griot africain, porter un regard sur lui-même, sur son identité, sur sa vie sociale. Devenu sujet de son histoire, il va désormais parler de ce qu'il est, de ce qu'il vit, de ses sentiments, de ses expériences, il va chanter le blues.

Puisant ses racines dans l'esclavage, la ségrégation, le racisme et la misère, le blues est à l'image de la créativité de ses auteurs.

Si, à partir du début du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, il définit progressivement ses propres structures musicales (harmoniques, mélodiques, rythmiques) en mélangeant Afrique et Occident, son instrumentarium se trouve circonscrit par la disparition des tambours africains au temps de l'esclavage : les planteurs en avaient interdit l'usage, craignant que les messages rythmiques véhiculés à travers les airs par les « talking drums » (tambours parlants) soient vecteurs d'insurrections. Le blues se jouera donc sur les instruments à cordes majoritaires dans les états du Sud à la fin du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Au son âpre du blues du Delta (Charley Patton, Son House, Robert Johnson) et du Texas (Blind Lemon Jefferson, Texas Alexander) répondront celui plus élaboré du sud-est et celui plus chaloupé de la Nouvelle Orleans. Il se jouera aussi sur des instruments de fortune créés, comme les blues eux-mêmes, avec les moyens du bord : kazoos, cigar-boxes, wahboards et autres détournements comme celui de jarres (jugs) en terre dans lesquelles on souffle, donnant son nom aux « jug-bands » qui fleurissent à cette époque.

Mais le blues est avant tout parole : parole autobiographique, parole poétique bien que nécessairement simple du fait d'un faible taux de scolarisation des populations noires dans la première moitié du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, parole humoristique, parole métaphorique. Plusieurs théories ont été avancées pour expliquer l'origine du mot

blues : « to be blue », broyer du noir, ou « to have the blue devils », avoir des idées noires, sont les plus connues. Quoi qu'il en soit, le blues reste associé à un sentiment de désespoir mélancolique souvent comparé au spleen des Romantiques. C'est ce sentiment, cette émotion qui transpirent dans tous ses textes, qui lui confèrent son universalité et sa grandeur.

Irrigué par la mémoire du peuple afro-américain à travers des personnages légendaires tels John Henry dont la force vainquit le marteau à vapeur, traversé par la mise en visibilité d'une sexualité exacerbée, contrepoint de l'invisibilité du corps noir dans l'Amérique blanche, pénétré de l'animisme du vaudou (le « hoodoo » avec ses os de chat noir, le mojo...), il va serpenter entre bonheurs fugitifs et désespoir face à la misère ou la mort, entre ironie du sort et aspiration vers des lendemains meilleurs, entre errance vers des ailleurs supposés plus cléments et oubli dans l'alcool, entre solitude face au coucher du soleil et proclamation de la valeur de son existence à travers double sens érotiques et métaphores culinaires. De la prison à la guerre, des inondations aux programmes d'assistance mis en place par Roosevelt pendant la Grande Dépression, jamais larmoyant, toujours lucide, il va, par la sublimation du quotidien, atteindre à l'universel. En assurant sa propre transmission par l'oralité et le relais d'une industrie du disque naissante, il va ainsi marquer de son empreinte toutes les musiques populaires qui ont émergé au XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle.



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## BROKE AN HUNGRY

Blind Lemon Jefferson (1926)

*I'm broke and hungry, ragged and dirty too.  
I said I'm broke and hungry, ragged and dirty too.  
Mama, if I clean up, can I go home with you ?*

*I'm motherless, fatherless, sister and brotherless too.  
I said I'm motherless, fatherless, sister and brotherless too.  
Reason I've tried so hard to make this trip with you.*

*You miss me woman, count the days I'm gone.  
You miss me woman, count the days I'm gone.  
I'm goin' away to build me a railroad of my own.*

*I feel like jumpin' through a keyhole in your door.  
I said I feel like jumpin' through the keyhole in your door.  
If you jump this time, baby, you won't jump no more.*

*I believe my good gal have found my black cat bone.  
I said I believe my baby have found my black cat bone.  
I can leave Sunday mornin', Monday mornin' I'm slippin' 'round home.*

*I wanna show you women what careless love have done.  
I wanna show you women what careless love have done.  
Caused a man like me, steal away from home.*

*Girl if you don't want me, why don't you let me know ?  
I said, if you don't want me, mama let me know.  
So I can leave at once and hunt me somewhere else to go.*

Écoute et compléments pédagogiques  
sur [www.itineraires-blues.com](http://www.itineraires-blues.com)

## ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Memphis Jug Band (1928)

*I would not, black woman, tell you the reason why - why ?  
Black woman's evil, do things on the sly - no !  
You look for your supper to be good and hot - uh-huh !  
She'll never put a neck-bone in the pot.*

*She's on the road again - just as sure as you're born.  
Lord, a natural-born eastman on the road again.  
She's on the road again - just as sure as you're born.  
Lord, a natural-born eastman on the road again.*

*I went to my window. My window was propped.  
I went to my door. My door was locked.  
I stepped right back. I shook my head.  
A big black nigger in my folding bed.  
I shot through the window. I broke the glass.  
I never seen a little nigger run so fast.*

*He's on the road again - just as sure as you're born.  
Lord, a natural-born eastman on the road again.  
He's on the road again - just as sure as you're born.  
Lord, a natural-born eastman on the road again.*

*Your friend come to your house, while passing, to rest his hat -  
yeah !  
The next thing he want to know where's your husband at.  
She says, "I don't know. He's on his way to the pen."  
"Come on, mama, let's get on the road again."*

