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MARSON, UNA

Marson, Una

1905 - 1965

Poet and dramatist

Born in Jamaica and educated at Hampton School, Malvern, she began writing poetry early in life, and was an active journalist, founding and editing *The Cosmopolitan* in Jamaica between 1929 and 1932. Her first volume of poetry appeared in 1930 and a second in 1932, but in that year she left for England. She became Secretary to The League of Coloured Peoples in London, and later, private secretary to the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, during his exile in Britain. She returned to Jamaica in 1936 and founded the Save the Children Fund and the Readers' and Writers' Club. She was influential in the starting of *Public Opinion*, a weekly progressive newspaper, and another journal, the *Jamaica Standard*. She wrote her best known play, *Pocomania*, at about this time, and the play had a warm reception and a long run in Kingston. In 1938 she returned to London and began to work with the BBC as an announcer to the West Indies. After the war she finally came back to Jamaica, where she remained active as a publisher, journalist and social worker, until her death.

Her early poetry is enthusiastic verse, and often tries to stimulate pride of race in black readers, while it also celebrates the racial mixtures of Jamaican society in an enthusiastic and aggressive style. Her poetry was regarded as bold and sometimes tasteless in the atmosphere of the late 1920s, when Jamaica was still very much a

colonial society, and it clearly anticipated later developments in the imaginative as well as the actual articulations of West Indian writers. Una Marson is remembered as an outspoken and proud personality in Jamaica, and she was clearly a pioneer in the newer age of Jamaican poetry.

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