*He's on the road again - just as sure as you're born.  
Lord, a natural-born eastman on the road again.  
He's on the road again - just as sure as you're born.  
Lord, a natural-born eastman on the road again.*

*Come on, mama, on the road again.*

## PEACH ORCHARD MAMA

Big Joe Williams (1941)

*Peach orchard mama,  
You swore wasn't nobody gotten near yo' peaches but me.  
Peach orchard mama-ooo,  
Swore wasn't nobody got near yo' peaches but me.  
Well, you want yo' women work in your orchard  
When I keep your orchard clean.*

*You done got me to the place.  
I hate to see that evenin' sun go down.  
(Play it a long time, boys). Yeah, man.  
I hate to see that evenin' sun go down.  
Well, when I get up in the mornin',  
Woo-well, Peach orchard mama  
She's on my mind.*

*Got a man to buy yo' groceries  
And another Joe gonna pay your rent.  
You got a man to buy yo' groceries  
And another Joe gonna pay your rent.  
Well, you got me workin' in yo' orchard,  
You-ooo well-well, and bring you ev'ry cent.*

*(Play the one. I wonder what maw-wee they wan' play ?)*

*Sometimes she makes me happy  
And again, she makes me cry.  
Sometimes she makes me happy  
And again, she makes me cry.  
Yes, again I want a peach orchard mama  
Hee-well-well, I wish to God that she would die.*

*(Play a little while).*

## I NEED A LITTLE SUGAR IN MY BOWL

Bessie Smith (1931)

*Tired of bein' lonely, tired of bein' blue,  
I wished I had some good man, to tell my troubles to.  
Seem like the whole world's wrong, since my man's been gone.*

*I need a little sugar in my bowl,  
I need a little hot dog, on my roll,  
I can stand a bit of lovin', oh so bad,  
I feel so funny, I feel so sad.  
I need a little steam-heat, on my floor,  
Maybe I can fix things up, so they'll go.  
What's the matter, hard papa, come on and save you mama's  
soul,  
'Cause I need a little sugar, in my bowl, doggone it,  
I need some sugar in my bowl.*

*I need a little sugar, in my bowl,  
I need a little hot dog, between my rolls.  
You gettin' different, I've been told,  
Move your finger, drop something in my bowl.  
I need a little steam-heat on my floor,  
Maybe I can fix things up, so they'll go.*

*Get off your knees, I can't see what you're drivin' at!  
It's dark down there! Looks like a snake!  
Come on here and drop somethin' here in my bowl,  
Stop your foolin', and drop somethin', in my bowl.*



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## SOUTHERN CAN IS MINE (RAGTIME GUITAR)

Written & performed by Blind Willie Mc Tell (1931)

*Now looka here mama let me tell you this,  
If you want to get crooked I'm gonna give you my fist,  
You might read from Revelation back to Genese,  
But if you get crooked, your southern can belongs to me.  
Ain't no need you bringin no jive to me,  
Cause your southern can is mine.*

*Might go uptown have me arrested and have me put in jail,  
Some hotshot got money come and go my bail.  
Soon as I get out, hit the ground,  
Your southern can worth two dollar, half a pound.  
Ain't no need you bringing no stuff to me  
Because your southern can is mine.*

*You might take it from the south you might carry it up north,  
But understand you can't rule or either be my boss.  
Take it from the east, hide it in the west,  
When I get it mama, your can won't see no rest.  
Ain't no need you bringing no stuff to me,  
Because your southern can is mine,  
In the morning,  
Your southern can belongs to me,  
I'm not dreamin,  
Your southern can belongs to me.*

*Ah ashes to ashes mama, and sin to sin,  
Every time I hit you you'll think I've got a dozen hand.  
Give you a punch through that barb-wire fence,  
Every time I hit you you'll say I've got no sense.  
Ain't no need you bringing no stuff to me,  
Because your southern can is mine,  
Every bit of it,  
Southern can belongs to me.*

*Get me a brick out of my backyard,  
Give you the devil if you get kinda hard.  
Ain't no need you bringing no jive here honey,  
Cause your southern can is mine,  
You hear me cryin,  
Your southern can belongs to me.  
Spank it a little bit, boy.  
Ah, your southern can is mine.*

*Now if I catch ya mama down in the heart of town,  
Take me a brand-new brick and tear your can on down.*

*Ain't no need you bringin no stuff to me,  
Because your southern can belongs to me,  
I'm talkin to ya,  
Your southern can belongs to me.*

*You may be deathbed sick and mama and graveyard bound,  
I'll make your can moan like a hound.  
Ain't no need you bringin no stuff to me,  
Because your southern can is mine,  
You hear me talkin,  
Southern can belongs to me.  
(Oh spank it like that.  
The way Ruthie Mae likes it.)  
Cause your southern can is mine.*

*Sit there unsteady with your eyes all red.  
What I said get your grandma dead.  
Ain't no need you bringin no jive to me,  
Cause your southern can is mine.*

*You got to stop your barkin and raising the deuce,  
I'll grab you mama and turn every way but loose.  
Ain't no need you bringin no jive here honey,  
Cause your southern can belongs to me,  
Every bit of it,  
Southern can belongs to me.  
(Aw, woop it boy, that's the way the people like that thing.)*

*Ain't no need you bringing no jive here honey,  
Cause your southern can is mine,  
You hear me talkin,  
Your southern can belongs to me.*

*You might twiddle like a tadpole,  
Let it jump like a frog,  
Bur every time I hit it  
You'll holler God and that's all,  
Ain't no need you bringing no jive here honey,  
Cause your southern can is mine,  
You hear me talkin,  
Southern can belongs to me.  
(Now play it a little bit, just woop it.)  
Aw shocks. Play that thing boy.)  
Southern can belongs to me.*